CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE LEBANESE STATE IDENTITY

The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Lebanese State Identity Through Discourse and Actions (2005-2020)

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Supervisor: Dr. László Csicsmann

Associate Professor

Elias Dahrouge

Budapest, 2022

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Declaration

I hereby declare that all the written material in this thesis were entirely and solely composed by myself during my academic research pursued as a PhD candidate at the Corvinus University of Budapest Multidisciplinary School of International Relations. This text in its current form was not submitted anywhere else. All the required ethical procedures were followed during the elaboration of this dissertation.

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Abstract

Lebanon developed since its creation a very peculiar form of political system. The Lebanese *consociational* democracy was created to preserve a fair representation of its various religious communities through a quota-based power-sharing model. Hence, factors that endanger the fragile sectarian demographic balance are perceived as a threat. But following the Syrian conflict that started in 2011, Lebanon became the host for 1,5 million of Syrian refugees, making it one of the countries with the highest rates of refugee per capita in the world. The following thesis examines how has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state identity. This is operationalized through 4 main steps: (1) the review of the Lebanese nation-building process and the main elements of its state identity; (2) the comprehensive presentation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and its heavy contextual frame, with the Palestinian refugee precedent as its cornerstone; (3) the analysis of the official discourse of the state, and (4) tracing the intentions behind its policies and behaviors, in order to track changes in its identity content. The thesis argues that while the refugee crisis had some impact on the state identity, it does not contradict its core elements. In addition, the thesis redefines Syrian refugees of Lebanon as *internationally displaced persons*, and confronts theoretical literature with empirical findings from the field, making it a novelty in its discipline.

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Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has been the subject of various studies and analyses throughout the past century. The attraction of scholars for examining it from multiple angles comes from a variety of special and fascinating features that characterize this small Levantine nation. One of these features is linked to the peculiar nature of its political system. Indeed, Lebanon is known for its religious and cultural diversity and pluralism which were translated into the core of its polity. As a system, it is often defined as a form of *consociationalism* which grants fair representation for its religious communities. This representation is based on a consensual power-sharing model in which communities have quotas that are allocated according to the respective demographic weights of each sect. Nevertheless, the nature of this model has proven to be quite fragile. One of the reasons lays in the fragility of the sectarian demographic balance on which the status quo is built. In fact, any major demographic change would endanger its stability. The fear of such probability is perceived as a threat by many in the society and the elites. Furthermore, the Palestinian refugees who escaped their homeland some 70 years ago constitute – through their involvement in the Lebanese politics – a precedent that cannot be underestimated when trying to understand the perception of fear and resentment against any refugee population. It is in this context that the upcoming developments must be framed.

Following the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Lebanon witnessed the massive influx of refugees from its neighboring country. While estimates might vary, the numbers exceed the million. Lebanon soon became among the countries with the highest rates of refugees per capita around the world. The impact of such a flood was considerable. It affected the host country on various levels. But beyond these consequences, what about the demographic status quo? How did the state react to their presence? What was their impact on its state identity? To answer such questions, the research must try to understand how identity and state identity change in general. Afterwise, it must define the elements and actors of the Lebanese identity and its state. Then, it has to examine the Syrian refugee crisis in-depth in order to "feel" the perceptions of Lebanese towards them. It is only after these step that the state's potential identity change can be interpreted through the state's discourses, behaviors and actions towards Syrian refugees.

In the wake of what was expressed above, Chapter 1 of this thesis starts by presenting the adopted research methodology. Then, Chapter 2 reviews the literature of identity and state identity. Later,

Chapter 3 traces back the Lebanese nation-building and state identity construction through its modern history. As a next step, Chapter 4 evaluates the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon in a comprehensive way. In parallel, Chapter 5 tries to reconceptualize the Syrian refugees of Lebanon by providing a more adapted definition for their case, through linking empirical findings with existing theories of migration. Finally, Chapter 6 analyzes the discourse of the state and tries to interpretate the motives behind its actions regarding Syrian refugees. Through discourse and action, it gives an answer to how has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted the Lebanese state identity.

Chapter 1: Methodology

1.1. Introduction

This chapter unfolds the research design through uncovering the research question and hypotheses. It then showcases the used methods for answering the research question and its sub-questions. Finally, it lists the data sources used for the purpose of this study, reveals its timeline, states the ethical considerations that were taken into account along the research process, and expresses the encountered limitations and the possible means for mitigating them. But before digging into all of the above, it is crucial to reflect on the author's ontological and epistemological assumptions and standpoints. The following paragraphs tackle these questions by defining the adopted approaches and arguing why they are appropriate for this thesis.

How to make sense of the social world? The question of what is the real and how to study it enhanced vehement debates between scholars for decades, each expressing a diverging opinion. Presenting them would be out of the scope of this research. Beyond the maze of these discussions, and in compliance with its topic's nature, this thesis lays on ontological constructivism using an interpretative epistemological approach.

Contrary to common beliefs, constructivism focuses on ways to put order into the world rather than questioning its existence. In our understanding, it enables scientists to provide pertinent explanations and narratives for processes which report for certain parts of social reality. The researcher can only have a perception of the reality. Reality exists, but is complex, therefore difficult to grasp as a whole. For a better understanding of reality, the researcher can only resign to the practice of interpretation, or to interpret others' previous interpretations (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Conditioned by the limits of his human nature, the researcher cannot but develop categories, concepts and theories for pursuing his/her explanatory efforts and give sense to some aspects of the reality. Furthermore, interpretations coincide with the researcher's own background and experiences (Creswell, 2009). Interpretation holds then a non-negligeable amount of subjectivity. But its subjective aspect cannot be considered as an issue since it helps to determine the underlaying meanings of the research's object.

Seen from this angle, a category, concept or theory cannot be dealt with as existing by essence. Rather, they are constructed by subjective human interpretation through conceptualization. This process allows research to evolve and explain things in an easier way. Social categories such as gender, ethnicity or class are made-up concepts that might not be really existing per se out there in the social world (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Even biological or geographical categories such as age or place of residence are built up since their categorical boundaries are set by researchers themselves. But research cannot be operationalized without testable and measurable concepts and categories. They are commonly seen as necessary filters between reality and the knowledge of reality (della Porta & Keating, 2008). This opens the door for taxonomic issues related to drawing concepts and categories (Kratochwil, 2008). In this respect, constructivism affirms that neutrality in descriptions is impossible (Kratochwil, 2008). Concepts cannot be treated as observable things (Kratochwil, 2008). They need to be put in their context which would help in defining their meanings. They can only be safely used when delivering specific explanations in a particular context.

In their classification of ontologies and epistemologies, Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (2008) point out that interpretivism affirms that social reality exists both objectively and subjectively. Thus, reality is somewhat knowable, but cannot be understood outside of its context (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Context is extremely important for any attempt of interpreting the social world. This confirms that interpretivism is extremely suitable for qualitative research, especially the ones that focuses on case studies. Interpretative case study helps in presenting explanations for a particular case. It evaluates and refines the theories under which the research was framed (Venesson, 2008). These theories are here to explain some aspects of the social world: knowledge is then filtered through the researcher's adopted theories (della Porta & Keating, 2008). In constructivism, the researcher builds patterns and theories through induction (Creswell, 2009). Theories are then not primordial. The researcher may not have to formulate strict testable theories. In the same inductive logic, concepts emerge from the work itself (della Porta & Keating, 2008). But a loose usage of these approaches does not exclude deduction, especially if induction/deduction is used in an iterative manner.

Since constructivism is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2009), the current thesis takes into consideration all of the assumptions developed above because it falls under the category of qualitative case study.

In conclusion, qualitative research in social sciences often uses an interpretivist approach based on a constructivist view of the real world. This approach relativizes the existence of concepts, categories and theories. It builds on narratives that take meanings and contexts into consideration. It focuses on explaining outcomes through exploration rather than simply establishing links of causality. This cannot be done without understanding clearly the context of a particular studied case. Understanding complex mechanisms especially in case studies must constantly question concepts and categories, and acknowledges that they are constructed for this purpose. Theories are not necessary; their function is to explain. Throughout the research, this thesis tries to be in line with the above-developed stances.

The following sections provide a step-by-step presentation of the adopted research design. For this purpose, it starts by revealing the main research question as well as the several sub-questions that emanate from it. Then, it elaborates on these questions by formulating clear hypotheses for each. It also shows the used methods for tackling each one of the listed questions.

1.2. Research Question and Hypotheses

The aim of this research is to explore the probable repercussions of the Syrian refugee influx on the Lebanese state identity. This simple initial thought enables us to formulate the main research question of this thesis. The question is the following:

How has the Syrian refugee crisis affected or shaped the Lebanese state identity?

The attempt of providing answers to this simple question identifies the need of breaking it down to many other equally important sub-questions. This step would enable us to find answers for all its constituting elements. Later sections give an account on how identity is measured through its content, the contestation of content, as well as through actions. Therefore, the impact of the Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon on its state's identity must be measured through the state's discourse and actions.

From here, the two main research sub-questions are *(1) how has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state's official discourse on the national and international levels?* And *(2) how has the Syrian refugee crisis shaped the policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state on the local, national and international levels?*

The answer to these questions requires the formulation of targeted hypotheses for each. If the refugee crisis has had an impact on the Lebanese state's identity, then it needs to be observable somewhere. Our general assumption is that the Syrian refugee influx is perceived as an existential threat for the country by the actors who determine or influence the Lebanese state identity. The perceived threat can only be understood under the peculiar structure of the Lebanese state's *consociational* system, which is based on a proportional representation of religious communities by quotas (Faour, 2007). These quotas are determined by the demographic weights of the respective communities. Constituted mostly of one major sect, Syrian refugees convey a fear through their demographic burden that threatens the country's fragile sectarian balance. Since state identity change is measured through the state's official discourse and actions – as it is explained later in this chapter -, then elements of a potential change should be examined there. Concerning the first sub-question *(1)*, if refugees had an impact, then the discourse of official Lebanon on a national level would have adopted positions, narratives and definitions that answer the various concerns of the different actors of the country. On an international level, the potential impact would be revealed through a shift towards a discourse that stresses on the existential threat of refugees on the Lebanese economy, security and identity. This message would be conveyed through an underlaying call for cash assistance. Concerning the second sub-question *(2)*, identity change would have symptomatic repercussions on the state's policy response and general behaviors. In this case, these actions would display clear and traceable evidences on the local, national and international levels. These hypotheses are tested throughout the research process.

	Research Question	Hypothesis
Main Research Question	*How has the influx of Syrian refugees affected the Lebanese state identity?*	Syrian refugees convey a fear through their demographic burden that is reflected in the state identity. This is reflected in its discourse and behaviors.
Sub-Question (1)	*How has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state's official discourse on the national and international levels?*	The discourse of official Lebanon on a national level has adopted discursive positions that answer concerns of the different local actors towards refugees; on an international level, it shifted towards a discourse that stresses on the existential threat of refugees on the Lebanese economy, security and identity.
Sub-Question (2)	*How has the Syrian refugee crisis shaped the policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state on the local, national and international levels?*	State's actions would display clear and traceable evidences on the local, national and international levels. These can be explained as addressing the actors' perceived threat.

Figure 1. Research questions and Hypotheses

But dissecting the main question into more specific questions leaves us with a batch of additional questions that requires further clarification. Some of these questions are: *what is identity and state identity, and what mechanisms push state identity to change? Does migration, specifically refugee migration, induce state identity change? Through what processes? What are the structural frames and contexts in which the Lebanese state identity is able to change?* The research design tackles these questions and helps in the operationalization in a structured and logical way.

1.3. Research Design

In order to find out the repercussions of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Lebanese state's identity, this thesis tries to measure the potential changes of the Lebanese state's official discourse and actions. But addressing such an enterprise requires the development of a strict research design. This design is based on qualitative methods; and testing the formulated hypotheses is mostly addressed inductively. As we saw above, providing answers to the initial research sub-questions leads us to other essential questions that need to be tackled. The research's logical process flow is developed through the answers to these additional questions. Each question is addressed through a targeted method. Indeed, triangulation helps in finding more scientifically rigorous answers, since each method complements another (della Porta & Keating, 2008). The following paragraphs give an account of the flow.

First, a thorough review of the existing academic and scientific, social and historical literatures delivers answers to *what is identity and state identity, and what mechanisms trigger state identity to change? Does migration, specifically refugee migration, induce state identity change? Through what processes? What are the structural frames and contexts in which the Lebanese state identity is able to change?* This step helps in providing a better picture of the structure in which Lebanon's state identity can change, and in determining the actors and mechanisms that enable such change. Beyond simply delivering definitions, theoretical and structural frameworks, this step leads to the formulation of concepts. In fact, prior to measuring the *"how-much"*, research should define the *"what-is"* through the process of concept formation (Mair, 2008, p. 184).

After the literature review, the thesis focuses on giving a holistic presentation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Here again, the research uses a combination of methods. An initial step consists of contextualizing the Syrian refugees through a historical tracing of previous migrations in Lebanon. Then, it provides a multi-level description of Syrian refugees and their situation through numbers. Afterwise, it complements the description by presenting the empirical findings and observations harvested during field research in the Akkar Governorate, North Lebanon, that was conducted in 2019. The methodology of this field work is detailed under the next section.

A third step consist of linking the empirical findings about the causes, drivers and patterns of Syrian refugees' migration with the existing migration and refugee theories found in the literature. This investigation gives an additional sub-finding to this study through a deductive theorization effort. It answers to *how Syrian refugees in Lebanon fit under theories of migration and refugee studies?*

It is only after these steps that the thesis attempts to measure the impact of the Syrian refugee influx on the Lebanese state's identity through its official discourse and actions. Each of the two main research sub-questions are analyzed separately through adapted methods. This is done through four distinct phases. The first phase redefines the structural frameworks under which the process of identity change can happen. The research reasserts how Lebanese legal, constitutional, systemic and political structures delimit the frames in which identity change mechanisms can or cannot take place. It also identifies how these mechanisms are revealed through content, contestation and action. The second phase uses some aspects of the cognitive mapping methodology in order to situate the positions about Syrian refugees of the most important political actors who can influence the identity shift of the Lebanese state. The third phase tries to interpretate how the mechanisms of change might be reflected on the state identity. The fourth phase consists of adopting the methodologies for answering the two research sub-questions.

For question *(1) How has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state's official discourse on the national and international levels?* The chosen methods are discourse analysis mixed with some basic content analysis. For the national level, it chooses 8 ministerial statements that were issued by cabinets upon their appointments between 2005 and 2020. The choice for these texts is justified along the analysis by showcasing how ministerial declarations are the result of consensus and tough negotiation between the main influential political actors. For the international level, the choice goes for fifteen of the annual speeches delivered by the President of the Republic at the United Nations General Assembly, from 2005 to 2020. This is justified also by the regularity – thus comparable - and the high importance of these allocutions that reflect on the official image and the discursive position that the Lebanese state wants to convey towards the international community about itself.

For question *(2) How has the Syrian refugee crisis shaped the policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state on the local, national and international levels?* The adopted method is process tracing. The analysis starts by framing the state's actions in its theoretical grounding, namely in existing theories relative to the effects of migration that study the state's policy responses. It then tries to understand how the Lebanese state behaviors are reflected on an identity shift through the influence of the mapped political actors. This analysis is done by using process tracing by providing alternative explanations for the state's behavior (or inaction) on the local, national and international levels.

The following section provides a detailed explanation of the selected methods and justifies their choice.

1.4. Methods

The previous section has shown how the adopted research design lays on the use of several methods. Each of the research sub-questions is addressed by an adapted method that helps the best in debunking answers. The triangulation between several methods has proven its importance. It can increase reliability and improves understanding (della Porta & Keating, 2008), thus giving an additional authority to the results. The next paragraphs explain how exactly these different mentioned methods are implemented in the research process. But before, it is important to show how identity can be measured, and to assess identity as an independent variable.

1.4.1. Measuring Identity

Measuring identity and its modalities are not unanimously accepted. Yet, some scientists have developed an extensive methodological summary on how to measure identity in social sciences. Some of the major achievements done in this respect that are worth to be mentioned here is the works of Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, Terry Martin and Rose McDermott (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnson, & McDermott, 2009; Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006; Abelal, Herrera, Johnston, & Martin, 2001). The thesis adopts their methodology. For the authors, collective identity is defined as a social category that can vary first and foremost around two separate dimensions (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). The first dimension is the content of social identity. This content articulates along four types: constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons and cognitive models. The second dimension is contestation, which can be defined by the degree of agreement within the social group on the content of the shared identity. Every social identity includes the four types of content, with varying degrees of contestation over some of the content's aspects (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). The extrapolation of these four different types of content is of a great use for this thesis' research design.

First, constitutive norms are all the rules that define the membership of a specific social group (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). Socialization process in sociology is the process of internalizing these constitutive norms. Therefore, the degree of belonging to a particular religious community can be seen as a Lebanese constitutive norm. Especially knowing that the admission to the Lebanese society can only be done through one of its 18 constitutive religious groups. In other words, religious communities are seen as a compulsory middle level between citizens and the state[1].

Second, social purposes are the shared goals of a group's members (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). Nevertheless, the Taef agreements, as a national unity and reconciliation pact signed between the representatives of all the Lebanese factions[2], includes some of the shared goals of the country. It is this case for instance with the eternity of the Lebanese entity as being a "final homeland for all its citizens" (Lebanon Const., pmbl.) introduced in the constitution at that

[1] Georges Corm for instance (2003) delivers an extensive explanation on this.
[2] Details about this agreement are presented later in Chapter 3.

time. The same can be applied also to the coexistence or "vivre-ensemble" formula as the ultimate purpose to be achieved peacefully.

Third, relational comparisons are the negative reflections which defines a social group according to what it is not. This is especially true where identity is defined according to the views about the other. Social identity theory assumes that the creation of in-group identity will definitely be translated into competition with out-groups (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). Therefore, in-group narratives will try to devaluate the outsiders. Lebanon witnesses this process on two different levels. One can be found in the competition among the sects on the state's power, while another is related to its definition towards the others. Syrian workers for example were seen as the devaluated other, often stigmatized as ignorant and related to their regime which occupied Lebanon until 2005 (Chit & Nayel, 2013). This image was recently extrapolated to the Syrian refugees by creating negative sentiments against this group by most segments of the Lebanese population (Chit & Nayel, 2013). This approach is a key element in mapping the actors' positions about Syrian refugees.

Forth, cognitive models are defined as the global interpretations about political or material conditions and interests that are emanating initially from a given social identity (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). This one might be the most relevant for the present analysis. Identities shape the interpretation that ones have about their past and present (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). So Lebanese perspectives and perceptions about what is a refugee, or how Syrian refugees constitute a threat to their future is strongly affected by their past experiences as a group. Both the prior presence of Palestinian refugees and sectarianism could be understood as affecting and shaping the Lebanese cognitive models.

Contestation is the open questioning, within a group, of all these evaluated types of content. Content is not fixed nor predetermined (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006), and the process of contestation shapes content through time. In the past, the contestation of elements of the National Pact led to constitutional reshaping in Taef: Lebanon switched from having an "Arab Face" towards becoming an "Arab country" (Lebanon Const., pmbl.). This is a clear example of how contestation shapes constitutive norms. Understanding how contestation is reflected in the Lebanese official discourse and actions is what seems to be interesting for this research.

Beyond content and contestation, identity can be assessed through actions. Identity affects behavior in different ways (Abelal, Herrera, Johnston, & Martin, 2001). Therefore, tracing behavioral changes at the Lebanese state's level concerning its explicit and implicit actions or inaction regarding its migrant and refugee populations leads us to a better understanding of the real impact of Syrian refugees on Lebanon's state identity shaping.

The work of Abelal et. all (2006) gives methods on how to measure both content and contestation in social identities. Compared to a previous work (cf. Abelal, Herrera, Johnston, & Martin, 2001) it does not take into consideration other dimensions of identity like its intensity. Their study lists many different methods that can be used for this purpose. Some are qualitative, like discourse analysis or cognitive mapping, while others are quantitative such as quantitative survey analysis. Discourse analysis, mixed with some basic content analysis, are the two methods that are implemented through this thesis for the interpretation of Lebanon's official discourse. Coupled with process tracing for measuring the actions, this thesis grasps elements from all the possible measurable sides. This is done after a preliminary cognitive mapping of the different relevant actors involved.

1.4.2. Identity as a Dependent Variable

Can we talk about variables in qualitative research? Qualitative interpretivism considers that cases are interdependent wholes rather than breakable into variables (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Variables are mainly used in quantitative research methodologies. The reason for this is linked to the nature of a variable itself: something that can literally vary, thus measurable. Variability is explained by finding the cause(s) that might drive this change. Therefore, a measuring process must somehow be translated into quantified categories, namely values. Since qualitative methods cannot implement such translations into values, researchers tend to avoid the use of this terminology. Nevertheless, the use of variables might be useful here for the schematization of its research design.

A dependent variable is thus understood to frame the caused phenomenon of a causal hypothesis (Van Evera, 1997). In our case, the research is trying to measure variations in the Lebanese state's identity construction. Therefore, state identity is the variable that depends on other influencing phenomena. These influencing variables are mapped in the next section.

1.4.3. The Independent Variables

Independent variables are the causal phenomena of a causal hypothesis (Van Evera, 1997). In this respect, anything that affects the Lebanese state's identity construction can be categorized as such. Many factors can be influencing it. Some of these independent variables might also be intervening variables or condition variables. This would be closely depending on the perspective from which particular research would be angled. The choice of focusing this study on testing the identity as the dependent variable means that all potential influencing factors might be candidates for being independent variables.

But the research question identified the influx of Syrian refugees as the chosen phenomenon to be tested. This perspective leads to the reconfiguration of all other probable independent variables to the status of intervening or condition variables. An intervening variable is an intermediary phenomenon in the casual chain linking independent variables to the dependent variable, whereas a condition variable is conceptualizing a precondition that influences the impact of variables on others (Van Evera, 1997). In the case of this thesis, if migration causes for instance a demographic change that might alter the direction of identity construction through fear, demography can be seen as the intervening variable. Especially that the Lebanese *consociational* political system is based on power sharing representation of sects, in which quotas are allocated according to their demographic weights (Faour, 2007). That does not mean that in absolute terms, demography is not a sole independent variable in itself. But here, it is as an intermediary station in the causal chain reaction. In parallel, sectarianism can be defined as a condition variable in this equation, since the preexistence of sectarianism is structuring the impact of demographic change through migration on the identity construction. Sectarianism can be thus defined as a structural condition variable for the Lebanese state identity change. Similarly, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon can be considered a preexisting condition. Finally, the economic and financial crises, the October 2019 wave of protests, as well as the local and international actors' political agendas are all important variables that cannot be ignored. Below is the list of variables by category:

Independent variable: Syrian refugees.

Dependent variable: Lebanese state's identity.

Intervening variables: demographic change, political leaders and influential actors, their agendas and discourses, degree of political polarization between local actors, external regional and

international actors, the 2019 wave of protests, economic and financial crises, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis management.

Condition variables: sectarianism and institutionalized state-sectarianism, Lebanese Constitution, Lebanese citizenship law, Palestinian refugees.

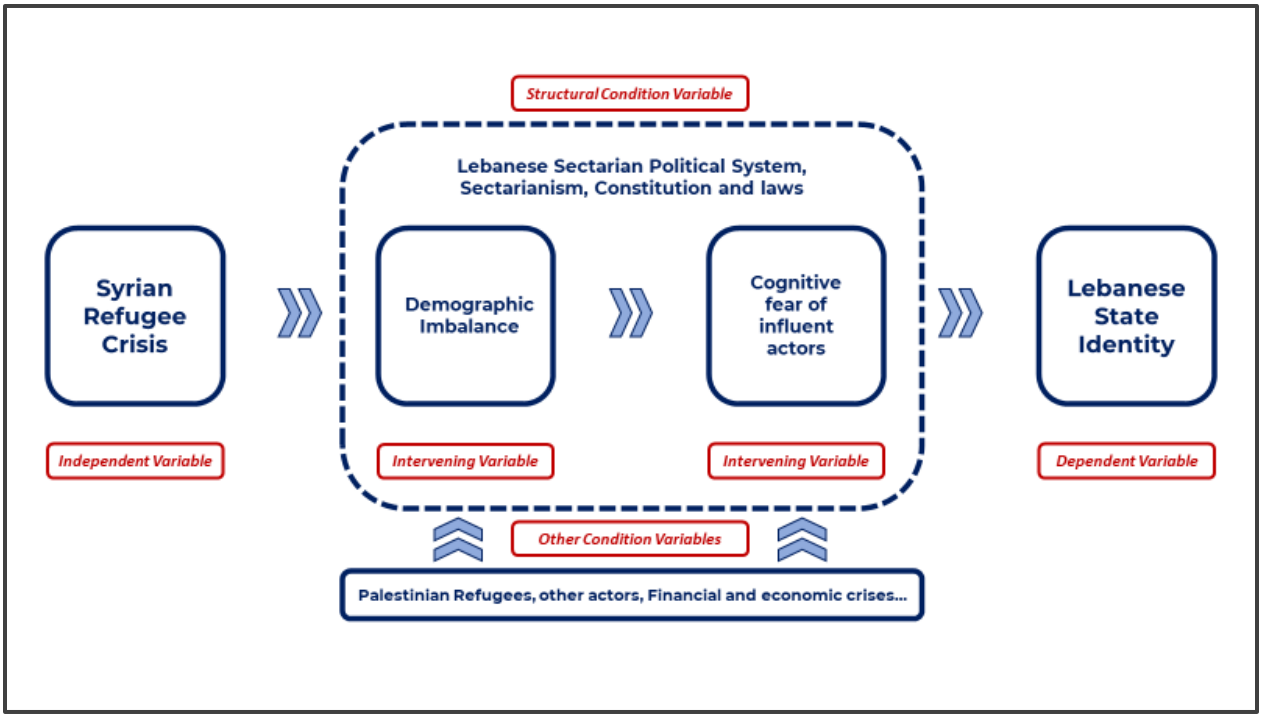

Figure 2. The variables

Identifying the variables is key for a better understanding of the problem itself, but we have to be aware that in an interpretivist approach, narratives are much better suited that variables (Kratochwil, 2008). Beyond this schematization, the story has to be understood as a whole and situated in its strict particular concept. Picturing the topic's variables leads us to the methods used for measuring them.

1.4.4. Historical Tracing and Analysis

The previous sections mentioned the importance of context in interpretivist qualitative research. Contextualizing the Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon through the broader understanding of migratory in-and-outfluxes to and from the country is a must. This is done through historical tracing. This method does not have an intention of providing historical explanation. The latter has

a vocation of determining causal links, while historical tracing accounts for facts that happened. This tracing is done through a narrative that links relevant events. The method is thus in line with the meta-theoretical approaches of the thesis. It is important to note that accounting for facts might be tricky (Thies, 2002). Social scientists must acknowledge that historians are not neutral and must avoid a series of bias: investigators bias, selection bias, confirmation bias, and differentiating between "latent" and "manifest" events (cf. Thies, 2002). But these can be mitigated by cross-referencing authors and historical sources.

1.4.5. Empirical Observations: Akkar Field Research

The textual empirical review of Syrian refugee migration to Lebanon is coupled with empirical observations from the field. Indeed, during the month of January 2019, the author took part, as a research assistant and supervisor, in a field research project in the Akkar Governorate, North Lebanon, organized under the Beirut Saint-Joseph University Arab Master in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA)[3]. The research topic was understanding *Refugee Challenges in Akkar*[4]. It focused on refugee education and refugee conditions. The team was composed of 24 students, 2 supervisors (among which, the author himself), and a research director. The research's implementation consisted of three phases: a preparatory phase, a field work phase for data collection, and a data cleaning and analysis phase. It used a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research consisted of focus groups with refugee parents, and semi-structured interviews for educators and NGO activists. The team prepared adapted guidelines and questionnaires for each. Quantitative research included two survey questionnaires: one targeted refugee parents, and another refugee children. Students underwent an ethical training for social field work and surveys implementation, especially in regard of interaction with under-age children.

[3] The ArMA Program is a regional Master program which is part of the Global Campus of Human Rights. It hosts students from Europe and the MENA region. One of the deliverables during their curriculum is to master quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and to get familiar with field research. The research design of the 2019 field work was prepared and implemented under the assistance and supervision of this thesis' author. The research was conducted under the direction of Prof. Carole Alsharabati, Director of the Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences.

[4] Results of this study were not published. Findings and analysis were compiled in a presentation that was shared with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Lebanon's representation, as well as with other key stakeholders and partners involved in humanitarian and social work with refugees in Akkar and across Lebanon.

Following this, the team prepared the ethical guidelines in line with Saint-Joseph University's ethical rules and procedures[5].

The first week of January 2019 consisted of brainstorming sessions as well as elaborating the methodology, the research questions, and the questionnaires. During the preparation phase, the team organized three focus groups through a preliminary field visit that took place on the second week of January 2019. Based on these, the team refined the surveys and set the targets. The second phase was dedicated to the field research which took place between January 21 and January 25, 2019. The team filled 280 survey forms with 120 refugee adults and 160 refugee children in five different camps and three villages. The locations were selected upon the care of reflecting an accurate representation of Akkar's regional diversity[6]. Data collection of surveys was done through the Kobo Toolbox software[7]. Data privacy and confidentiality were respected: anonymity of surveyed participants was kept and the row data were not shared with students. The daily schedule on field included daily briefs and debriefs in which the team could share observations. The author was able to compile and add-up these observations to his personal field notes. These notes are used in this thesis for the presentation of empirical findings.

These field research results and observations are of great importance for this thesis. In fact, the interpretivist approach for qualitative case study encourages the researcher's immersion in empathizing situations through which he/she is able to narratively reconstruct actors' perceptions with credibility (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Beyond, it provides more authority and validity to the findings by (1) cross-validating empirical desk research, (2) assessing the magnitude of the crisis, thus providing tools for the interpretation of its potential implications on the Lebanese state and society, and (3) by linking empirical work with existing theories in the relevant literature. The latter is developed under the next section.

[5] Saint-Joseph University of Beirut (USJ) has strict ethical procedures that follow the highest European standards. Any field research or social work must be submitted in a written form to the university's ethical committee in compliance with the principles of consent, confidentiality and data privacy. The committee reviews the request and gives authorization only if these criteria are fulfilled. For more details about the procedure: https://www.usj.edu.lb/universite/ethique-proc.php.

[6] Akkar Governorate is composed of three distinct geographical regions. Each has its own socioeconomic specificities. These three areas are: the plain, the hilly middle region, and the highlands or *Jurd*. One village in each region was chosen for the field research.

[7] Kobo Toolbox is a free and open-source software for data collection and analysis. It is widely used by academic researchers and humanitarian organizations. For more information: https://www.kobotoolbox.org/

1.4.6. Linking Empirical Findings to Theories

Giving a theoretical framework to Syrian refugee migration by linking it to existing theories of migration is more than relevant. In this respect, empirical findings from both textual and field work sources are analyzed through the scope of the literature's migration and refugee theories. This analysis checks where Syrian refugees "fit" across these theories, and assesses their validity. The deducted results are nonetheless a "by-product" of this thesis. Interpretative case studies like our topic of interest use theoretical frameworks to deliver explanations for a particular case-study which help in return in refining the existing theories (Venesson, 2008).

1.4.7. Discourse Analysis

Measuring identity in a qualitative way can be implemented through the interpretation of the underlaying meanings that are hidden in discourses. This method is perfectly in line with interpretivism and constructivism (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). Furthermore, it can overcome the impossible mission of understanding an identity-related question, which would require reading thousands of documents, and conducting months of archival research and interviews (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). The approach considers that texts and discourses do not have inherent meaning without their contexts. Contexts provide an explanation for the meanings that are found in a specific text. Through interpretative explanation, researchers are able to define the meanings found in the analyzed discourses. For us, the interpretation of meanings found in Lebanon's official discourses - in the context of the repercussions of Syrian refugee influx, and understanding how the perceptions of the influential actors might be reflected in this discourse- leads us to assess identity alterations in the Lebanese state.

The discourse analysis is also complemented by some basic elements of content analysis methods. Content analysis is largely laying on a positivist approach (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). However, mixing it with discourse analysis is possible (della Porta & Keating, 2008). The two methods can be complementary to each other especially if combined in a single study (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). To do so without contradicting our interpretivist assumptions, this must respect the following principles: conduct an interactive back-and-forth analysis between text and emerging categories, always stick to the context, explain how the analyzed categories came up in a way that makes sense to the reader, and always take into account the author's role in respect of the provided explanation for meanings (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004).

Two corpuses of texts are chosen for the analysis: the ministerial statements delivered upon cabinet formation to the parliament before the vote of confidence, and the annual speech of Lebanon's President of the Republic during the United Nations General Assembly' Plenary Sessions. The first corpus is composed of 8 ministerial statements for the cabinets that were formed between 2005 and 2020. The second corpus includes 15 speeches covering the same timelapse. Knowing that the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis started after 2011, the timelapse is then able to provide a comparative dimension between texts that are older than 2011, and those which came after.

Justifying the choice of these two corpuses is extremely important. Choice can induce a selection bias. But it can be mitigated through a pertinent argumentation. We are trying to find and interpretate elements in the Lebanese state's discourse that might elucidate the impact of the Syrian refugee influx on its identity. For this, we need to assess if the discourse has effectively changed or not. This entails us in comparing the discourse delivered before the start of the refugee crisis with the discourse delivered after. Therefore, we had to identify corpuses that have some recurrent consistency. On the other hand, the choice must be representative of the state's high-level discourse. It has to take into account the internal mechanisms that are specific to the Lebanese *consociational* political system, in which competing positions and narratives of influential actors are integrated in the official state in a consensual way. Indeed, we must identify the official discourses that reflect consensus rather than the sole political stances of one of the actors who might use the platform of his official post for prevailing his own views. But even if not, a discourse is an "act of language" from the actor who has authority to deliver it (cf. Wæver, O. 1995, as cited in Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). Taken from this angle, the state' identity is defined by its leaders' declarations at a given time (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). The listed parameters of selection narrow down the candidacy to a few corpuses. A preliminary assessment led us to choose the two mentioned ones. The following paragraphs elaborate on each of the two.

The choice of the ministerial statements is straightforward. Since Taef, the executive power shifted from the president's prerogatives to the council of ministers. This was justified by the importance of collegial decision-making in which all religious communities have a say through consensus. In practice, all political forces representing their sects must be taking part in national-unity governments. Ministerial portfolios are distributed based on sectarian quotas. Therefore, they

represent all political actors whose perceptions and positions might influence the state's official discourse. The ministerial statements are meticulously prepared, in a way that takes into consideration the participants' diverging stances on general principles. For example, Hezbollah and its allies do not participate in governments unless the ministerial statement clearly validates the resistance and its weapons' legitimacy[8]. This imposes in a way Hezbollah's vision and identity on the Lebanese state's discourse. The same goes with all the other major components. Through the consensual positions of its influential parties, the ministerial statements are barometers of the state's official discourse towards the nation. Also, cabinets' change in Lebanon is relatively frequent. Thus, there are enough statements to be compared within quite short intervals.

Concerning the other chosen corpus, namely the presidential speeches at the United Nations General Assembly's Plenary sessions, it can be justified through four main arguments. First, Presidents are elected by the parliament upon a "package deal" that involves all the major political factions. In the last two decades, this was not possible without consensus. Second, concerning the state's image and symbolism, the president represents the republic. He is considered as the referee of the nation. This is especially true on an international level. Tinted by institutional protocols, his speeches are conveying this symbolism[9]. Third, the chosen speeches are held on a yearly basis. Their regularity allows temporal comparison. Fourth, the international nature of these speeches gives us the opportunity to assess the discourse of the state on the international level. In fact, identity discourses are "practices of legitimation" that are addressed to both domestic and international publics (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). Reflecting on the state's discourse delivered to the international community is then more than relevant. This choice complements the first corpus which has a more domestic vocation.

The discourse analysis is focusing on the following: it identifies and compares where in the text Syrian refugees are mentioned, it assesses if these mentions have negative or positive connotations, it interpretates the importance of terminologies such as "*nazih*", *displaced* in Arabic, or "*tawtin*", *naturalization* in Arabic, it tries to understand the fears expressed throughout the text, especially concerning the mention of an existential threat. All of these are done by taking into account the context. Afterwise, it catches the evolution in time of the topic's eminence from year to year. It

[8] see in this respect Aziz's analysis (2014).
[9] Their modalities and mechanisms are detailed in the thesis body, with the relevant references.

also tries to understand *why* these mentions and fears are expressed in the text. It links the parts that deal with Syrian refugees with the paragraphs that tackle the Palestinian refugees by comparing and pinpointing the differences. It tries to identify the conveyed message of the government as well as the conveyed message to the international community. Is there any difference? Then, the investigation searches through the entire text for elements that show links between the Syrian refugee crisis and the expressed identity of the state. Are identity elements evolving throughout time?

As already mentioned, the discourse analysis complements the interpretation with some tools from content analysis. These basic elements are: keywords' counting (*laji', nazih, tawtin*[10]), paragraphs' length compared to other paragraphs (for example, comparing paragraphs that talk about Syrian refugees with those dealing with Palestinian refugees), length comparison from year to year, before/after the crisis, place of paragraph in the text, place's evolution through time, and see if the paragraph is a bureaucratic copy from the previous text or not.

1.4.8. Process Tracing

Beyond understanding the simple causal mechanism, interpretivists try to catch the hidden motivations behind behaviors, actions and discourses (della Porta & Keating, 2008). In the scope of this thesis, understanding the Lebanese state's behaviors and policies towards Syrian refugees can provide a tangible explanation for the motives behind them. Motives can then be interpreted in terms of identity change. For this purpose, the thesis uses process tracing. This method can be fruitfully used in interpretivist research designs, especially in case studies (Venesson, 2008). Following the classification of Beach & Pedersen (2013), this thesis uses a case-centric explaining-the-outcome process tracing variant. This type of process tracing tries to explain a case-specific outcome by providing minimal yet sufficient explanations, without trying to test or to build theories (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). In this thesis, we give alternative explanations for the observed policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state concerning Syrian refugees and interpret them: through elimination, we only keep the most plausible one(s). This approach allows us to look for mechanisms in which links appear or not, and the structural context in which they happen (Venesson, 2008). These are done on the local, national and international levels.

[10] In Arabic, *laji'* means *refugee*, *nazih* means *displaced*, whereas *tawtin* means *naturalization*.

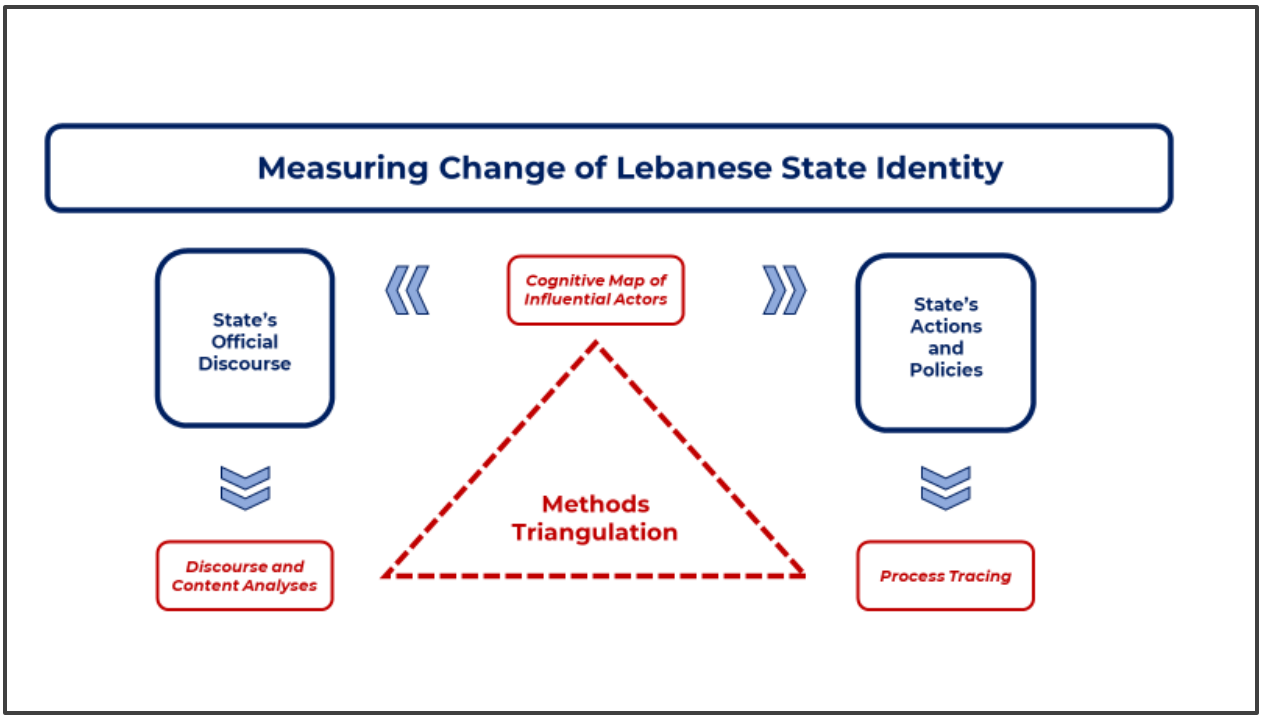

Figure 3. Methods Triangulation

1.5. Data Sources

In the previous sections we saw the importance of data triangulation. In compliance with this, the thesis implements a constant cross-checking between three main datasets. These are composed of the followings: key primary and secondary sources, and the empirical results from Akkar's field visit. Primary sources englobe Lebanese laws and decrees - such as the Lebanese Constitution, the Taef Agreement, the Lebanese Citizenship Law-, the yearly speeches of the Lebanese Presidents of the Republic at the United Nations General Assembly's Plenary Sessions from the UN archives and library (composed of 15 transcripts from the proceedings), as well as the compiled transcripts in Arabic language of the Government of Lebanon's Ministerial Statements upon the parliamentary vote of confidence (8 statements). Secondary sources include history books on Lebanon, scientific journal articles, newspapers and websites, reports, studies, UNHCR and other UN agencies' statistics, datasets, and reports in addition to official websites. The Akkar field research dataset is mainly based on surveys' results and interviews, but mostly on personal field notes and observations.

1.6. Timeline

The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon started after the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011. But since the aim is to track potential changes in the Lebanese state identity, the timeline goes back to previous years as well. This enables us to compare the state's discourse held before the crisis, with its discourse held after the crisis. The chosen timeframe goes from June 2005 until June 2020. Hence, the selected corpus of speeches and statements is comprised of the texts that fall under these temporal boundaries. On another hand, the field research conducted in Akkar has a punctual timeframe. Its findings reflect observations made during the month of January 2019.

1.7. Ethical Considerations

This thesis is based on solid ethical standards in relation with responsibility, integrity, incorruptibility, professionalism, respect, conflict of interest, prohibition of causing damage, and authenticity. The author acknowledges and adhere to the Corvinus University Code of Ethics[11]. The thesis commits to be in compliance with the essence of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on data privacy and security[12] when dealing with personal information. Finally, the empirical field research was conducted in compliance with the Saint Joseph University Ethical Committee procedures, which were detailed earlier.

1.8. Limitations

Undeniably, this research, as most researches, faces several limitations. First, identity is a very volatile concept which requires a lot of precision and rigor. The researcher's subjective interpretations may interfere, and we acknowledge that. In this respect, qualitative research is criticized as being less rigorous and scientifically valid than quantitative methods based on numbers (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Measuring a complex issue such as state identity change is quite challenging, yet highly interesting. Second, the choice of a particular dependent and independent variables highlights and stresses on a specific aspect of the causal link and mechanisms that we are trying to understand. This is mitigated through analyzing the topic through a holistic narrative that takes into consideration the context. Third, the choices of specific discourses, speeches and statements might be shedding light on the state's identity only partially. But the allocated time and resources cannot cover all the existing sources. However, we strongly believe that our choice for high-level content that are issued on a regular basis, such as the ministerial statements and the presidential speeches at the UN General Assembly, is sufficiently pertinent to account for the identity of the state through its discourses.

[11] The Corvinus University of Budapest Code of Ethics is accessible at: https://www.uni-corvinus.hu/contents/uploads/2021/09/EN_II.I.11_Etikai_Kodex_2011_december_19_ln.0b3.pdf

[12] GDPR principles and rules are accessible at: https://gdpr-info.eu/

Chapter 2: The Literature of Identity and State Identity

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is composed of two major sections. The first one presents and discusses the relevant scientific literature that deals with *identity*, its related theories and approaches, with a special focus on the constructivist perspective. While the second one defines *state identity* through both its domestic and international dimensions. Its domestic dimension is presented through the concepts of *national identity*, *nationalism* and *nation-building*. On the other hand, the international dimension is explained by how constructivist international relations theory understands state identity. In addition to that, the section tries to define and synthetize the concepts of *determinants* and *actors* of state identity, in parallel to the different mechanisms that lead to *identity change*. Afterwards, the second section investigates the relationship of *state identity* with *state security*, and analyses the role of immigration as a vector for its change.

2.2. Identity

« Pour le meilleur et pour le pire, nous sommes désormais entrés dans l'âge des identités. »

Jean-Claude Kaufmann, L'invention de soi : Une théorie de l'identité, 2004.

2.2.1. Identity Issues

Defining *identity* as a concept is still a widely debated question. Individuals, societies, decision-makers and even scientists from various disciplines tend to adopt different definitions. Additionally, there is a distinction made between individual identity and collective identity. If we refer to the basic understanding of the terminology, *identity* is defined either as "who someone is", or as "the qualities, beliefs, ect., that make a particular person or group different from others" (The Britannica Dictionary, 2022). This definition is quite vague. Fearon (1999) was already blaming, more than twenty years ago, the inadequacy of its dictionary definitions. He was also outraged how it was still not addressed correctly by social scientists although enjoying a growing attention (Fearon, 1999). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) went even further by declaring that social and human sciences have capitulated to the word *identity*. Côté (2009) was afraid that this nonchalance would result in the birth of another "Tower of Babel" in social sciences. Up to this point, it seems to be quite clear that working with *identity* and trying to define it can be very challenging.

Back to the dictionary definition, someone can be who he/she is, based on material features (physical, biometric traits or even identification documents), or on their immaterial characteristics (qualities, culture, opinions or beliefs). This raises another round of tricky questions: who determines these characteristics? Is it the subjects themselves or the others? Is there any interaction between the subject and the *other* for determining this identity? The notion of relativity seems to be an inherent component of the word itself. Indeed, the classical Latin root of *identity* comes from *idem*, meaning *the same* (Larousse, 2022). Similarity implies de facto a dimension of interaction with the other. This also takes us back to how we deal with reality: if reality is out there and waiting for us to discover it, identities are then existing by essence. If identities are relative to how individuals and societies make sense of them, they are then malleable constructions that are able to change through agency. This question constitutes a major issue and is far from being consensual in the literature.

Philosophy, psychology and social sciences are maybe the three disciplines that dealt the most with *identity*. The three are sometimes intertwined, and inspiring for each other. But each has its own approach. Psychology focuses more on individual identity and calls it personal identity (American Psychological Association, 2022). The discipline distinguishes between the "I" and the "me": the first refers to the self as a thinker and agent, while the second is what the "I" recognizes as being the self (Talaifar & Swann, 2018). The "me" is also broken down to a material, a social and a spiritual *self* (Talaifar & Swann, 2018). In short, psychology approaches social identity through the individual: social identity is a set of common features between the *self* and the group (Talaifar & Swann, 2018). Whereas social sciences have another approach: the stress is on collective identity through which individual identities and behaviors are defined (Burke, 2020), even when they deal with personal identity. For instance, in the so-called "Self-Studies" sub-field, if used alone, *identity* refers to social identity (Côté, 2009). But this superficial common ground does not mean consensus in social sciences. The next sub-section shows how, despite the complex cleavages, academics tried to structure *identity* into types and theories.

2.2.2. Identity in Social Sciences

Despite the common understanding presented earlier, the concept of identity does not have yet a unanimous definition in social sciences[13]. This is especially true for the past few decades, where the literature about definitions, categories, meaning, ethnic, national, religious, gender, class and other identities has significantly risen (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnson, & McDermott, 2009). In parallel, the number of publications that have *identity* as a keyword is growing exponentially (Côté, 2009). In this overwhelming amount of diverse literature, the concept of *identity* was used in various and confusing ways, sometimes being amalgamed with other concepts like culture or language (Côté, 2009). This is partly happening because of the multifaced nature of *identity* (Côté, 2009). Moreover, there is a tendency in the literature for identity to mean too much, very little, or nothing at all (Brubaker & Cooper, Beyond "Identity.", 2000). These issues made the task of unifying the common understanding of *identity* even harder. To counter these problems, some scholars tried to dissect identity into smaller definable concepts and to sort them into more precise types and categories. But these efforts are still insufficient in providing a single definition to the word *identity*.

The first significant analytical division comes along the differentiation between individual and collective identities. In this respect, Fearon (1999) and Côté (2009) for example suggested the use of *personal identity* and *social identity*. Along this first division, scholars worked on addressing each of these categories both separately and together, and sub-divided them further for a targeted analysis. Speaking about personal identity, academics often define it in simple words as how a person expresses who he/she is (Fearon, 1999). But the answer to this question can vary based on different contexts. Therefore, a person has multiple identities: he/she has as many identities as groups to which he/she belongs to (Burke P. J., 2006). This multiplicity automatically rises the importance of the place given by social sciences to the collective aspect of identity: personal identities are not dissociable from their social context. A person's identity is only relevant to a particular context. In another context, another identity of his/her own multiple identities would prevail. Others defined *identity* as a group of beliefs, attitudes and opinions regarding the *self* and the *other* (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). Fearon (1999) argues that *identity* can be simply replaced by *social category* in the majority of academic literature. But he adds that this does not

[13] In this respect, See (Kuo & Margalit, 2012). In this article, the authors account for the multiplicity of approaches in defining *identity*. As they say: the "examination of the literature reveals a plethora of definitions of identity".

take into account the inherent meanings that a person might give to his/her personal identity. These might be indeed too subjective for rational categorization. And identity is deeply subjective (Kaufmann, 2004). A social category is a group of people designated by a label given to them by themselves or by other people. Chandra and Laitin (2002) take this further: through a general classification scheme for identities, they state that categories, attributes, and dimensions are the three main components of identity. Categories refer to the primary "box" used to describe individual identity, whereas attributes define the expected qualities that are required from an individual in meeting the membership criteria of a social category. For their part, dimensions are the "range of categories that make up a typology" (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnson, & McDermott, 2009). If my category is to be Hungarian, then one of my attributes would be to speak Hungarian fluently. In this case, the category's dimension would be nationality. We can see here that attributes might be quite discussable. A particular attribute can be different for two individuals of a same social category. For the previous example, some Hungarians may consider that speaking Hungarian fluently is not a must: if it would be a must, then Ferenc Liszt[14] would not be considered as one of the greatest Hungarians. Therefore, these attributes are constantly negotiated at best, and contested at worse. But this takes us to discuss the layer of *social identity*. James Fearon (1999) argues that *social identities,* in the sense of social categories, are defined by implicit and explicit rules of membership, as well as by content. He defines *content* as being a set of characteristics (beliefs, desires, or physical attributes) or expected/obliged behaviors, such as roles for instance. Both rules of membership and content can be contested. This contestation is what political science calls "identity politics" (Fearon, 1999).

There are also many other analytical dimensions of social category that were addressed by the literature. Psychology strongly influenced these analyses, if not completely developed by it. As an example, we can cite the one that focuses on the relationship between groups. As Burke (2006) says, this can be illustrated through the mentality of "us versus them". It spots a crucial aspect of social identity: the important role of the different *other* compared to which a group strengthen its own identity. In other words, what makes a social group is relative to the differences that it has with other groups. The previously-mentioned *sameness* of the dictionary definition is then relative

[14] Liszt's mother tongue was German and his second language was French. It is generally admitted that he had little proficiency in Hungarian language. For more information on the debate around Liszt's national identity and his relation with languages see Joanne Cormac's account in her article "Liszt, Language and Identity" (2013).

to the differences that it has with the *other*. It can also be linked to the concept of in-group bias (Brown, 2000), according to which individuals of a specific group tend to think that their own group is superior and better than other groups. The study of these inter-group relations came along a multitude of theories, mostly in social psychology, such as Social Identity Theory. This theory was first developed by Henri Tajfel: according to him, large-scale social phenomena could not be sufficiently explained by neither individual personality, nor interpersonal relations alone (Burke P. J., 2006). From there, the discipline saw the birth of a multitude of other theories such as the self-categorization theory (according to which individuals categorize themselves fluidly by self-positioning in a group), or later, theories related to group norms and their impact on individual and social behavior (Burke P. J., 2006). But these fields are out of our scope of study.

Besides, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) tried to categorize *identity* by compiling a holistic inventory of its different uses in the literature. For the authors, *identity* is at the same time a category of practice, and a category of analysis: the first one refers to how people and society use it in their everyday life, while the second refer to how researcher use it in their analyses. Through this, they demonstrate the diversity of -sometimes contradictory- meanings given to *identity* in social sciences. They argue that most of these meanings can be divided along two types of understandings: a strong and a weak one (Brubaker & Cooper, Beyond "Identity.", 2000). Strong understandings of identity are the ones that consider it as a collective phenomenon, or as a fundamental condition of social being. These two presume that identity is universal, deep, basic or essential, unconscious (discoverable), and implies a certain homogeneity and boundedness in social groups. On the other hand, weak understandings of *identity* are the ones that define it as (1) an interactive process, or a product of social action, or (2) as an unstable, multiple, changing and fragmented product of multiple and competing discourses (Brubaker & Cooper, Beyond "Identity.", 2000). Lastly, *Identity* as a driver of social and political action (that is different from *interests*) is an additional use that is compatible with all the others.

Finally, French sociologist Jean-Claude Kaufmann linked the rising efforts for conceptualizing *identity* to the needs of our modern world (2004). In pre-modern traditional societies, *identity* was not a crucial topic to study or explain. Modernity made people lose their landmarks and search for deep and cohesive meanings. For Kaufmann, *identity* if not an existing entity. It is rather composed of a bunch of *identifiers* (Kaufmann, 2004). This must be understood in line with the already-

mentioned multiple and contextual aspects of *identity*. In each given context, one *identifier* of the person's multiple identities is prevailing. Furthermore, individuals and their identities must be separated from each other (Kaufmann, 2004). But his scope of interest is mostly micro-sociology that focuses on daily social interactions between individuals on a small scale.

The previous non-exhaustive brief overview leads us to three major conclusions: First, the definition of *identity* in social sciences is still very ambiguous and subject to various interpretations. Second, *identity* is described as multiple, subjective, contextual, and relative to the *other*. Third, scholars tried to compensate the absence of a common definition by elaborating categories for both personal and collective identities. But these categorization efforts left *identity* without a unified definition. In order to mitigate the gap and avoid misunderstanding, it seems to be important to quote here Fearon's definition of *identity* in which he summarizes its meaning as it is understood in both ordinary speech and most of academic writings. His definition goes then outside its owner's rationalist background. The definition is:

> (…) "identity" means either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) a socially distinguishing feature that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or, of course, both (a) and (b) at once). (Fearon, 1999, p.36).

Beyond being a simple category, identity accounts for what its owner perceives as making them different (from the *other*) or special. But this definition has several implications. It suggests an understanding of identity that is relative to its owner's views. In other words, identity is based on the constructed views that its owner gives to it. Hence, the concept seems to be undetachable from a constructivist approach. But this was not always the case. The following sub-sections give an account to the existing approaches.

2.2.3. Different Theoretical Approaches

We have seen that *identity* cannot be easily defined. Each scholar or sub-discipline has developed its own understanding of the word. Social scientists have worked on trying to dissect categories and types for identity, but these efforts revealed to be indissociable from basic theoretical assumptions. The subjective aspects of *identity* presuppose a clear standpoint on things like the nature of a social category: if this category is fixed or not through time, if malleable or not able to change, or if its initial presence is natural or not. Most of what was developed earlier reflects the

presence of some conflictual ontological assumptions at stake. In other words, the real question is if identities and social categories really exist naturally (thus transcendent and unable to change through time), or if they are socially constructed (thus malleable and evolving through time). Taken to the extremes, the first assumption refers to the essentialist vision, while the second refers to the constructivist one. In social sciences, it is common to understand group identities from either an essentialist or a constructivist perspective (Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010). But this division cannot be simply binary: neither of the two approaches can be understood as monolithic blocs (Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010). There are shades and nuances within both. Most of the modern literature on identity has been handled from a constructivist perspective, or at least, from perspectives that shares ontological similarities with it. But this was not always the case: in a recent past, identity was mostly handled from an essentialist perspective.

When it comes to essentialism, scholars usually divide it into three main types: artifact, innate and social essentialism (Mahoney, 2021). Artifact essentialism is relative to objects and their essential functions as determined by their nature. Innate essentialism is the one that determines categories that are beyond any human control, such as ethnicity, gender, race, or sexual orientation (Mahoney, 2021). For hardcore essentialists, these categories cannot be the fruit of constructions. The modern-times popular concept of races for example is based on the existence of races by essence, which is undeniably a false construction (Naomi Zack, 2003, as cited in Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010). Therefore, constructivism criticizes it and tries to eliminate it (Mahoney, 2021). In turn, social essentialism can be described as the process through which a self-organized distinct entity in the world becomes essential, out of some elements that it acquires through time (Mahoney, 2021). In other words, a social category that was forged through time and became existent, is de facto considered as essentially existing at the end of the journey.

On the other hand, constructivism rejects these assumptions. Its “extremist” understanding considers that everything out there is a social construct. Essentialism in social sciences has got a negative connotation, whereas constructivism is seen as liberating since it implies that identity is always able to change, under constant negotiation over its content (Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010). So, “bad” constructions can be reconstructed in a better way in the future. Hardline constructivists went sometimes so far that that they almost deprived social science

from its analytical means. This happened with defining *identity* for example, where many constructivists adopted a very soft understanding in order to avoid any accusation of essentialism in their interpretations (Brubaker & Cooper, Beyond "Identity.", 2000). This is the understanding that Brubaker and Cooper (2000) labeled as "cliché constructivism".

But a lot of essentialist reminiscences can still be found in the constructivist literature[15]. In this respect, constructivism sometimes engages in essentialism through the process of reification (Mahoney, 2021). In fact, this process is inherent to our human thinking and can barely be avoided. By categorizing or conceptualizing, we are "creating" real entities that we falsely take for granted for the sake of simplification. In other words, we can only understand a category as a cohesive *thing* even if we know that it is malleable and socially constructed (Mahoney, 2021). It is because of our human mind, which directly makes generalization -as well as normative judgments and emotions- when trying to deal with a category (Mahoney, 2021). This process is deeply essentialist. But as stated earlier, the gap between the two approaches is not Manichean. There are many shades and scales of essentialism and of constructivism alike. For some constructivists, there are some categories that might have identities that are very hard to change: these identities could be considered as essential (Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010). A good way to illustrate this is with gender and sex for example: unlike gender, for which almost every constructivist agrees that it is a social construct, the debate around sex is not consensual. Many acknowledge the essentialist nature of someone's biological sex, whereas a few might consider the "practice of grouping people according to their reproductive organs" as being a social construction in itself (Phillips, 2007, as cited in Berg-Sørensen, Holtug, & Lippert-Rasmussen, 2010, p.43).

These nuances are at the core of our discussion. While taking part of this never-ending debate might be out of the scope of the current research, it is important to give at least an account about our own understanding of the above-detailed review. It might be true that the natural world is ruled by an original essence, but any attempt of categorization, classification, conceptualization or theorization is impregnated by an anthropocentric view, which would ultimately "pollute" reality, even if minimally. In other words, the eventual essence of things is so complex that any human scientific analysis could not be made without the construction of explanations. This said, and based

[15] In anthropology for example, Fischer (1999) explains how despite becoming a "dirty word", essentialism has a latent presence, and scholars could not get rid of it completely when studying culture, ethnicity and identity.

on what was already presented in the various previous sub-sections, we consider that the constructivist framework seems to be the most adapted approach for studying *identity*.

2.2.4. Constructivism and Identity

Constructivism started to be crystalized as a separate school of thought in the 1980s. Nicholas Onuf is considered to be the first one to use it explicitly in the *World of Our Making* (Klotz & Lynch, 1999; Cho, 2012). It proposed an alternative way to address issues that were unable to be resolved by existing mainstream approaches, such as for instance realism or neoliberalism. In this respect, it contested their strict materialistic and individualistic assumptions (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). In other words, the starting-point for constructivist analysis leans on the assumption that considers the social world as constituted of shared beliefs rather than of its physical units (Jackson, 2006). This alternative and innovative approach supposed that the social world is defined by what people make out of it. The various interactions of the society's actors create a structure that regulates society itself. In fact, constructivism considers that structure and agency are constantly influencing each other (Theys, 2017). Structure here is defined as the social structure created by institutions, formal or informal agreements, as well as thoughts and actions of social agents, which are in turn bent by the structure, in a constant and iterative way (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). This concept was borrowed from the structuration theories of Anthony Giddens (1984), who took Pierre Bourdieu's structuralism further, and developed a more dynamic and interactive interpretation of the relationship between *structure* and *agency*. In addition to the structure and agency mutual influence, constructivists stress on some other important concepts, with a central attention given to social practices. These concepts are the *situatedness* and the *embeddedness* in *contexts* of the given practices (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). In other words, social practices must be analyzed through the scope of their place, and these places' level of rooting within their particular historical, economic, political or geographic contexts, which can in turn give sense to these practices (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). The important role given to contexts reflects a Weberian influence on constructivist analysis (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). The constructivist approach was gradually adopted by a multitude of disciplines and sub-fields such as international relations, political science, sociology, social anthropology, ethnic politics, identity politics, nationalism studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, and many others. Each of these disciplines adapted constructivism to its own research field.

Theory of international relations focused on the relationship between *context*, *identity* and *interests*, as well as on social *norms* and *behaviors* of agents, which both emanate from their identity (Theys, 2017). Many scholars of international relations dealt with *identity*, *state identity*, its construction, and its relationship with other concepts such as *state security* for example. The most prominent scholars in these topics are Ted Hopf, Alexander Wendt, Peter Katzenstein, Friedrich Kratochwil, Martha Finnemore, Kathryn Sikkink, Jeffrey Checkel and Michael Barnett among others. In this respect, constructivist scholars of international relations defined the structure as the international system made up from the combination of its material elements and thoughts alike (Theys, 2017). We cannot but mention Alexander Wendt's already notorious statement that illustrate the most the international relations' constructivist approach. For the scholar, 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons (Wendt, 1995). The perceived threat is constructed on the system of values that makes the United States think that North Korea is more dangerous for its security than Great Britain. This reality is not built purely on facts and numbers (both have nuclear weapons, and 500 being way greater than 5), but also on thoughts and ideas (unlike North Korea, Great Britain share common liberal democratic values with the United States). This reasoning underlines the importance of context, without which, the causes of the problem cannot be understood: in other words, the existence and number of nuclear weapons is not enough for the analysis. In order to interpretate the complex conflictual and diplomatic relations between states, the researcher must debunk the motives and interests that are inherently part of these states' own identities. Also, the balance of power between these states is not a static reality. It is constantly evolving and under construction, through the novel inputs of actors' ideas and thoughts (Theys, 2017). The same logic can be projected on the domestic national level as well.

As it was hinted in the last paragraph, constructivist theorists of international relations emphasize also on the role of identities and interests. In this respect, actors have several identities that are socially constructed through continuous interaction with other actors. This rejoins the idea of multiple identities. Actors' interests are then the reflection of their own identity in a particular context. In the same logic, the interests of a state are determined by its identity (cf. Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). For example, a small state's interest can be based on its "survival mode", while a great power could have hegemonic interests (Theys, 2017). In this case, the identities of states (small state/strong state) are the main determinants of their interests. These interests can then

be translated into actions for the sake of implementing their respective interests. But these identity-based categorizations (small or strong state) are not given by essence. They reflect on the identities that these states constructed for themselves and their prevailing aspects that they wish to vehicle towards the others. Their actions are then considered as reflecting on specific elements of this identity.

Another important key concept in constructivism is the importance given to both social norms and behaviors. As we saw it earlier, identity determines interests which in turn determine actions. Rules and norms guide together the actors' behaviors (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). Furthermore, a state's action cannot contradict its own constructed identity. If so, this identity will have to change and be reconstructed in line with its actions (Theys, 2017). Change can happen through challenging or negotiation engaged by key influential actors within the state for instance. These show the important place given to norms in the constructivist perspective. Katzenstein (1996) differentiates between *thick* and *thin* norms, and defines these norms as a sort of guidelines that determine the appropriate behavior that actors should engage in order to comply with their given identity (cf. Theys, 2017; Alexandrov, 2003). Actors believe that a particular behavior is appropriate for a particular norm that reflects on their identity. This mechanism is conceptualized under the name of *appropriation* (March & Olsen, 1998). Other scholars took Katzenstein's division of norms further by elaborating a typology for a better understanding. The norms are classified into three main types: regulative norms, constitutive norms and prescriptive norms. Regulative norms (Katzenstein's thin norms) are those that order and frame the behavior of actors; constitutive norms (Katzenstein's thick norms) are those that create new actors, interests or even new categories of action; and finally, prescriptive norms lay down some other norms. Also, there are no bad norms for those who create or promote them (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Another interesting dimension lays in the lifecycle of norms: a new norm must be first adopted and internalized within the practices of a critical number of actors, then it becomes an expected behavior by the majority, and finally it gets accepted as such (Theys, 2017). Norms define then the nature of interests, and change would only happen when actors, by their practice, would alter the existing norms (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). Other than norms, constructivists stress on the actors' intentions laying behind a given behavior. They interpretate the social significance of those intentions that drive behaviors (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). Contrary to positivists who need to catch material evidences,

constructivists allow themselves to freely interpretate hidden intentions that lay in the very thoughts of actors in order to explain behaviors.

But beyond structure, identities, interests, intentions, norms, behaviors and the complex relationship between them, some constructivists found that these are not enough to explain all the international social system. To mitigate what they considered as a lack, some scholars adopted the so-called "practice turn", which takes into consideration Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. In this respect, some of the behaviors in international relations must be understood as based on both the conscious or unconscious habits of actors, as well as the practice-learning engaged by other actors regarding these same existing and evolving habits. While this perspective might be seen as a middle ground between many approaches (Wille, 2018), constructivists believe that the social structure is made up of group practices in an intersubjective way: this is completely in opposition with its rigid positivist understanding (Klotz & Lynch, 1999).

This preliminary presentation makes us realize that there is a notable diversity within constructivism itself. In fact, constructivism has many types. Each one has a different standpoint on the nature of *identity*. A simple division can be made between conventional and critical constructivists (Theys, 2017). Conventional constructivism, also referred to as the mainstream constructivism, considers *identity* as relatively stable, although permeable to change (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). It focalizes the analysis on the central role of thoughts and norms. On the other hand, critical constructivism, along with postmodernism and feminism, perceives *identity* as the result of continuous construction and reconstruction (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). It sees *identity* as a process within time and tries to avoid any reification. Others divided constructivist approaches along much specific lines. For example, we can find in some literature the mention of structural constructivists (Wendt, Katzenstein and Onuf) whom, beyond mainstream constructivists, have focused on the structure in which identity, norms and behaviors are evolving (Das, 2009). Yet, Macleod, Masson, & Morin (2004) consider mainstream constructivists as "convinced structuralists". All these nuances show us once again the existence of complex categories, even within constructivism. Hence, it let us realize that even within constructivism, *identity* is perceived differently and has many shades.

As a conclusion, we can sense how constructivism gives a very important role for *identity*. In this logic, actors create and move the/in their social structure, according to their understanding of their

own constructed identities. Their interests and norms determine their actions, which are in turn based on their identity. Actors define who they are and what they want relatively to their social context (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). The initial review developed above pushes us to find out more in details how constructivists defined and conceptualized the state's identity on both domestic and international levels. The following sub-sections tackle this specific question.

2.2.5. Conclusion

The previous section informs us about how *identity* failed to be addressed correctly by the literature. This is quite surprising considering the importance of this concept. *Identity* is a vague and subjective notion. The various theoretical approaches, the debate between essentialism and constructivism, and sometimes the various nuances within each of these camps, can be partly held responsible for this gap. As for its usage, we have learned that *identity* is most commonly referred to as a social category, or as a set of distinguishing attributes and expected behaviors that are perceived as a pride by its holders. Finally, through the prism of constructivism – which remains the best approach for studying it- *identity* is socially constructed and vary over time. Moreover, it is a product of thinking, discourse and actions (Fearon, 1999). After this thorough review, the next section focuses on defining and understanding *state identity* as a concept, through its various facets.

2.3. State Identity

2.3.1. Introduction: Pluralistic levels of State Identity

Understanding state identity and its formation remains a crucial point that is at the core of this thesis. By consulting the relevant literature, the reader can find a multitude of publications that addressed this particular question. Constructivism has indeed provided some interesting research on the constitution of state identity (Hurd, 2008). Some of its theories were already developed in the previous section. Yet, state identity is most of the time studied on two separate levels, namely the domestic level and the international level. The first one is most commonly addressed by political scientists and historicist sociologists, while the second one remains in the realm of international relations' theorists. But the separation between domestic and international levels of analysis is not that obvious. In this respect, the international dimension of state identity cannot be understood without its domestic dynamics and vice versa. While sometimes overlapping each other, the division is quite understandable since political science and sociology are interested in

the social contract (and its institutionalized concretization: the state); whereas theorists of international relations are focalized on explaining the complex inter-state relations and dynamics.

The analysis of state identity on a domestic level was approached through the concepts of nation, nationalism, nation-building, and national identity. In this respect, what we are referring to here as *state identity*, is frequently named *national identity*. But why do we have two different terms for the same concept? One answer might be that these two concepts are frequently mixed-up and used interchangeably (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). This said, providing a definition for *state identity* seems to be inevitable. Since the understandings differ through disciplines and levels of analysis, the following sub-sections are tackling the question of state identity along these lines.

2.3.2. The Domestic Dimension of State Identity: National Identity and Nation-Building

In political science and sociology, through identity politics and nationalism studies sub-disciplines for example, *state identity* is generally analyzed through *national identity*. The domestic dimension of their analyses makes them focusing more on the social mechanisms that forge national identity, which is then reflected on and adopted by the state itself. We can then sense a clear nuance between *national identity* and *state identity*: national identity is the identity of a nation, but not every nation has a state for its own. Furthermore, some states are composed of more than one nation or ethnicity, and some nations are dispersed across more than one state. This heterogeneity was pointed out by the critical review of Walker Connor (1972) who argued that only a small minority of states are ethnically homogenous. But how to define a nation? And what defines the mechanisms that help in creating and consolidating a nation? How are these reflected on the state identity at the end? Before answering these questions through a detailed review, we should first make an account of the various approaches that tried to address the topic.

As we might imagine, the above-listed questions led to interminable debates between scholars who could not agree on the nature of these social mechanisms. Once again, the main divergences are articulated around the essentialist/constructivist fracture. In nationalism studies, those who prone an essentialist approach towards the concept of nation and its formation are called the *primordialists* (Walicki, 1998). They presuppose that a nation is based on the preexisting pre-modern, and vernacular ethnicity that is built on kinship, traditions, symbols and culture. Nations exist independently of nationalist movements or states that adopt it. On the other hand, constructivists stress on the modern origins of *national identity*. This is why they are frequently

called *modernists* as well. The three most prominent thinkers and philosophers who are considered by scholars to be the reference in this respect are Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm (1983). They believe that national identity was constructed to address the tensions that emanated from the rupture of traditional social ties, which came as a consequence of modernism and industrialization. For Gellner, it is nationalism that creates the nation, not the other way around (Walicki, 1998). The existence of a common identity is crucial for bonding a social group together. In this sense, national identity came as the social cement of modern societies, by replacing the pre-modern traditional identities. Yet, in traditional societies, identity was based on direct interpersonal and family relations. This could not be maintained in modern societies with a booming demography, urbanization and mobility. It implied the creation of a broad and virtual identity that could bound and unify all segments of a society living in a given state. This is exactly what Benedict Anderson (1983) conceptualized as *imagined communities*. Members of a society feel as belonging to the same community without having to know each other, hence communities are imagined. The primary bond that links members of a society through the person of the prince is replaced by the abstract concept of *nation* (Thiesse, 1999). In this constructivist understanding of *national identity*, the state seems to have a central and undeniable role in building this unifying identity. Indeed, the state is seen as a powerful *identifier* (Brubaker & Cooper, Beyond "Identity.", 2000). Far from holding monopoly on it, the state possesses enough resources to impose its classifications and categories (of public servants for instance) on its society. Therefore, assuming that a state could impose a unifying national identity seems completely pertinent. This can also partially explain the confusion made between *national identity* and *state identity*. After this brief presentation, the following paragraphs go into the nuances and details of *national identity* by presenting respectively the concepts of *nation*, *nationalism, national identity formation* and *nation-building*.

Nation

In the popular understanding, *nation* usually refers to a collective social identity based on the common belonging to a group that shares common beliefs, history, culture, and sometimes territory and language. It is occasionally mixed up with *state* or *country,* as understood in *United Nations, international relations,* or *League of Nations* for example (cf. Connor, 1972). One can take a look at its dictionary definition to see the diversity of meanings given to this word, which diverges on

small nuances that could lead to confusion[16]. Decision-makers, political actors and thinkers used *nation* through modern history in various forms. Their conflictual views and understandings influenced the identity construction of modern states, especially in Europe and the West. An interesting summary of these different interpretations is delivered through the analysis of the discursive construction of collective identity given by Patrick Sériot (1997). The author stresses on the difficult task that modern scholars have in overcoming historical and ideological weights when trying to define terms like *nation*. The fact is that *nation* was used "naturally", without questioning the different connotations that it could be impregnated with, relatively to the background of its user. In this respect, the European understanding of *nation* seems to have had two major different connotations throughout history: a Western European one labelled as *Demos*, and an Eastern European one labelled as *Ethnos* (Sériot, 1997). The first one is understood as the state-driven political project in which the nation takes a social sense. The second one considers the nation as the romanticized community of language and culture, which has an eternal existence. *Nation*-as-*Demos* is the French republican *Jacobine* nuance in which the language is just a tool for the elites in vehiculating their ideas. In contrast, *nation*-as-*Ethnos* is mostly defined by a unique language that constitutes the basic cement of its people (Sériot, 1997). It takes it roots in the German romanticism and was a key driver of the German national construction and unification during the nineteenth century. We can sense here the premises of the essentialist/constructivist debate. Furthermore, it leads us to comprehend more the different historical developments of nationalisms through Europe, which Gellner (1983) divided between *republican/civic nationalism* and *ethnic/blood nationalism*. Accordingly, *blood nationalism* is based on the unity of the *volk* that has an essential and rural organic system conceptualized as *kultur* (Sériot, 1997). It does not need a state for its existence, but has to struggle for establishing a unifying state based on the *jus sanguinis*. Others argued that *civic nationalism* needs state institutions to thrive, while *ethnic nationalism* appears during institutional vacuum, like it happened in post-soviet Europe (Snyder, 1993). These opposed visions of *nation* are very important in analyzing how societies perceived and constructed their national identities throughout modern history. It shows how each social

[16] See for example the Cambridge Dictionary's definition according to which the nation is either (1) "a country, especially when thought of as a large group of people living in one area with their own government, language, traditions, etc.", or (2) "a large group of people of the same race who share the same language, traditions, and history, but who might not all live in one area", or (3) "a country, esp. when thought of as a large group of people living in one area with their own government, language, and traditions", or (4) "an American Indian group of the USA", and (5) "a country, especially when considered as a society with its own government, economy, etc." (2022).

group, state or nationalist movement had a different understanding of its imagined nationhood. Also, the different historical dynamics of their respective national constructions cannot be interpretated separately from the above-presented types of their imagined nation. Their reminiscences can still be found in the current identity discourses around the globe. They continue to influence and shape the destinies of many societies. For example, *nation* as *Demos* is a key component of multiculturalism and integration policies, while *nation* as *Ethnos* shaped Zionism and its various implications on the Israeli national construction[17].

On the academic level, the essentialist meaning of *nation* faded away at the expense of constructivism, which conceived it as an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983), based on an *invented tradition* (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). In this case, individuals become members of the nation through practices, beliefs and/or inheritable attributes (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Moreover, nations are constantly fluctuating and contingent, as they are "illusory or spurious communities" (Brubaker, as cited in Walicki, 1998). Consequently, *nations* are just the reflections of the identarian will of the given social groups or communities at a given historical moment. But this "collective creation" presupposes the existence of a preliminary common consciousness. Indeed, in order to be created and constructed, a nation must emanate from a cognitive will. This will cannot be formed without a conscious awareness of belonging to a particular imagined community. Therefore, national consciousness is crucial for understanding how nations are constructed. As Gellner says, two persons become part of a same nation only if they recognize themselves as adhering to one unique nation. These allegations were refuted by *primordialists* such as Anthony Smith (1986) for instance, who insisted on the ethnic origins of nations, which preexisted modern times in some embryonic forms.

Finally, it is important to underline the Eurocentric and Western aspect of this review around the concept of *nation*. In this respect, the specificity of the nation's Western understanding lays in its finality: the nation's final goal, whether naturally existing or imagined and constructed, is the constitution of a territorial state (Al-Barghouti, 2008). This is contrary to the Arab-Islamic understanding of *nation* for example. There, *nation* is most frequently translated to *Umma*: *United*

[17] Shlomo Sand (2010) holds a critical review about the Zionist construction of the Jewish nationhood which ultimately led to the creation of the state of Israel. He claims that the initial thoughts of this intellectual movement came from Central and Eastern Europe as a reaction, and in the same logic of Gellner's exclusivist "blood nationalism" which has an essentialist/primordialist understanding of the concept of *nation*.

Nations is *Al Umam*[18] *Al Muttahida* for example. This translation makes it closer to the concept of *state*, *Dawla* in Arabic. Furthermore, *nationalism* is translated to *Qawmiyya*, from *Qawm*: a group of people -sometimes with a common ancestry- (Almaany, 2022). Nevertheless, the latter is barely used for designating *nation*. Tamim Al-Barghouti (2008) explores these differences and explains the influence of Islam on the concept of *Umma*. In this respect, while a state can make a nation, a *Dawla* cannot make an *Umma* (p.64). He also criticizes that translating *nation* to *Umma* is extremely biased and based on colonialist influences. It distorts, mutes and subdues genuine meanings and conceptual richness. In short, in contrast with the Western concept of *nation*, the primordial understanding of *Umma* is non-territorial and non-racial (Al-Barghouti, 2008), since it is influenced by its Islamic definition that has a universalist vocation.

Nationalism

In its Western understanding, *nationalism* can be maybe best defined as the political movement that seeks the goal of establishing a state out of the *imagined* nation (cf. Gellner, 1983). If this goal is reached (in terms of establishing the aspired nation-state), *nationalism* refers to a movement that promotes the interests of the nation (Smith, 2010). Actors who want to pursue the nationalizing process do it through mechanisms that are called *nationalism*. At the opposite of nations (which are constructed), nationalism is real, and it is not a product or a function of nations (Walicki, 1998). Despite that, nationalism is a passionate sentiment that is far from being rational (Connor, 1994). Historically, nationalist movements were the ones who wished to established a nation. Therefore, *nationalism* is the political struggle that urged, through modern history, the establishment and self-determination for what nationalists perceived as the nation to which they belonged to, irrespectively of their understanding of nationhood. As for *nation*, *nationalism* is also categorized by authors along the conservative/radical, Eastern/Western or civic/ethnic lines (Breuilly, 1999). The study of *nationalism* evolved in recent decades in political science towards a sub-field of its own (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Yet, some of its most foundational knowledge came from sociology, which focused on comparative case-studies (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). For instance, sociologist Roger Brubaker wrote about such particular cases as nationalist politics in Transylvania (cf. Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006). With the constructivist turn in comparative

[18] *Umam* in Arabic is the plural form of *Umma*. In Arabic, *Umma* has several meanings (Halliday, 2002). It takes it roots from Islam where it takes the generic sense of community of believers (Larousse, 2022). Umma also refers more generally to nation, like in the *Umma al 'Arabiyya*, literally the Arab nation.

politics, *nationalism* is viewed by scholars as emerging from contextual circumstances, rather than what was believed before as historically inevitable (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). So, nationalism is viewed as the fruit of the novel political context and structure that emerged since the industrialization. But Elie Kedourie[19] criticized this linear and reductionist view of *nationalism* by arguing that it spreads across the world in an indiscernible pattern (Kramer, n.d.). In this sense, the idea of having an identifiable social pre-condition that would inhibit a strong nationalist movement is seen as being not very pertinent (Breuilly, 1999). More recently, nationalism studies are thriving and started to move out from their Eurocentric bias (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). This field became so vast that presenting and reviewing all of its trends would be out of the scope of the current thesis[20]. However, some aspects of Arab nationalism are developed later in the next chapter.

National Identity

We have seen before how *national identity* and *state identity* are subject to confusion and often interchanged (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). This is particularly true when there is an intersection between *nation* and *state*, as it is the case in Western nation-states for instance. When this is the case, international relations scholars differentiate between domestic and foreign *national identity*. Domestic national identity can be defined simplistically as the cohesion and fidelity towards the nation-state (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). Cohesion and fidelity are the expression of the individual sense of belonging of all members of the state's society. In this respect, *national identity* is based on subconscious and irrational emotions that make individuals perceive the nation as the "extended family" to which they all belong (Connor, 1994). But *national identity* can also be adopted by social groups who are not constituted within a state. The previous paragraphs showed how nations are constructed irrespectively if constituted within a state or not. Therefore, in the same logic, *national identity* is also constructed (Thiesse, 1999). In other words, *national identity* is the shared constructed identity of a group who believes of belonging to a certain constructed nation. Therefore, it is contingent, flexible and subject to continuous change through time and contexts (Grotenhuis, 2016). Beyond this definition, what is really interesting for us is to understand how national identities are constructed and able to change. What comes out first from

[19] Elie Kedourie is also a notable scholar of *nationalism*, especially concerning the Arab world. He reconceptualized self-determination as being a *principle of disorder* (Kedourie, 1960) that cannot be reified and understood as a unique terminology across all countries and regions.

[20] Mylonas and Tudor (2021) compiled an extensive review of nationalism studies in which they list, present and confront all its different theories and approaches.

the literature in this respect is that national identities are constructed, changed and conveyed through discourse (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999; Sériot, 1997). They are the product of discourse which are mainly expressed in the national culture's narratives (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999). National identity stresses on the role of the discursive construction of meaning (Todd, 2018). Moreover, discourse uses names as conceptual categories which are given by the social group itself or by the others (Sériot, 1997). In this sense, national identity is defined by how it gives sense to names in the discourse. Lebanese, Arabs, Hungary or Europe take the sense of what the discourse gives to them. This preliminary assessment of national identity construction and change shows the need of digging further into its many mechanisms. The next paragraph is consecrated to this task through the presentation of the nation-building process.

National Identity Formation: Nation-Building

National identity formation and construction is conceptualized in the literature of -mainly-historicist political scientists as the *nation-building* process. The theory of nation-building aims first and foremost to explain the national integration and the nationhood's crystallization processes undertaken within modern states (mainly nation-states). The modern aspect of this process, as emerging in industrialized states, rejoins Gellner's previously-mentioned views. For Grotenhuis (2016) *nation-building* is the process by which people converge towards a common identity in language, culture, social and political systems. This is done through celebrating common heroes, or by visiting the same historic places, and where a dominant religion is viewed as a central backbone of the nation (Grotenhuis, 2016). Nations are then built upon common unifying symbols and practices which are interiorized by members of the society through a long process of socialization. *Nation-building* is therefore qualified as an exercise of planning on a large scale, rather than a simple social evolution process (Weede, 2008). But once again, this is a poor understanding of *nation-building* since it focuses mostly on Europe and the West. Stein Rokkan (1999) theorized *nation-building* through a historical process of four phases: (1) social, economic and cultural unification of elites under common goals and values, (2) adherence of the masses into this unification through the army or public schools for instance, (3) the proactive engagement of these masses in the participation within the established political system, and (4) the unifying expansion of the state's administrative apparatus (Rokkan, 1999). Throughout these phases, the elites' visions, norms and narratives are vehiculated towards the entire society, and are ultimately

institutionalized and officialized within the state. But this theory is also quite Eurocentric. Walter Connor (1972) argued that the general historic trend was rather of *nation-destroying* than *nation-building*. According to his understanding, nations are mainly built by demolishing other existing nations or ethnic specificities for the sake of the "chosen" dominant nation of the state, rather than the creation of a unique nation that is recognized as such and built by the state's apparatus. In fact, his analysis makes us acknowledge once again the risks related to the terminological confusion around the concept of *nation* since it sometimes refers to its definition as a state rather than a social group (Connor, 1972). But *state* and *nation* cannot be amalgamed when trying to define *nation-building*. Indeed, *nation-building* is very different from *state-building*. The two concepts are far from being synonyms, but the blurry confusion between them was sometimes left unaddressed (Clausen, 2016). In fact, *state-building* refers mostly to the process of strengthening, creating or recreating (after a conflict for instance) the state's structures of governance (Clausen, 2016), such as its various institutions for example. It is thus defined as a conscious effort of generating tools for power and control (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2010). This process can be initiated domestically or through foreign intervention, or done in a complex mixture of both (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2010). It can be executed top-down or bottom-up from outside the state's structures (Clausen, 2016). Hence, *nation-building* might be perceived as a potential side-effect or byproduct of the state-building process (Ignatieff, 2003). *State-building* is also different from *state-formation* in the sense that the latter refers to the long historical and unconscious process of conflicts and compromises between agents of power (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2010). Another important element of *nation-building* is that it goes in pair with the concept of *integration*. Scholars such as Karl Deutsch considered that *nation-building* and *integration* are two aspects of the same process in which disparate populations are pushed to abandon their local particularisms by forging a unified *national identity* of the state (Kolsto, 2000). This rejoins the classical liberal concept of the state's socializing role of *fusion* within the "cauldron of the state" (Kolsto, 2000). But here again, Connor showed the limits of such mechanisms. In fact, modern communication and transportation rise awareness of identarian particularisms at the detriment of the common national identity (Kolsto, 2000). Actually, ethnic diversity is a key and an understudied element of *nation-building*, especially in non-Western countries. In other words, ethnic diversity undermines the assimilative effects of *integration* (Connor, 1972). Therefore, Connor (1972) criticized theories of integration which, he considered, were characterized by an unquestioned optimism. Arendt Lijphart took the

issue further to explain the rising hostility between groups of what he calls "plural societies", where modernity emphasizes the differences between diverse social and ethnic groups within a state rather than unifying them (Kolsto, 2000). The assimilative force of *integration* is then questionable in front of the resistance encountered within plural societies. This can be particularly true in fragile states, where nation-building is the object of dissimilar mechanisms (Grotenhuis, 2016). Gellner (1983) conceptualized this resistance and named it "entropy resistance" without restraining it to plural societies. This resistance is seen by him as a major obstacle for successful assimilation. It can be even helpful in explaining the rise of local identities and velleities for regional autonomy across Europe itself for instance. Concerning non-Western states, nation-building theorists started to examine them in the wake of the decolonization. They identified many issues in this respect. Since *state* could mean "very many different things in different settings" (Kolsto, 2000), the applied conditions on Western nation-states' nation-building projects could not be extrapolated on the newly independent non-Western states. One of the main conditions that differ here is the time factor: what took several centuries in the West, is now processed within a few decades in the new states, augmenting the end results' contingency (Kolsto, 2000). Therefore, these new non-Western states were considered by some as being nation-states in the making at best, or as being unsuccessful nation-building projects, which would ultimately never succeed, at worst (Kolsto, 2000). A similar reasoning was applied later on Eastern European states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is interesting to mention here Brubaker's concept of *nationalizing states* that could better define some of the Central and Eastern European states such as Hungary or Romania, rather than the *national states* category (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006). These states try to implement nationalizing policies and practices to all segments and ethnicities that live on its soil. In other words, they are ethnically heterogeneous but act as nation-states through what can be called the "state-bearing nation" (Kolsto, 2000). In these states, the dominant elites impose and promote "their own nation" on the society. According to Brubaker (1996), there are three different models that were adopted by nationalizing states. The first one is the civic state that is focalized on the citizen, irrespectively of his/her ethnicity. The second one is the binational or multinational state which places the ethnonational groups as the constituent units of the polity (Brubaker, 1996). While the third one is a hybrid mixture of both: the state is national but guarantees minority rights for ethnic minorities (Brubaker, 1996). But others argue that the so-called *nationalizing* process is not solely adopted in this part of the world. Indeed, the nation-building process can be perceived

as a never-ending task that needs to be constantly updated and readapted, even in the old nations of the West. Taken from this perspective, nation-building can better be defined by the concept of *nation-maintenance* (Kolsto, 2000), which takes into account the infinite duration of such a process. More recently, Andreas Wimmer (2018) tried to provide a systemic explanation for the reasons why nation-building succeeds in countries and fails in others. In a global comparative approach, he explains that the success is often linked to the degree of integration, equality and political alliances of and between the state's constitutive ethnic groups, along some exogenous factors such as topography or population density. For instance, in a state that has abrupt topography with difficultly-accessible mountains, peasants in the past could avoid national integration by escaping to these mountains.

But there is one remaining question: who is the nation-builder? Is it the state, the society, both? Who within the state? To answer these questions, we have to distinguish first between *elite nationalism* and *mass nationalism* (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). The former refers to the nationalist movements and thoughts that are created and conceptualized by the state's elites, while the latter refers to the nationalist sentiments and velleities that emanate from the people on a lower level. Some scholars argued that *nation-building* is achieved through continuous negotiation between the state's elites and the masses who have a popular understanding of the concept of *nation* (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006). This approach was adopted by *nationalism-as-practice* scholarship (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). It presumes that the tension between, on one hand, the elites' created and proposed understanding of the nation and, on another hand, the nonstate actors, is the one that structures the entire nation-building process. In this sense, elites do not have an exclusive control over the national narrative (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Therefore, nations are interactively built from both above (top-down) and from below (bottom-up).

The previous paragraphs give a clearer definition for the domestic dimension of *state identity* as well as an explanation of the various mechanisms that lead to its creation, formation and alteration locally through *nationalism*, *national identity* and *nation-building*. But as stated earlier, *state identity* has an international dimension that was mostly analyzed by international relations' scholarship. The following sub-section tries to present a concise summary of this literature.

2.3.3. The International Dimension of State Identity

Parallel to its domestic determinants and dynamics, *state identity* is also evolving and shaped on the international scene. In addition to the state itself, actors of *state identity* on the international level are other states, international organizations as well as various nonstate actors. Theory of international relations started to deal quite early with these questions. This was especially the case with constructivists, particularly Wendt and Katzenstein (Alexandrov, 2003), who found a particular interest in adding *state identity* as a crucial component for their various theoretical interpretations. Some of their main assumptions were already presented in the previous sub-sections of this chapter. In this respect, and alike realists and liberals, constructivists consider that states pursue their own interests. But they strongly disagree with them on what constitute the sources of these interests. For them, interests are also constructed by agents or actors within the state. Furthermore, the state's behaviors cannot be understood apart from the process of state construction (Hurd, 2008). In fact, constructivists stress on the important role of norms in determining the behavior of a state, beyond only a simplistic costs-and-benefits equation (Hurd, 2008; Goldgeier & Tetlock, 2008). To be more specific, norms are seen as a product that is continuously constructed by various nation-building actors. Therefore, moral norms and ethics do matter. State identity cannot be defined and analyzed without taking into account these principles. Yet, the strict division between international and domestic dimensions of state identity is not that obvious. Even constructivists do not agree on how much weight must be given for each dimension. Wendt for example focuses on the international dimension (Alexandrov, 2003). But beyond this internal debate, constructivists do emphasize unanimously on the important role of identity and culture, which are concretized through the shared social norms among states (Jackson, 2006). In this respect, Wendt sees *state identity* as the frame in which the state's role is defined within the interstate culture (Alexandrov, 2003). The role of a state can be best described as the concrete expected behavioral pattern of a state by itself or others, according to its defined identity. For a better picture of the international dimension of state identity, the following paragraph reviews how state identity is conceptualized in international relations.

State Identity in International Relations

The concept of *state identity* in international relations is subject of an internal debate between *conventional* constructivists and *critical* constructivists. *State identity* is generally categorized by

constructivists as being an element of culture, which in turn is seen as the various set of beliefs that are socially shared by states (Alexandrov, 2003). For *conventional* constructivists, states comply to given established norms not only by considering their self-interests, but also by internalizing these norms into their own respective state identities (Alexandrov, 2003). This implies the existence of some essentialist assumptions in *conventional* constructivist's thinkers like Wendt, who somehow gives anthropomorphic attributes to states, such as desires or beliefs for instance (Cho, 2012). Indeed, Wendt sees *state identity* as the state's self-understanding, along its interests and actions (Alexandrov, 2003). Thus, it presupposes a monolithic nature of *state identity*. However, his view is quite understandable since the simplification of the concept of *state identity* helps his analysis on the international dimension. This is of course refuted by the so-called *critical* constructivists who consider *state identity* as malleable and subject for continuous change (Cho, 2012). For them, *state identity* exists only in the state's discourse (Alexandrov, 2003). This vision rejoins what was already developed earlier in this chapter. It supposes that *state identity* is able to change through variations within the content of its discourses.

In the previous section, we have seen how Fearon (1999), in his review on the use of *identity* in the literature, identified the two most commonly used definitions of *identity*: identity as a category and identity as a set of subjective self-differentiating characteristics, or both at a time. The author extrapolated the same definition towards *state identity*. For him, *state identity* as a category refers to the pool in which states can be grouped upon common features, such as for instance NATO member-states, EU member-states, or nuclear powers. On the other hand, the second definition would involve the promotion of a state's particular features that underline its identity through self-respect and pride. He gives the example of *democracy* as a feature, which might be assessed by the United States of America as a key component of its state identity for instance. But this implies us to interpretate the meaning that the United States gives to *democracy* in order to understand this particular aspect of its identity (Fearon 1999). Consequently, this meaning is constructed and thus able to evolve and change through time. Fearon tried by this classification to tackle the failure of international relations' constructivist literature in providing a shared definition for *state identity*. Maxym Alexandrov (2003) points out this issue and argues that constructivists failed to link theory to concrete empirical findings. He tries to mitigate this by proposing a novel concept of *state identity* in international relations. His proposal comes along the separation between its domestic and international dimensions. The first dimension is, as theorized by political scientists, the set of

beliefs that are shared by the local elites and masses, while the second one is those shared by the elites and masses of other states (Alexandrov, 2003). The author advocates for the concept of *state identity politics*, which is the expression of the state identity through its actual policies or behaviors. State identity politics can be simplistically defined as the "more or less explicit attempts to influence state identity". (Alexandrov, 2003, p. 39). His understanding of *state identity* does not give supremacy to one dimension over the other. It stresses on the fact that the two dimensions are often hard to be separated from each other. They are overlapping, multiple and sometimes bearing contradictory representations of the state's beliefs about the appropriate behavior to be taken.

2.3.4. Determinants of Identity

Up to this point, the question of what determines *state identity* needs to be further clarified. For constructivists, one of the most important determinants of *state identity* is culture. In this respect, *state identity* is seen as a constituent part of culture. In the literature, *culture* is mostly defined as the set of views, norms, values, habits and beliefs that bond a particular social group together and that are translated into common behaviors (Zorba, 2019). Consequently, concepts like religion, ethnicity, tribalism or kinship can be logically considered as elements of *culture*. By extrapolation, they are indirect determinants of *state identity*. For example, religion as a determinant is sometimes taken into account in the analysis of European states' identities (Raciborski & Rafałowski, 2018). But it is especially relevant in places like the Middle East, where religious belonging is seen as a major determinant of identity (Kaplan, 2009). In this respect, some authors such as Bernard Lewis[21] for instance, go further and argue that Islam as a religion is not only the cement of social identity in the Middle East, but also the main driver of political activity (Kramer, 2016). *Culture* can also be separated along its domestic and international dimensions. While most international relations' scholars believe that the main source of *state identity* is the state's domestic culture (Alexandrov, 2003), Alexander Wendt (1992; 1994; 1995; 1999) thinks that it is primarily determined by the international structure. According to him, this structure is composed of the interstate community's culture (Alexandrov, 2003), which he defines (1999) as the sum of beliefs

[21] Lewis is an eminent historian with an essentialist approach towards Islam and the Arab Islamic studies. He stressed on the role of religion in the identity construction of Middle Eastern societies and states (Lewis, 1998). His views were seen as controversial and led to a decade-long intellectual debate between him and Edward Said (Owen, 2012; Mahmood, 2018; Susser, 2018).

that are perceived by actors as being true facts. This also means that the *structure* is also a key determinant of state identity.

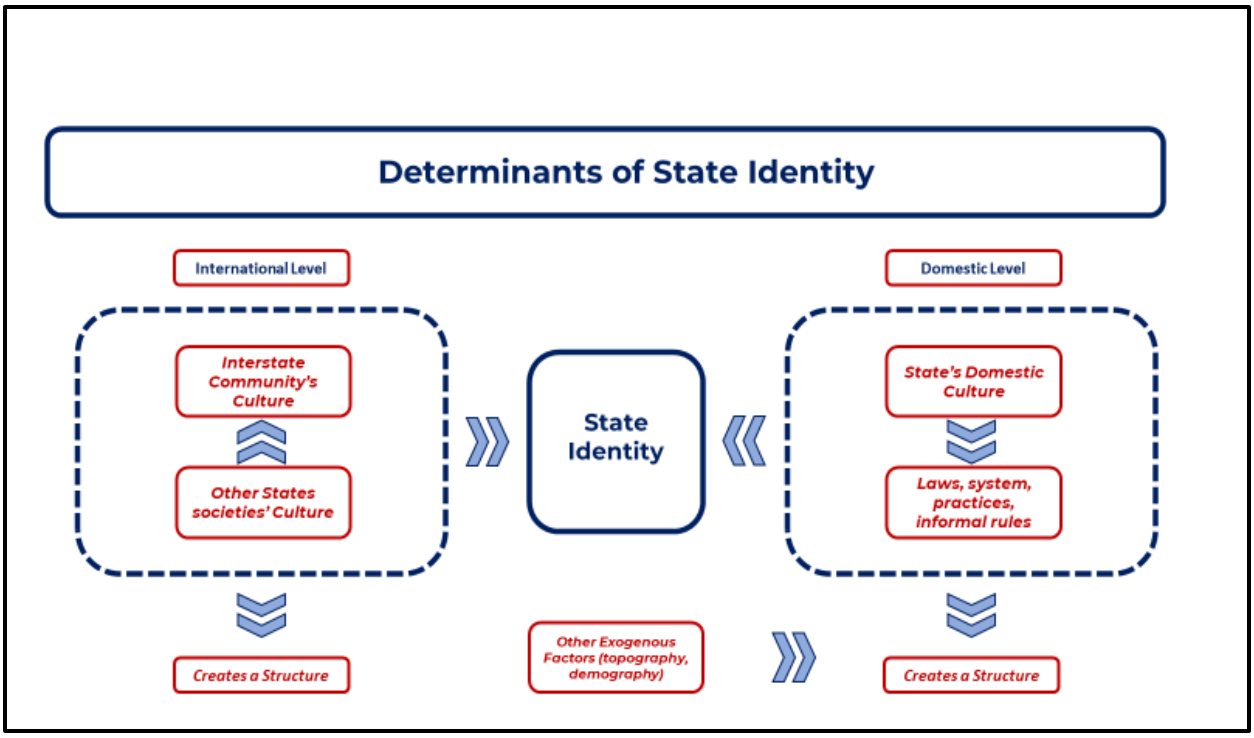

Figure 4. The Determinants of State Identity

2.3.5. Actors of Identity

Scholarship of both political science and international relations have identified a significant number of actors of various natures who influence, shape and create state identity. These actors are also referred to as agents of identity. They can be acting on both the domestic and international levels. Constructivists highlight the role of agents in the creation of identities and the development of norms both within a given society and between societies (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). Talentino (2010) argues that nation-building can be implemented by external actors through as part of state-building. Alexandrov (2003) considers that these actors are not simply confined under the state's ruling elites that has the obvious means and power to control it. Rather, he recognizes the role of non-state actors such as non-state organizations and mass media in influencing the state's identity on various degrees. The last sentence implies that actors are not equally influential. The differentiation in the degree of influence is therefore more than essential in conceptualizing actors

of identity. Indeed, those who are proactively engaging in the process of identity construction or change are labelled as *entrepreneurs* of identity. They seek to reproduce and challenge existing identities by altering them (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). They do so through boosting or contesting the identity's content[22] (cf. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnson, & McDermott, 2009). Entrepreneurs promote and adopt given identities by spotting or creating topics through a set of elaborate discursive tools (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). They are nothing more than political actors who extol or deviate state identity through their own discourse towards what they want it to be (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). This shows once again the importance of discourse as one of the main employed tools by actors of identity. Since structure as a determinant of identity is somehow constraining, entrepreneurs search for its weak points where their agency has a leeway (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). They take advantage of this flexibility to impose their versions of identity construction. Therefore, their agency can make an impact only in particular contexts where structure is weak and able to be challenged (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). Entrepreneurs of identity can also be *norm entrepreneurs*. They advocate for new norms which they try to impose domestically, then impose it on the international scene (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). But are actors or entrepreneurs doing it intentionally? Some say yes. For instance, Weede (2008) differentiates between two categories of nation-building actors: one wants to ultimately govern the nation in the making, another is keen on preventing state-failure and its potential spillover effects. If their goals are so clearly determined, then their entrepreneurship must have been consciously elaborated. In this perspective, foreign powers can also be considered as actors of nation-building (Weede, 2008). Hence, they are also state identity builders. Other authors refute the conscious nature of state identity entrepreneurship. Campbell (1998) for instance questions this probability. Actors are part of the structure. It bounds them and makes them engaged towards its existing norms, especially in times when structure is strong enough to do so. Actors of identity, far from being always rational agents with a cynical strategy for implementing their goals, are influenced by existing identities (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). Their agency is bond and tinted by the structure of the existing state identity. Thus, once again, it is quintessential to understand and analyze correctly the context in which actors of identity are being active[23].

[22] In this respect, see Chapter 1: Methodology.

[23] For example, traumas (as context) have a crucial role in challenging existing identities. In these circumstances, identities can be more easily reconfigured (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015).

2.3.6. Identity Change

The multiplicity of agents taken into consideration in the constructivist analysis of *identity change* leads to the complexity of its mechanisms (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). In this respect, the literature fails in providing an explanation to how and why actors choose among competing identities (Alexandrov, 2003). To mitigate this complexity, constructivist authors got "specialized" in some particular aspects of *identity change*. In short, identity change mechanisms are analyzed in the literature of international relations along two main approaches: a top-down one and a bottom-up one.

The first one focuses on the structure-agency relationship. In this respect, interests of the state are shaped by the state's identity, which is in turn changing on the international level through interaction with other states (Alexandrov, 2003; Cho, 2012). Hence, international structure has an influence on the state's behaviors: the international structure induces a mechanism by which international norms spread towards the intra-state level through the socialization of states and domestic actors from top to down. Domestic changes can be then analyzed as constituting a dependent variable (Klotz & Lynch, 1999). This *relational* approach tries to grasp *state identity* as changing vis-à-vis the others (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). In other words, *identity change* happens in a collective way on the international level. This is what Alexander Wendt means when he asserts that interaction between states on the international systemic level leads to changes in the state's identity and interests (1994). Nevertheless, the structure-agency relationship is viewed as dynamic. In this sense, states also change the international structure in which they interact. But the international structure is not solely defined by the inter-state relations. Indeed, norms can also be transmitted to states via some – governmental and non-governmental – international organizations, which are to be considered as constitutive elements of the international structure. They shape national policies by normatively formatting states towards what their interests should look like (Jackson, 2006).

The second approach, also called *norm constructivism* (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015) seeks to explain how the domestically constructed state identity influences the state's foreign policy. It can be opposed to the first one where the role of domestic politics on the interaction between states is neglected. For example, Katzenstein emphasizes on the role of domestic normative structure as a subsequent influencer of state identity and its various interests and policies (Jackson, 2006). The

same goes for Ted Hopf (1998), according to whom state identity is expressed through the influential decision-makers within the state. These authors focus then more on the domestic aspect of the identity change mechanism.

In summary, *identity change* is either related to the state's *self*, or to the *others*. Change happens through interaction with the international structure in a top-down approach, or from the state's domestic actors in a bottom-up approach. It alters interests, which are then reflected on both discourse and behavior.

Both approaches of *state identity change* rely on discourse and actions. Norm entrepreneurs for instance use persuasion (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). They first try to rally a critical mass of state leaders to their norm, then induce a sort of socializing "domino-effect" in which other states' leaders start imitating the first-convinced ones (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). These mechanisms are – domestically or internationally, from top-down or bottom-up – implemented through discourse. Within the discourse, actors use words which meanings are accepted, rejected, or taken for granted in describing things, concepts or groups. In this respect, Sériot (1997) give the example of the great French debate during the Algerian war where the simple categorization of Algeria[24] as either a French department or a colony, was forging its definition in the discourse, hence the French state's identity. Similarly, the discursive creation of identity can be done by giving a name for the enemy, by simply naming the -bad- other (Sériot, 1997). Discourse is particularly central for the postmodernist critical constructivist approach: state identity is constantly created and recreated by the leaders' discourses. In the same logic of Sériot, identity is built by discursive narratives of exclusion. These narratives establish symbolic boundaries between *us* and the *others* (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004).

Finally, in addition to entrepreneurs, emotions and traumas are important factors contributing to identity change (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015): while emotions help in the crystallization of an identity in construction, traumas can destabilize it and reconfigure its construction.

[24] Those who advocated for defining Algeria as a French department – hence an integral part of the French national territory- were in a sense pushing towards a different understanding of France's state identity. Consequently, conceding independence to Algeria meant in a way to give up the state's territorial integrity. And this was reflected in the way Algeria was categorized in the discourse itself.

2.3.7. State Identity and Security

International relations' scholarship got also interested in the relationship between *state identity* and *security*. This is not a surprise, knowing that *security* constitutes a major research topic in the field. Linking it to state identity seems to be quite pertinent. The specific literature that focuses on it leans on the works of Jepperson and Wendt, but also Katzenstein (1996) who studied national security policies and state identities. According to him, states define their respective identities by taking into account threats and interests that might significantly affect their national security policies (Katzenstein, 1996). Macleod, Masson, & Morin (2004) summarized in their review the state's perception on the security of its national identity throughout five main elements: (1) the object of securitization which can be either the state itself, the society, or vulnerable groups and individuals; (2) the nature of the threat which can be military, social, economic or even alimentary; (3) the guarantor of security which can be the international community, the state itself, or more recently, held by some private organizations; (4) the securitization' means which are not always military anymore; and (5) the positive or negative perception of the state towards security as a concept (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004). From here, the authors says that we can filter three possible relational patterns between *security* and *identity*. The first one happens when the state sees its domestic identity as an object of security, leading to the necessity of defending shared norms and values, especially in times of war[25]. The second one is reached when security-related norms and values that are interiorized by the society become part of the state identity[26]. Finally, the third one occurs when the perceived threat on national identity is related to the relationship with the – probably dangerous – *other* (Macleod, Masson, & Morin, 2004).

It is noteworthy to mention again the fundamental role of discourse in all these dynamics. Campbell (1992) believes that state's domestic elites create or inflate security threats in a *discourse of danger* which tends to emphasize the gap between the *us* and the dangerous *other*. Knowing that nation-building is a never-ending process, maintaining this discourse helps in the state's sustainability (Alexandrov, 2003). Nevertheless, Alexandrov (2003) criticizes these assumptions

[25] The authors cite Campbell (1998) who illustrates this with the American foreign policy of the Cold War era which was mostly laying on the defense of America's national identity.
[26] The authors give the example of Germany and Japan in which society internalized anti-militaristic values after the second world war. These values were strongly incorporated in the state's identity and its relation towards security. In these states, anti-militarism is considered as part of the national security policies.

since he considers that they cannot be empirically proven as valid: it is barely impossible to determine the extent in which states rely on their *discourse of danger* for the sake of their existence.

In conclusion, identity seems to be a crucial security concept in international relations theory (Cho, 2012). While some as Buszynski (2004) simplify the relationship by stating that *security* is nothing more than about protecting *identity*, the perception of the state about its own safety and security is undeniably a key element of its identity.

2.3.8. State Identity in Fragile States

State identity and *nation-building* are of course not applicable equally on all states. In fact, states vary in their capabilities to acknowledge, aspire, implement and succeed in consolidating a viable state identity. The literature is aware of this gap and addressed it by developing alternative theories that are specific for fragile states. As Kaplan (2009) notes it, weak states are incapable of leveraging game-changing social, political, institutional or economic assets. On the contrary, fragile states often undermine or misuse local identities, capacities or institutions (Kaplan, 2009). The author argues that fragile states are often those that are the least dependent on their domestic social structures and their relevant interests and identities. This creates a gap between the state and the society which then obstruct an organic identity construction at the state's level. Fragile states are generally characterized by a plural society based on ethnic or religious diversity. This diversity is perceived as a significant obstacle towards the construction of a trans-communitarian unifying national identity. For example, national identity is almost impossible to achieve in an Iraq based on its Arab identity, since Kurds are not Arabs (cf. Weede, 2008). In other words, fragile states have usually many competing identities that might constantly scrutinize and put at stake the very legitimacy of the state as an entity (Kaplan, 2009). These competing identities are based on divergent ethnic or religious identities which have values, norms and goals that are opposed to the dominant official state' identity. Furthermore, fragile states are characterized by both a dysfunctional system which needs to be mitigated by an efficient state-building process, and a lack of social cohesion which needs to be addressed by nation-building (Grotenhuis, 2016). In this sense, the two processes are often intertwined and deeply interdependent in these states. Therefore, building a broader unifying sense of belonging is essential and must be implemented in parallel with state-building (Grotenhuis, 2016). In addition, fragile states have usually experienced civil wars and conflicts. These unrests led to even more fragmentation and disunion among the various

communities. A successful nation-building can only be achieved if this new heterogeneity is taken into consideration within the novel reuniting common identity (Grotenhuis, 2016). For example, symbols, commemorations and heroes must be chosen from all segments to avoid resentment of some minorities which will then feel excluded from the constructed nation. This point has very important implications for this thesis and are addressed in the next chapter.

2.3.9. Immigration and State Identity

The last important aspect of *state identity* that needs to be highlighted in this review resides in its relationship towards *immigration*. The real question here is how state identity is affected by immigration in general? Yet, the literature fails to explicitly address this relationship in the way the question is articulated. Most of the writings focus either on the interaction between immigration and group or social identities in general[27], or on the effects of immigration on state policies[28]. While *actions* reflect on *state identity*, their conceptualized explanatory mechanisms are rarely being tackled. Concerning our previous question, the answer must be framed under what was developed earlier in this chapter regarding the state's perception of the *other* versus the *us*. In the identity-security relation, we have seen that the *other* might be seen by the state as a threat to its *us*, thus embedded in its discourse in a negative way. But immigrants, let it be refugees or economic migrants[29], can be perceived either positively or negatively by the state. In theory, since national identity is a constantly fluctuating social construct through time and contexts, national identity can be defined as the way of expression of the interaction between nationals and outsiders (Grotenhuis, 2016). Therefore, a demographic fluctuation linked to migration will definitely have an impact on the state's national identity and the various novel political thoughts (Grotenhuis, 2016). The positively-perceived scenario of this impact can be for example the inclusion of these others immigrants in the *us*, whereas the negatively-perceived scenario would be the reinforcement of the gap through an exclusivist discourse based on the *jus sanguinis*. A good illustration for these

[27] See for example Roxanne Lynn Doty (1996) who debunks the complex links between immigration and national identity through the example of Great Britain, but stays on the societal level of national identity without explicitly explaining its implications on the state's official identity itself and how to link it with national identity.
[28] Most of what is found in the literature addresses state identity through the scope of the states' – restrictive or flexible- immigration policies and their relations towards societal nationhood (see for example Heath & Tilley (2005), Lewin-Epstein & Levanon (2005), Diez Medrano & Koenig (2005)) such as citizenship law, residency permits, or refoulement, or by trying to understand how a multiculturalist identity affects these policies. The relationship between migration in general, refugee in particular, and state policy responses are tackled in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.
[29] For the typology of migrants and the conceptual difference between refugee and economic migrant, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

dynamics would be the case of post-Soviet Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a migratory wave of non-ethnic Russians came from former Soviet republics. In the discourse, immigrants were negatively perceived as a threat to Russian national identity. This is because Russian national identity evolved after the collapse of the Soviet Union towards a more ethnic understanding (Liedy, n.d.). Furthermore, the state's official national identity can influence individual attitudes vis-à-vis immigration (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Since *structure* influences *agency*, if a state's identity is based on ethnic or religious exclusivism, then its citizens' attitudes towards immigration will be automatically affected. As a conclusion, immigration is an additional element of interaction in the state identity construction. It adds an extra layer for the relational definition of identity as opposed to the *other*, by setting the boundaries of the differentiation between the external *other* and the internal *other* (Doty, 1996, p. 253) of those living within the given polity.

2.3.10. Conclusions and Implications

After tis extensive review on *state identity*, it seems fundamental to draw some conclusions and think of the potential implications that the literature gives us in relation to the thesis' topic. These implications and conclusions are articulated below under a set of points:

- *State identity* has a domestic dimension that is constructed through a process called *nation-building*. Various actors create and imagine a *nation*. *Nationalism* is the movement that tries to impose the constructed nation as the common *national identity* of the society which is, if successful, adopted by the state itself.
- Nation-building is particularly challenging to be achieved in *fragile states*, where it is difficult to construct a common national identity that unites all segments of their plural societies. fragile states have competing identities that constantly question the legitimacy of the state.
- *State identity* has also an international dimension. It is conceptualized by constructivist international relations theories in relation with other notions such as norms, behaviors, interests and context. In this respect, constructivists believe that state identity determines the state's interests, which in turn, determine the state's *behaviors*. These behaviors must be in line with the state's interiorized *norms*. If not, *identity* must be changed through challenge or negotiation. *Norms* define the nature of *interests*.

- *State identity* is mainly determined by *culture*. Religion, ethnicity, tribal links and kinship are all parts of the culture. Hence, they are by extrapolation determinants of *state identity*.
- Actors of identity are various: some are domestic, other are international. State actors are other states or the state's elites, while non-state actors are other states' societies, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, local non-governmental organizations, civil society, political parties and media. Some of these actors are proactive in identity construction. They are labelled as *entrepreneurs* of identity. Entrepreneurs act by either promoting or challenging existing identities.
- *Identity* is changed by different actors through two possible paths, depending on the nature of these actors. In this respect, state identity changes in a *top-down* or a *bottom-up* ways. We refer to these as *identity from above* and *identity from below*.
- *State identity* changes mostly throughout the discourse. It includes the various discourses of the state's elites and official statements as well as the meanings that these discourses give to words and concepts. In fact, the real power of discourse lays in its power to build, perpetuate, change or deconstruct the national identity (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999). Emotions are also considered as factors of identity change.
- Studying identity *change* is extremely important since it has a direct impact on the state's behaviors, which are then altered or changed (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015). Therefore, *actions* reflect on identity change.
- *State identity change* is bounded by the state's domestic and international structures. Actors can have an impact on identity in particular *contexts* when the structure is weak enough to allow such alterations. Thus, the weak institutional structures defining fragile states allow change to happen.
- *State identity* is tightly linked to *state security*. The relational linkage resides in the state's perception of a given *threat*, and how this threat is reflected in its discourse or mitigated in its actions and policies (*behaviors*, that are determined by *interests*, that are determined by *identity*).
- Immigration can be perceived either positively or negatively by actors who determine the interests of the state. A negative perception implies that immigration is considered a threat. This threat must therefore appear in the state's discourse or behaviors.

Now that the concepts and mechanisms are clearly presented as explained by the theory, time has come to understand and present the Lebanese state identity and the story of its formation along its determinants, actors, entrepreneurs as well as the structural and contextual frames in which it evolves. The next chapter is dedicated to this particular task.

Chapter 3: The Lebanese Identity and the State

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines thoroughly the Lebanese identity as well as the process of its construction through a historical overview of its state formation and nation-building processes. Moreover, the chapter lists the different competing narratives and their actors throughout time, before diagnosing the state's structural frame – namely, its peculiar political system- in which the Lebanese *state identity* is determined. The aim is to understand the Lebanese state's identity through mapping its various determinants, actors and their competing narratives, as well as the mechanisms and factors of its identity change. The first section puts the Lebanese nation-building process in its regional context. The second section gives a brief overview of Lebanon and the history of its creation. The third section gives an in-depth account to its national identity construction through modern history. Its historical review is based on the work of the most prominent historians of modern Lebanon such as Kamal Salibi (1971; 1998; 1992), Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007) and Georges Corm (2003) among others. The following few sections try to map the competing narratives of the different actors of identity, as well as the specific determinants of the Lebanese state's identity. Finally, the last sections present the Lebanese state identity through its structural, constitutional and legal frames, and show how sectarian demographic imbalance is considered as a major threat to its state security by influential actors.

3.2. Identity in the Arab World

Before digging into the Lebanese case, it is important to put very briefly its identity construction in its own regional context. In fact, Lebanon is a Near Eastern, Mediterranean and Arabic-speaking[30] country. Its nation-building process must be therefore analyzed under the general frame

[30] Lebanon's official language is Arabic, but bilingualism among Lebanese is widespread in the country (cf. Shaaban, 1997). Moreover, Lebanese people ma the Lebanese dialect, "*'ammiya*", part of the Levantine Arabic dialect, which is different from the Modern Standard Arabic known as "*fusha*" (Naïm, 2011; Wardini, 2011). Many of them practice *diglossia*, which refers to switching between one language and another, in this case, between "low" colloquial Arabic and "high" standard Arabic (Mabry, 2013).

of nation-building in the Middle East, and more especially in the ex-Ottoman part of the Arab world. As stated previously, *culture* is the main *determinant* of identity. In this regard, the Arab world has two prominent elements of *culture* which play a major role in determining identities. These are language and religion. Indeed, the widely-spoken Arabic language as well as the predominance of Islam, can be considered the two most prevailing determinants of identity around which a common social identity construction and nation-building could be envisaged in this part of the world. As a result, the states of the region have been using explicitly or implicitly some sort of religious or ethnic identity to impose their legitimacy (Masad & Christie, 2013). But the Arab world includes also other cultural determinants of identity such as ethnicity and tribalism, which are either shared or varying among communities of the region (cf. Barakat, 2015).

Language as a Determinant of Arab Identity

When it comes to the Arabic language, it constituted the base for a paramount Arab national identity at its inception (Barakat, 2015). Arabic was considered to be a vector of unification that transcends other cultural traits such as race or religion and helped in creating Arab nationalism (Barakat, 2015). The ideas and sociopolitical struggles that tried to build a common identity on the base of the Arabic common language include Arabism and Pan-Arabism. This movement started to be conceptualized in the 19th century and turned into political militantism in the 20th century (cf. Mabry, 2013). It has two branches, a more secular one that tried to attenuate the weight of religion, and another one which could not clearly separate between Islam and Arabism (Barakat, 2015). Its secular wing stressed on the concept of '*uruba*, "Arabness", based on the Arabic language, represented by movements like Michel Aflaq's *Baathism* for example (Mabry, 2013, p. 30). Some scholars like Elie Kedourie (1992) considered that the origins of Arab nationalism are a reactive form of anti-colonialism against Ottoman and Western rules. But Arabic language is not singular since it is composed of many varying spoken dialects that are completely different from its written form (Mabry, 2013). And since Arabic is the vector of Islam, beside some secular Arabist ideas that spread starting from the *Nahda*[31], the language is deeply associated with religion. Indeed, religious fundamentalism started to be considered as an alternative to secular Arabism (Barakat, 2015). This takes us to the second *determinant* of identity: religion.

[31] *Nahda* refers to the Arab renaissance of the 19th century. See in this respect the next section.

Religion as a Determinant of Arab Identity

Concerning religion as a *determinant*, the role of Islam as well as other minority religions is undeniably a major element to be taken into consideration in the analysis of Middle Eastern politics in general[32]. But the phenomenon is not exclusively applicable to the Arab Middle Eastern countries. In fact, other Mediterranean and predominantly Christian countries who were previously part of the Ottoman Empire do share this specificity. In fact, Orthodox churches of the Empire played the role of conservatoires for "national languages" and collective memories for centuries, and when the context allowed it finally, they stimulated and escorted national awakenings by inspiring local elites and intelligentsias (Thual, 2002). Greece for example represents one of the best illustrations for it. As Georges Prévélakis (2017) notes it, the Orthodox Christian religion constitutes the basic layer of the Greek nation-building. To some extent, the Maronite church in Mount Lebanon played this role for the early elaboration of a peculiar Lebanese identity, as it is shown throughout the next sections. While Europe was built on territorial identity, the East contested it (Prévélakis, 2017, p. 71). In fact, the Ottoman Empire from which derived most of the region's modern states based its identity on the *Millet* system[33]. This system gave space to the formation of an intermediary strata of belonging that was comprised between the individual and the state (Corm, 2003). Its essence is to be found until today in many of the region's countries. The role of Islam as a major *determinant* of identity in the Arab world cannot be underestimated. Even the translation of *nation* into the Arabic *Umma* has a meaning that remains indissociable from its Islamic connotation (cf. Al-Barghouti, 2008). It gained in the last few decades a resurgent importance in determining identities in the Arab world. In this regard, political Islam, namely *Islamism*, had taken over the political scene in many of the Arab countries and became very popular (Hovsepian, 1995). In fact, religious forces are seen as somehow pushing aggressively to do an overlap between religion and state (Masad & Christie, 2013). But the reason for the resurgence of *Islamism* was often analyzed simplistically as a result of the successive – military

[32] See in this respect, the detailed overview of Erzsébet N. Rózsa (2005) on identity and foreign policy in the Middle East and the important role played by Islam in shaping international relations in the region.

[33] *Millet*, from Ottoman Turkish: "religious community", usually based on the *Qur'an's* definition for the groups belonging to the *people of the book* (Abrahamic non-Muslim religions). It usually refers to the system implemented gradually by the Ottoman Empire for the self-regulation of personal status by Christian and Jewish communities. See in this respect Fatih Öztürk (The Ottoman Millet System, 2009).

and socioeconomic- failures of secular Arabism that was adopted as the official ideology in many Arab states (Masad & Christie, 2013).

Other Determinants of Arab Identity

The Arab world has also additional determinants of identity which are not equally shared by all its states. The most important ones are ethnicity and tribalism (Barakat, 2015). When it comes to ethnicity, it is crucial to underline that the Arab world hosts a consequent number of ethnic groups that are not of Arab origins, or that at least do not see themselves as being such. Among those, we can cite the Kurds, Armenians, Berbers and even the Assyrians who, among others and on various degrees, contest the overarching Arab identity (Hourani, 1982). Tribalism is also an important determinant of identity in the Arab world, which is also sometimes in competition with Arab nationalism (Barakat, 2015). The central role of families and traditional ties of kinship characterize all Arab societies on various degrees. If tribalism is obviously associated with Bedouin communities, it is nonetheless present all across Arab societies and regions in different degrees[34].

Multiple Identities in the Arab World

All in all, the Arab world has diverse identities that can be merely narrowed to one exclusive identity that could be imposed on from above (Kumaraswamy, 2006). The above-listed *determinants* of identity are leading to a multiplicity of identities which are sometimes in competition (cf. Hovsepian, 1995). As a result, the identity scene of Arab countries is as diverse as the number of possible combinations between all of its determinants. Therefore, instead of mere inconsistencies, Arab identities are multiple: "between pan-Arab (*qaumi*) and state-specific (*qutri, watani*) identification, and the slipping of Arab states and politicians back and forth between them, is explicable within a conception (…) of multiple identities" (Halliday, 2013, p. 444). In more practical terms, identity construction in the Arab world is marked by a history of the main movements of Arab nationalism and Islamism. Both can be subdivided into smaller and more specific ideological variations such as Arabism (*'uruba*), Pan-Arabism (*qawmiyya 'arabiyya*) such as Baathism or Nasserism, and country-level nationalism (*wataniyya*) for the former (Manduchi,

[34] See in this respect Francisco del Río Sánchez (Arab Tribalism and Urban Environments: Alternative Models of Social Organization, 2019) who through the case of Syria, shows clearly how tribalism (*qabaliyya*) has been associated with the stereotypes of desert, nomadism and rural areas, but it is also well embedded in urban societies across the Arab world.

2017); and such as Sunni Jihadist Salafism, modernism and quietism (Schuck, 2013), or Sunni Takfirism and local militant Sunni or Shia Islamism such as Hezbollah or Hamas (Cofman Wittes, 2008) for the latter. In parallel, each country evolved in its own path towards a peculiar form of national identity which reflects on the most important cultural *determinants* of its identity. In the Gulf states where traditional tribal ties and religion are both very important, the state identity evolved towards peculiar forms incorporating the two of them, as well as other Gulf-specific *determinants* (Smith Diwan, 2016; Karolak, 2019). Both their state and nation-building processes were affected by these trends (cf. Kaplan, 2009; Grotenhuis, 2016). Others were to choose different paths such as secular authoritarian regimes, or even illiberal democracies based on sectarianism for some (Csicsmann, 2013). In fact, these can be inscribed in the general context where structure is weakened enough to be challenged or contested. Indeed, the dislocation of many states caused by various forms of conflicts and unrests made it possible for other revendications to rise. The structural weakness of the state, coupled with a low degree of ethnic or religious homogeneity, makes people to rather identify with their subgroup than with the entire society (Weede, 2008). This is particularly the cases of countries such as Iraq or Lebanon which went towards other forms of nation-building that are characterized by power-sharing and sectarianism. So, what makes the Lebanese identity different from all of its Arab background? The answer to this question takes us to analyze further the Lebanese state's identity.

3.3. The Lebanese Republic

3.3.1. Lebanon: An Overview

Lebanon is a small republic located on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It has a surface area of 10,452 Km^2 for a population of around 5 million[35] Lebanese citizens (CIA, 2022). It stretches along the coastal line from North to South in a length of around 220 kilometers. Parallel to the sea, the Mount Lebanon mountain range comes out abruptly from the shores towards its snowy peaks which culminate at 3,088 meters above the sea level (El Zaatari, 2017; Bugh, et al., 2022). The fertile plain of the Beqaa Valley lays on the Eastern versant of Mount Lebanon. This 10-kilometers-wide valley at its narrowest is limited by the Mount Lebanon on its West, and by the Anti-Lebanon mountain range on its Eastern flank (Bugh, et al., 2022). The latter delimits the

[35] Numbers are pure estimates since, as we will see it along the thesis, the last official population census to be held in Lebanon was conducted in 1932. Also, this number does not take into account the foreign residents (both migrants and refugees living on the country's territory).

frontiers with the Syrian Republic, with which Lebanon shares all of its 403 km-long (CIA, 2022) Eastern and Northern borders. Each of the regions has its own peculiar climate: the coast and the middle highlands have a Mediterranean temperate climate, while the high mountains are known for their rude winters characterized by heavy snowfalls (Bugh, et al., 2022). In turn, the Beqaa plateau has a more continental climate which is on many aspects similar to continental Europe. The population of Lebanon is as diverse as its topography and climate. In fact, the country is home for a patchwork of religious minorities and ethnic groups that live intertwined across its narrow territory. From a religious perspective, the country is composed of both Christians and Muslims. It also used to have a thriving small Jewish community[36] which members left during the civil war (1975-1990). Christians represent around 40% of its total population[37]. The Maronites, who are an Eastern Church of Syriac culture and liturgy that is in union with Rome since the middle-ages, are in majority. They are followed respectively by the Greek Orthodox, Greek Melkite Catholics, Armenians, as well as a multitude of smaller oriental Christian communities[38] (CIA, 2022). In turn, Muslims constitute the remaining 60% of the population[39]. Twelver Shia and Sunni Muslims are the bulk of this religion: they are estimated to share similar proportions (around 25-30% each (Agenzia Fides, 2019; CIA, 2022)). They are followed by the Druze, around 4.5% (Office of International Freedom Report, 2019), a small syncretic and esoteric sect that evolved from Ismaili Shiism in the late 11th century (Obeid, 2006; Firro, 1992). Lebanon is also home for a tiny Alawite community that is estimated between 55,000 (Diab, 2019) and 100,000 to 120.000 individuals (Lefevre, 2014). From an ethnic perspective, most Lebanese can be considered as Arabs, since their main language is the Northwestern Lebanese dialect. Albeit, some of them – mainly Christians - do not identify themselves as such, and prefer to promote a mythical Phoenician origin (cf. CIA, 2022), or a strictly Lebanese one. The second largest ethnic group is made of the Armenians who continue to use their native language and culture in their daily lives. The Kurds,

[36] Before the civil war, thousands of Lebanese Jews use to live in Beirut, especially in *Wadi Abou Jmil* neighborhood, and other parts of the country such as *Bhamdoun* or Sidon. In this respect, see Paul Tabar (The Lebanese Jewish Community: Emigration and Diasporic Relations, 2010) and Stephanie Khouri (The last Jews of Lebanon, a life shrouded in secrecy, 2022).

[37] Here again, without a proper official census held in the past 90 years, proportions are only estimates. In this respect, the estimates diverge from 30% (Al Dawliyya Lil Maalumat, 2019), to 32% (CIA, 2022; Office of International Freedom Report, 2019) and 38-41% (Agenzia Fides, 2019). For simplicity, the current thesis uses the 40% proportion.

[38] In addition to Maronites, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics, we can list Armenian Orthodox and Catholics, Syriac Orthodox and Catholics, Assyrians and Chaldeans, Protestants, Latins and Copts.

[39] As noted in the previous footnotes concerning Christian numbers' estimates, Muslims are sometimes estimated as making up 67% of the Lebanese population (Office of International Freedom Report, 2019; CIA, 2022).

Assyrians, Turkmen and Greeks come next, but their process of assimilation has been engaged a long time ago (Melikian & De Karapetian, 1977; Aboumerhi, 2012). Other ethnic groups that can be mentioned here from a pure anthropological/ethnographical perspective are the Bedouins and the Dom[40]. Obviously, coexistence is not a given thing, and history has showed it quite well.

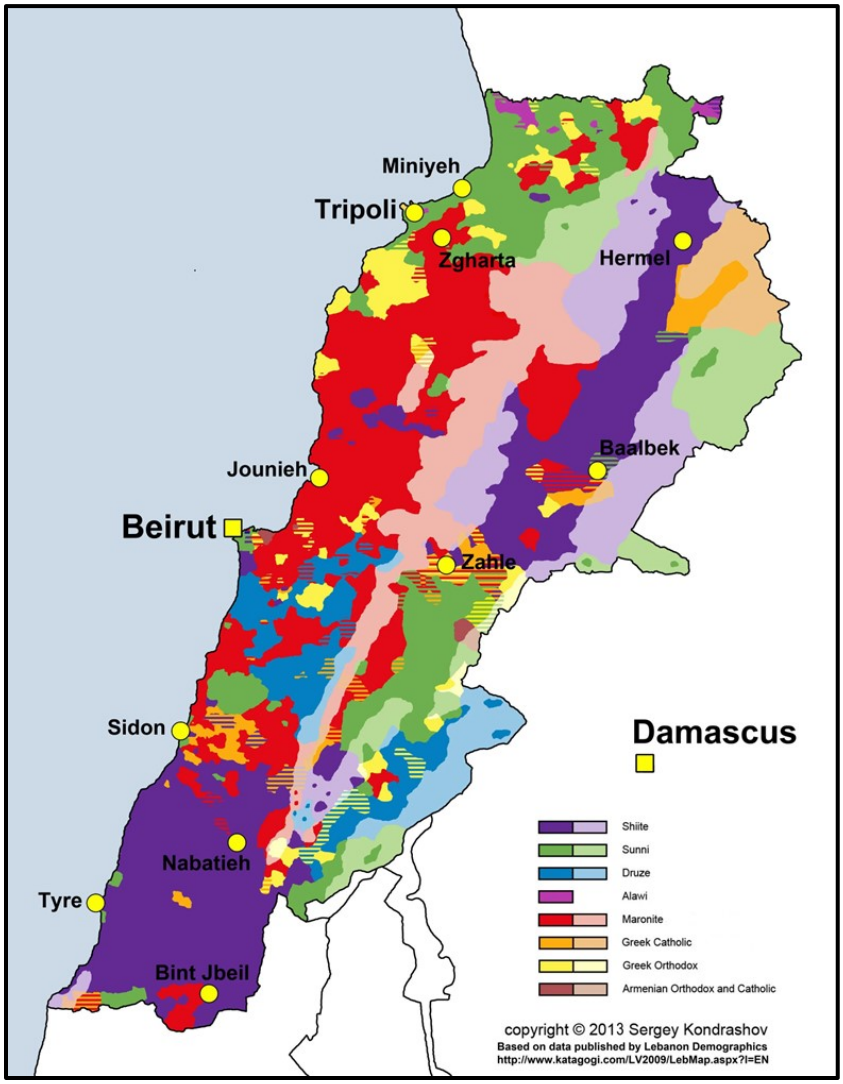

Figure 5. Religious Composition of Lebanon (Source: Sergey Kondrashov, 2013)

[40] Bedouins are Arab tribes of nomadic origins who use to live mainly as shepherds, livestock breeders and merchants. Most of them got naturalized as Lebanese, especially in 1994 (cf. Chapter 4). Most of them switched to a sedentary way of life, but many kept their distinctive Arabic dialect and cultural traits. See it this respect Dawn Chatty (Bedouin in Lebanon: The Transformation of a Way of Life or an Attitude?, 2010), Chatty et al. (Statelessness and Tribal Identity on Lebanon's Eastern Borders, 2013) and Chatty et al. (Bedouin in Lebanon: Social discrimination, political exclusion, and compromised health care, 2013). Dom, also known as *Nawar* or *Ghajar*, are the Gypsies of the Levant. See in this respect Terre des Hommes (The Dom People and their Children in Lebanon, 2011) and Siren and UNHCR (Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Akkar, 2021).

3.3.2. The Creation of Lebanon

The modern state of Lebanon in its current frontiers was created in 1920 by the French Mandate upon the end of World War I and the division of the Ottoman Empire's remains between French and British colonial powers. It was proclaimed under the name of the State of Greater Lebanon, then politically reconstituted in 1926 as the Republic of Lebanon (Salibi, 1998). But as a polity, Lebanon came to life way before that. Indeed, during the 16th century, the Emirate of Mount Lebanon was granted autonomy within the Ottoman Empire (Traboulsi, 2007). Later, in 1861, the Emirate became the *Mutesarrifate* of Mount Lebanon, an autonomous *Sanjak* within the Ottoman Empire. The *Mutesarrifate* had some very interesting administrative features, that can be considered, for the least, as innovative for its time. In fact, the European great powers granted the Mountain with a special status called *Règlement Organique* (Traboulsi, 2007). It replaced traditional feudalism with sectarian representation based on religious quotas in an Administrative Council that played a consultative role in front of a non-Lebanese Christian Ottoman governor appointed by the Sublime Porte (Traboulsi, 2007). The Council was composed of twelve elected members distributed along the major sects: Maronites, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Sunni and Shia (Salibi, 1992). This period introduced two main structural concepts to future Lebanon: religious communitarianism and foreign intervention in domestic affairs. But the created entity was almost three times smaller than the size of the modern republic. The French annexed to it the cities of Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre as well as the fertile plains of the Beqaa valley and Akkar. These regions were socially, economically and religiously very different from Mount Lebanon. In fact, Mount Lebanon had a Christian Maronite majority coupled with a Druze substantial minority, while Greater Lebanon incorporated Muslim Sunni populations from the urban areas (Beirut, Sidon, Tripoli) and from the rural periphery (Akkar and Beqaa), as well as Muslim Shia from the South (Tyre and Jabal 'Amil) and Northern Beqaa (Corm, 2003; Traboulsi, 2007; Salibi, 1998). Why were they then integrated in Greater Lebanon? Beyond the French colonial will, some local actors were actively promoting and advocating for it. The Maronites especially, who argued that these were parts of the historical and natural boundaries of Lebanon (Salibi, 1998). Their claims were the result of a long process of national identity construction that was undertaken by their elites. But their ideas were far from being shared unanimously by all segments of the society. The following paragraphs explain this historical process.

3.4. The Lebanese National Identity: The Story of a Construction by Steps

"To create a nation is one thing, but to create a nationality is another"

Kamal Salibi, A House of Many Mansions", 1988.

3.4.1. Different Phases of a Construction

The Lebanese identity as an idea evolved through different phases and was fine-tuned at every stage, by adapting to the geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts which structured its content. First, it started to be crystallized in the late 19th century along the Syrian national idea. This preliminary evolution must be understood under the broad flourishing of nationalist movements across Europe, which were imported and locally adapted by various ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire such as the Turks, Armenians, Greeks and Arabs. The second phase of this national idea evolved after the creation of Lebanon in 1920. This particular context made it to separate itself from *Syrianism* as a standalone idea, and to justify the existence of the new Lebanese state in its borders. The third phase developed after the independence of Lebanon in 1943. During that period, the ruling elite had to fight and consolidate the Lebanese construction. The fourth phase came with the civil war of 1975-1990, during which the country came to the verge of implosion and division, and seriously questioned its constructed identity. The fifth and last phase covers the post-war period after the Taef Agreements up until the current times. In this phase, the national identity was readjusted, and some of its characterizing elements such as sectarian consociationalism were strengthened even more than before.

Each of these phases is characterized by the presence of particular actors who promoted their visions as *entrepreneurs* of identity. When their ideas were imposed and broadly accepted, they altered the national identity, which became structural: by being adopted by the state, the altered official identity was imposed through a top-down mechanism on the society. But these happened in specific contexts within a certain structure. At each stage, the nascent identity was challenged by the discourse of various competing identity narratives. The context of the first phase is framed by the Ottoman Empire and by the exile of dissident *Lebanist* elites who joined forces with other *Syrianist* and *Arabist*[41] intellectuals. The second phase's context is determined by the French

[41] As developed later in the text, *Syrianism* or *Pan-Syrianism* is a nationalist movement that promotes the creation of a Great Syrian nation-state which includes all the Levant and Mesopotamia. It views Greater Syria as a separate and distinct nation from a broader Arab one. In contrast, *Arabism* is a nationalist movement that considers that all Arabs

Mandate and the creation of modern Lebanon. The *fait accompli* of Greater Lebanon constituted the new structure in which ideas evolved by interaction with it and with its new setup. Indeed, Muslims had to be incorporated in the idea of Lebanon as an identity. Therefore, entrepreneurs such as Michel Chiha had to adapt the state identity towards a more inclusive format. Its identity switched from an exclusivist refuge for Maronite Christians towards a refuge for persecuted minorities, in which other non-Christian minorities could be included. In addition, it incorporated it its identity the notions of *vivre-ensemble*[42] and *consociation* (cf. Firro, 2006a). The merchant background of the rich elite of the new Lebanese state made it easy to add the mercantilist *laissez-faire* liberal elements into the Lebanese identity (cf. Traboulsi, 2007). This was then consecrated by the National Pact of 1943 which included the communitarian repartition of power-sharing as a pillar of the Lebanese state's identity. The structural context characterized by a weak French colonial power and the growing interests and rivalry of Great Britain in destabilizing its French ally is exactly what we referred to in the previous chapter as a contextual opportunity for identity change when structure is weak enough to be challenged or contested. Later on, the *fait accompli* of Lebanon as a state was smoothly and gradually accepted by more and more of its citizens. Even Druze and Muslim communities adhered to it with time. Some explained this as the natural result of a long maturation socializing process where communities were forced to share a long history of coexistence through time (cf. Hanf, 1993). In this respect, Kamal Salibi (1971) noted already in the pre-civil war era that:

> The Lebanese, despite persisting differences which often seem grave, have actually become more and more of a distinct people, recognizing themselves as such and being recognized by others as such, simply by the process of living together and sharing in a common national life (Salibi, 1971, p. 86).

Here again, the Lebanese national identity became the structure and the top-down identity of the state, which could only be challenged by entrepreneurs who promote, contest or alter its content. Usually, the challenging mechanism of change was implemented through conceding some elements of the identity content in unwritten agreements such as the National Pact of 1943, the

constitute one nation and should be united in a single Arab state including at least the Levant, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian Peninsula (cf. Salibi, 1998; Firro, 2006a, Traboulsi, 2007).

[42] In Arabic "*al 'aych al muchtarak*", literally the *common living*, refers to the peaceful coexistence among religious sects and different minorities.

negotiations of 1958, and more recently, the Taef and Doha Agreements of 1989 and 2008 respectively. The following paragraphs give an account for each of the listed phases by presenting the elements that shaped and reshaped the Lebanese national identity.

3.4.2. The Embryonic Lebanese Idea

The first phase in the construction of a separate Lebanese national identity takes its roots in the 19th century and stretches up until the creation of Lebanon in 1920. The paramount nationalist umbrella movement in which its main features were developed is usually called *Lebanism*, *Lebanonism* or *Phoenicianism*, sometimes interchangeably (cf. Salibi, 1998; Kaufmann, 2001; Firro, 2006a; Traboulsi, 2008). Its main promoters were Boutros Nujaym, Michel Chiha, Hector Klat, Charles Corm, Chucri Ghanem, Yussef El-Saouda, among others, and later on, Said Akl who advocated for a Phoenician renaissance (Salibi, 1971, p.84). For Kais Firro (2006), Lebanese nationalism came as a national ideology developed by Christian elites, especially the Maronites, to confront *Arabism* that came into existence in the mid-19th century. In fact, they perceived *Arabism* and Arab *Syrianism* as a threat to their particularism (Firro, 2006a). Undoubtedly, the birth and evolution of these ideas must be understood in the historical context of that period. Indeed, the 19th century witnessed a renewed economic and cultural development of the Arabic-speaking regions of the Empire. This era is called the *Nahda*, the "renaissance" in Arabic[43]. During that time, European nationalist ideas started to reach the Ottoman Empire through growing economic exchange and the influence of Catholic missionaries. Arabs became more aware and self-conscious, and started to construct their national identity. Several other nationalist ideas and movements, such as the nascent Young Turks, promoters of a Turkish national identity, started to crystallize and challenge the traditional Ottoman identity (cf. Kayali, 1997). In rural Mount Lebanon, the infiltration of European notions of democracy, self-determination, and national consciousness caused a series of unrests that ultimately resulted in the Mountain's autonomy and self-administration (Salibi, 1992). These ideas developed in steps throughout the century.

The idea of a separate Lebanese nation started with the Maronite church in the first half of the 19th century. Their clerics had put down the bases of their revendication for a separate Lebanese

[43] The Nahda was a cultural, literary and social movement that emerged during the 19th century mainly in Cairo and Beirut, as well as Aleppo in a lesser extent. See in this respect Hasan Kayali (Arabs and Young Turks. Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918, 1997), Hill (Utopia and Civilisation in the Arab Nahda, 2020), and Traboulsi (2007, p.63).

political entity (Kaufmann, 2001). Later, the idea was refined and consolidated by thinkers such as Boutros Nujaym, who used the concepts developed by the Jesuit Priest Henri Lammens to build the Phoenician and non-Arab origin of Lebanon (Kaufmann, 2001). But the Jesuit scholar also understood Syria as a separate entity from its Arab environment (Firro, 2006a). In fact, in the very beginning, entrepreneurs of *Lebanism* were not clearly separated from *Syrianists*. Since the entire Levant was still part of the Ottoman Empire, *Syrianists* and *Lebanists* had a joint cause of emancipating from the Turkish ruler. The question of the polity's form to take after the eventual independence was still not on the agenda. Therefore, the two movements were not clearly separated yet. Moreover, Lebanese Christians were the first ones to promote and crystallize the Arab and *Syrianist* nationalisms (Firro, 2006a). But also, these were from different sects and backgrounds than the Maronites: most of them were Greek Catholics or Orthodox coming from cities rather than the rural mountain (cf. Salibi, 1998). Therefore, due to their urban socialization which exposed them to interact more with people from other confessions, they constructed a less "isolationist" understanding of the region's collective identity. *Syrianism* saw Syria as a nation by itself. However, it was composed of two branches: one promoted Arab identity as its major cultural component, while another stressed on its non-Arab aspects (Firro, 2006a). The latter was defended by students of Beirut's Jesuit Saint Joseph University who got inspired by the teachings of the Jesuits. It is this second form that shifted towards *Lebanism*, also called *Phoenicianism*, in the 1920s (Firro, 2006a). For example, the latter's most radical form, called *protectionist* by Traboulsi (2007, p.82) asked for the simple annexation of Lebanon by France based on the Algerian model, because it viewed Maronites as being "French since times immemorial".

Characteristics of this *Lebanist* identity were grounded on the autonomy or the independence of the Mountain through history. From its Phoenician origins up until Maronite resistance against the Arab Muslim invaders, *Lebanists* perceived Lebanon as having a unique character that needed to be preserved. Also, to conciliate the conflicting fact that Lebanese were Arabic-speakers, they diminished the role of language as a major determinant of identity. For them, culture rather than language or race was the key determinant of national identity (Kaufmann, 2001). In this respect, some of them perceived Arabic as playing the role of a common *lingua franca* in the region. It could therefore be supplanted later by any other language such as the French for instance (Firro, 2006a). As stated earlier, their ideas were influenced by European nationalism and conveyed mainly through the Jesuit missions which had a direct influence on the elites (Kaufman, 2001).

Later, in the newly created Lebanon, many of the public administration staff were chosen among the Jesuit schools' graduates (Kaufman, 2001). Therefore, it is not surprising that ideas of Jesuit scholars such as Henri Lammens were passed to the local elites and decision-makers. The latter Jesuit scholar constructed the idea of "Liban Refuge", in which Mount Lebanon was perceived as the asylum of the region's oppressed minorities (Kaufman, 2001). Thus, *Phoenicianism* was nothing else than a Western-centric, non-Arab, Christian-Maronite aspiration for an independent Mount Lebanon, determined by a peculiar culture, and based on an ancient and glorious history, as well as important geographical specificities opened towards the Mediterranean as the Phoenicians were. It was then, by definition, an isolationist and exclusivist understanding of the Lebanese identity.

All in all, and in contrast with other Arab and Middle Eastern modern states, the creation of Lebanon was not solely based on the will of the colonial ruling powers. In this regard, the Maronite Christian community of Mount Lebanon appeared as one of the only groups who knew what they wanted, and the French were ready to listen to their claims (Salibi, 1998, p. 25). For others, the "elected" and multi-confessional Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon's *Mutesarrifate*, with the shifting mentality from feudalism to confessionalism, had also a role in advocating for the creation of a Lebanese independent state (Simon, 1995). But Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007) minimizes the non-colonial role of the creation of Lebanon as it is. For him, its creation is rather inscribed under the *ethnicization* process of the people living in this region (p.76). In other words, religious confessions were approached by colonial powers in the same way as were European ethnic minorities. The efforts and lobbying of *Lebanists* were finally concretized by the French colonial power with the creation of the State of Lebanon in 1920. In this regard, various Lebanese delegations visited Europe before and during the Versailles Peace Conference to actively support the establishment of a Greater Lebanese entity. One of those was even headed by the Maronite Patriarch Elias Howayek himself, who thoroughly advocated for the enlargement of Lebanon by including the agricultural regions of Beqaa and Akkar in order to ensure viability and food security for the new state (cf. Simon, 1995; Salibi, 1998). Their insistence on this particular point was maybe exacerbated by the trauma caused by the recent great famine that ravaged Lebanon during World War I.

3.4.3. From the Creation of Lebanon to The National Pact (1920-1943)

Right after the creation of the Lebanese state, some difficulties started to emerge. Obviously, not all compatriots of the newly created state wanted to be part of it. In this respect, many non-Maronite Christians – like Greek Catholics in Zahleh- were in favor for an annexation with Syria (Traboulsi, 2007). Furthermore, most of its Muslim population boycotted Lebanon (Salibi, 1998). This is a great example of how actors' identity can be evaluated through their actions. Indeed, since the beginning, *Arabism* (whether domestic or external) confronted *Lebanism* on all fundamental issues. But the real problem was somewhere beyond: the first was promoted by Christians (mostly Maronites) while the second by mostly Muslims (mainly Sunnis). *Lebanists* saw Lebanon as a Christian heartland, while *Arabists* wanted irredentism (El-Solh, 2004). This ideological division along latent sectarian and religious lines were to become deeply problematic (Salibi, 1998). Since the "victorious" form of the Lebanese nationalism was mainly carried out by the discourse of Maronite intellectuals, and tried to incorporate under its umbrella regions that were traditionally not complaisant with its ideas, Muslims accused the creation of Lebanon as being a French colonial project serving the "Maronite interests" (Firro, 2006a, p. 19). Addressing this issue by either deconstructing, reshaping or attenuating the exclusivist aspect of the Lebanese national idea seemed to be crucial. The attempts for such initiatives mark the second phase of the Lebanese national identity construction which took place during the French Mandate (1920-1943). As expected, in a logic of encouraging Muslims for cooperation within the newly-created Lebanese state,

> (…) Christian-Lebanese leaders set out to modify Lebanese nationalism and somehow adapt it to Lebanon's multi-communal character. They began to search for common denominators among the diverse communities that could be incorporated in Lebanism, without renouncing its basic concepts, such as the 'historical continuity' of Lebanon (Firro, 2006a, p. 20).

The main and most notable *entrepreneur* of Lebanese identity during this period is undoubtably Michel Chiha, a rich Christian Catholic businessman who belongs to the intellectual elite and a Jesuit student alumnus. Chiha believed in integrating other communities than Maronites into the Lebanese project (Firro, 2006a). He was the main actor who drafted the first Lebanese constitution of 1926. He mitigated the exclusion of non-Maronites by introducing the religious communities-

based representation in the political system. This was based of Henri Lammens concept of "Liban Refuge", a safe haven for all the persecuted religious minorities of the region. He believed that granting power-sharing through proportional representation by quotas to all sects would ultimately reduce dissatisfaction. As Kais Firro says:

> By ensuring proportional representation of Lebanon's different ethnic communities and the equality of all Lebanese before the law, the constitution was designed to create a basis for power sharing as part of the process of nation-building (Firro, 2006a, p. 19).

Consequently, the constitution of 1926 introduced a hybrid compromise between republican liberal democracy and confessional rights and representation (Traboulsi, 2007). Its Article 95 granted fair distribution of governmental posts between religious communities, while its Article 9 consecrated personal status regulation to the sects (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 90). These became the most prominent features of the Lebanese peculiar political system. Its details are revealed later in this section.

Undeniably, Chiha built another version of *Lebanism* which minimized its *Phoenicianist* wing. This way, he attempted to bridge with other communities for a transcendent and inclusive Lebanese common identity for all of its religious components. His vision of Lebanese nationalism can be therefore considered as nothing more than an additional "ideological construct to eliminate the 'threat' of any form of Arabism becoming the national ideology of modern Lebanon" (Firro, 2006a, p. 21). The main difference of Chiha's understanding lays in his aptitude to provide an identity for the new Lebanese territorial state in contrast with his predecessors who had to justify the creation of a Lebanese state per se (Firro, 2006a). His syncretistic approach must be understood under the mottos of "unity in diversity" and "diversity is our destiny" (Firro, 2006a, p. 22), which can be achieved in a pluralistic parliamentarian democracy where the representatives of the different confessions can deliberate. This formula aims at giving a chance to other communities' elites to recognize the Lebanese state and involve them through power-sharing (Firro, 2006a). The discourse of diversity came to regulate most of the elite's discourse (Firro, 2006a). This revised version of *Lebanism* worked, not only among other Christians, but also in attracting and convincing to some extent the Druze and Shia communities: for the Druze, it was easy to see Lebanon as the continuation of their feudal pre-modern Emirate, while both Druze and Shia could adhere to the idea of a Lebanon *refuge* for minorities (Salibi, 1998). Obviously, it was more difficult to convince Sunni Muslims who had no apparent reason to do so. Finally, Chiha's ideas

were to be contested by more radical *Lebanists* such as Emile Eddé for example, who went as far as lobbying in France for the reduction of Greater Lebanon by underlining the fragility of its current borders since, according to him, it incorporated Muslim-inhabited territories that would threaten its identity's defensibility (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 90).

Chiha's ideology had also another important aspect that is worth mentioning here. This aspect defined the economic identity of Lebanon, and this one was more appealing for Sunnis, especially for their urban merchant elites. Its idea is also linked to the thinker's socioeconomic wealthy background. In this regard, we often hear the famous saying that describes Lebanon as being the "Switzerland of the Middle East". This comparison was developed and promoted by Chiha (Firro, 2006a). Lebanon was thus granted with a new identity dimension: in addition of being a "federation of sectarian cantons", it acquired the title of the "banker of the region", and a destination for alpine tourism and estivation that are all similar to the Swiss model (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 92). Based on his own social circle's interests, Chiha wanted Lebanon to become a commercial and financial hub of the region by applying an ultraliberal economic *laissez-faire* model. This mercantilist view and discourse was promoted, along with Chiha, by Charles Corm – a convinced radical *Phoenicianist*- since their interests were in a Greater Lebanon ruled by influential rich families of Beirut (Kaufmann, 2001). It is this particular point that marks a door opener for the integration of Muslims in the Lebanese project. Indeed, economy has no religion. Convincing rich Muslim Sunni merchants to associate with Christian merchants in the Lebanese "business project" was the best entry point. This was to be concretized under the so-called National Pact of 1943, an unwritten gentlemen's agreement that is generally seen as a compromise between the Maronite and Sunni wealthy elites, which institutionalized power-sharing confessionalism (cf. Traboulsi, 2007).

The Pact was sealed between Bechara El Khoury, a notable Maronite who was recently elected President of the Republic, and Riad El Solh, a member of the Sunni elite who was appointed Prime Minister. El Khoury represented the Maronite vision of a Western-centered Lebanon separated from its Arab background, whereas El Solh was an advocate and militant of Arabism which sought union with Syria (Traboulsi, 2007). These two entrepreneurs of identity profited from the contextual weakness of the structure in order to challenge and modify the Lebanese state identity in accordance with their own understanding. Indeed, the context was marked by a regressing French control caused by the German occupation of its territories during World War II, as well as

by the British support for the two men in which it saw a way to promote its own interests at the detriment of its French ally (cf. Salibi, 1992, 1998; Traboulsi, 2007). As a result, the National Pact set the ground for political life after the independence of Lebanon from French rule. Through this pact,

> The Moslems promised loyalty to Lebanon as an independent state, and agreed to cease their demands for the dissolution of Lebanon in a larger Arab entity; the Christians promised to regard Lebanon as a member of the Arab family of nations and to follow a national policy that does not run contrary to the general Arab interest (Salibi, 1971, p. 83).

Instead of agreeing on a common ground, the two poles preferred to make concessions from their own convictions and revendications without really solving the identity gap between the two visions for the country. This formula made Georges Naccache (1949) to criticize the Pact through his famous saying of "deux négations ne font pas une nation!", two negations would not make a nation.

On another hand, the National Pact was here to complement the constitution and fill-in some of its missing gaps. According to Traboulsi (2007), this happened on four major fronts: (1) the Pact confirmed and institutionalized the previously-established confessional power-sharing status quo imbedded in Article 95 of the constitution, by granting the Presidency of the Republic to the Maronites, the Premiership to Sunnis, and the Parliament Speaker's post to Shia Muslims (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 110). (2) It also defined the official state's identity in an ambiguous way by stating in the Constitution's very first Article that Lebanon has an "Arab face" (or profile), rather than being an Arab state per se. (3) It condemned colonialism and prohibited the use of Lebanon as a passage or outpost for Western colonial powers, and (4) it integrated Muslims in the decision-making process at the expense of the Maronite elite who sought exclusivity on the state's posts and administrations (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 110). Definitely, this formula was a great milestone in the construction of the Lebanese State's identity, but it is just a stage in the long nation-building process of Lebanon.

3.4.4. The Post-Independence Era (1943-1975)

In the period that followed independence, the Lebanese economic elite, also named *consortium* by some historians (cf. Traboulsi, 2007), adopted the above-mentioned mercantilist national identity that promoted their own class's interests (Lawson, 2021). By following their interests, they

achieved full economic and financial rupture with Syria, which they described as strengthening national independence and sovereignty (Traboulsi, 2007). But the political identity was soon to face some serious challenges. In this regard, the *Lebanist* elite in power had to consolidate, develop, and even securitize by all means the freshly-adopted distinct trans-communitarian Lebanese identity. These efforts were led mostly by the Maronites, as well as by their allies from other sects. They had to face the Pan-Arabism of the Sunni community's overwhelming majority by themselves, with little to no help from Shia or Druze, as well as with internal division inside the Christian ranks (Salibi, 1971). The *Arabist* pressure was not only domestic. Regional emerging powers such as Iraq and Jordan were actively working on pushing towards integrating Lebanon into their unionist projects (Traboulsi, 2007). Bechara El Khoury skillfully succeeded in navigating through these dangers by actively involving official Lebanon in the Arab League project. This was done by constantly reiterating the country's fidelity towards its "Arab engagements" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 111). In this respect, with the help of Chiha, he managed to "impose" in the Arab League's charter of 1945 a special clause "calling upon all the Arab states to respect Lebanon's independence and sovereignty in its current borders" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 112). In a will to secure its perennity, Lebanese diplomacy won also that executive decisions would be taken upon unanimous vote rather than majority (Traboulsi, 2007).

On the domestic level, and in addition to *Arabist* threat, the state had to deal with its *Syrianist* rival. In 1932, Antoun Saadeh, a Greek Orthodox thinker from the mountains, created the Syrian National Socialist Party (SNSP) which actively militated for the creation of a greater Syrian nation including the entire fertile crescent (Khouri A. , 2021). The Lebanese state profited from minor unrests between the SNSP and the right-wing Christian Phalangist party to eliminate Saadeh by condemning him to death in 1949 for conspiration against the state (Traboulsi, 2007; Khoury A., 2021). But this move did not resorb the threat since the SNSP tried to overthrow the government through a military coup in 1961 that ended in failure (cf. Khoury A., 2021).

Another significant challenge for the Lebanese young identity came into existence after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. An interesting point here is how the Lebanese government led by its "Maronitist" elite dealt with the Palestinian refugee crisis following the *Nakba*. The government pictured the flood of the thousands of Palestinians escaping towards Lebanon, as an unbearable economic burden, and tried to expel them towards neighboring Syria unsuccessfully (Traboulsi,

2007). This particular decision tells us a lot about the history of how official Lebanon handles refugees.

But instead of only trying to consolidate the acquired identity, the governing elite sometimes undertook more aggressive policies which triggered great resentment. By having the Presidency of the Republic - constitutionally the country's strongest political post (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 109) – some of the Maronite actors tried to stir the identity towards a more radical *Lebanist* understanding. This "political Maronitism" generated growing frustration among other communities that will have some major repercussions over the years to come. Frustrations exacerbated for the first time in 1958, when the actions of the Maronite President Camille Chamoun, in an attempt to contain the expanding Pan-Arabism of Nasser who threatened the country's integrity, and based on his adherence to the US-led Bagdad Pact, triggered a small quasi-civil war (cf. Salibi, 1971). This event was a prelude for the bloody civil war that will rip up the country for fifteen years. Chamoun's authoritarian actions stretched the limits of the National Pact (Traboulsi, 2007), destabilizing by that the fragile sectarian status quo on which the state's identity was built. The violent interlude was resolved by a small agreement that reaffirmed and deepened the trend of sectarian repartition of the state's public administrative posts that were to be from now on, divided equally "between Christians and Moslems, and as equitably as possible among the sects, in order to ensure the maintenance of the national unity of the Lebanese people" (Salibi, 1971, p. 83). This formula, based on the slogan of "no victor and vanquished" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 137), and consolidated by the moderate governance of President Fouad Chehab, remained unchallenged up until the upcoming civil war.

But the fire kept on burning under the ashes. In fact, the likelihood for sectarian violence "had its strongholds in the mountains" with its heritage of interconfessional rancor, mainly between Christians and Druze (Salibi, 1998, p. 182). These were inherited from the 19th century when the two communities undertook mutual clashes and massacres (cf. Salibi, 1992). Traditional sectarian resentment was soon added, on one hand, to the social and economic injustice of the growing proportion of deprived Lebanese, and on the other, to a strengthening Pan-Arabism fueled by the recurrent Arab-Israeli wars (cf. Salibi, 1998; Traboulsi, 2007). Finally, the legalization of the Palestinian armed presence, followed by the relocation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Jordan to Lebanon, was to be the last "ingredient" in the civil war's recipe.

3.4.5. The Civil War (1975-1990)

The Civil War period (1975-1990) is unquestionably the phase where the Lebanese state's identity based on consensual sectarian power-sharing was to be challenged and questioned the most by other competing identities and their respective discourses. Furthermore, it reached a point of rupture in which its survival was at real stake. The dislocation of the state's institutions, among which the collapse of Lebanese army, the rise of militias that promoted contradicting and irreconcilable ideologies, as well as the "*cantonization*" and ethnic cleansings that resulted from militias' actions, pushed the country towards partition. As presented earlier, the state's identity was challenged on many fronts: indeed, various segments were deeply frustrated and aspired for substantial change. The conflict was so complex, that presenting it thoroughly would be out of the scope of this analysis. In short, Pan-Arabists and Pan-Syrianists joined forces with Progressists, Leftists and Palestinians to get rid of - what they saw as - the right-wing, Western, anti-Arab *exclusivist* and mostly Christian Maronite state. On the other side, right-wing Christian militants not only wanted to maintain their acquired primacy over the state's power, but also aspired to push their *exclusivist* understanding to its paroxysm. At some point, the latter faction envisaged of dividing Lebanon to a smaller entity where Christians would have absolute demographic majority. For example, Phalangists proposed federalism as a solution for Lebanon, by dividing it into five separate regions (Traboulsi, 2007). During the first phase of the conflict, Leftist Progressists and Pro-Palestinians blamed right-wing Christian Phalangists for their "isolationism" towards the Arab world, "*in'izaliyya*" in Arabic (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 187), which were previously borrowed from European right-wing Christian conservationist thoughts (Mazzucotelli, 2022). But these accusations reinforced the Phalangists' popularity among Christians in general (Traboulsi, 2007). Later in 1980, Phalangist discourse accused the Leftists Pro-Palestinians of seeking to "change Lebanon's identity in order to *Arabise* and *Islamise* the country", and considered the Christian faction as representing "real Lebanon" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 211). Interestingly, despite the unreasoned sectarian turn that the war was taking (Corm, 2003), all of the belligerents were openly asking for the political secularization of the Lebanese state (cf. Traboulsi, 2007). But these claims were not sincere: rather, they were part of the "confidence game" played by traditional confessional parties, who knew that the abolition of political sectarianism was merely impossible to be achieved before its abolition from the society first (Salibi, 1998, p. 196). Christians were not ready to concede of their privileges, such as the 6 to 5 ratio that they enjoyed in the parliament's

seats repartition. They sabotaged any attempt to review these kinds of agreements (cf. Traboulsi, 2007). In order to protect their interests, especially those linked to containing the Palestinian threat, they even broke the ultimate taboo of getting into tacit alliance with the State of Israel (Traboulsi, 2007), official Lebanon's undisputed enemy. Concerning this point, the civil war was soon internationalized, and out of the many foreign powers involved through years, Israel and especially Syria, were the two states who intervened the most through direct military occupation. The Syrian military occupation was to mark the political scene of Lebanon in the two upcoming decades.

However, even during these years, demonstrations for peaceful coexistence continued to reiterate the Lebanese people's consensus for their shared identity (Hanf, 1993, p. 640). Beside the cartel of militias and their local and international sponsors, consociation was already deeply rooted in the mindsets of the population (Hanf, 1993, p. 640). At some punctual moments, even extremist discourses were appeased. One cannot but mention in this regard the famous speeches of the right-wing Maronite Phalangist leader Bachir Gemayel who, right after his election as President of the Republic in 1982, switched his radical *isolationist* and *exclusivist* discourse towards an inclusive one. Gemayel declared that Lebanon is "a country of Lebanese Christians and Muslims" that has an "oriental belonging and Arab links" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 216). He also reiterated national territorial integrity under the famous slogan about the will to liberate all of the "10,452 km^2" (Ajemian, 2008), which remains in use by Phalangists and Lebanese Forces right-wing Christian political parties up until this day.

All in all, the historiography based on French influence was crumbling during the civil war, but many of its *cliché* elements survived (Corm, 2003, p. 20). Furthermore, the conflict gave room to other rising competing identity narratives and agendas that were to challenge once again the official state's identity, which, although weakened, managed to survive this period.

3.4.6. The Post-War Period (1990-2010)

The post-war era is characterized by numerous milestones that reshaped the Lebanese national identity by adding to it some institutionalized elements. Concerning this phase, three major milestones are to be studied in focus. The first two come in the context of the rise and fall of the Syrian occupation's influence and grip over the country, while the third is linked to the redefinition of the *consociational* formula in the years that followed the regain of sovereignty. The first one is consecrated by the Taef Agreements of 1989, the second one is defined by the 2005 popular

mobilization for the ousting of Syrian occupation, while the third one is conceptualized by the Doha Agreement of 2008. Each of these moments is marked by the reconfiguration of the sectarian power-sharing formula as well as by the redefinition of the state's relations with the neighboring Syrian regime.

(1) The Taef Agreements and its Consequences

In October 1989, in the context of a domestic, regional and international will to durably stop the hostilities, the remaining members of the last elected parliament who accepted the deal's conditions, met in the Saudi city of Taef in order to agree on changes in the constitutional power-sharing formula of Lebanon (Corm, 2003). It came as a new social contract, in which the society reiterated its will for peace and "*vivre-ensemble*", and as a reform plan for the state and its institutions (Karam, 2012). Additionally, the agreements reaffirmed the unitary character of the state in contrast with the federalist tendencies that thrived during the conflict (Maalouf Monneau, 2015). Nevertheless, the bloodshed continued for an additional year (Corm, 2003). The Taef Agreements, called "*Wathiqat al-wifaq al-watani*" (in Arabic, National Consensus Document), were constitutionalized by the parliament in 1990 (Reinkowski, 1997), pushing Lebanon into its Second Republic (Corm, 2003, p. 225). Changes are to be understood along the particular context that draw the post-war period. Although conceptualized under a narrative of "*la ghalib wala maghlub*" (in Arabic, neither winners nor losers) status quo solution (Reinkowski, 1997, p. 501), Christian Maronites in general, and their prevailing *Lebanist* understanding of the Lebanese state's identity, seemed to be the major losers of this agreement. This happened mainly because of their strategic miscalculated alliances during the war. In parallel, the Syrian Baathist regime's occupation successfully imposed some of its own visions on the Lebanese state. Its local allies made of former militia leaders took the control over the state's institutions. Following the agreements, militias had to render their weapons. All had to abide but one, the Hezbollah, a rising Shia Islamist militant group, which was to be labelled as being a resistant group against Israel. Concerning the state identity per se, the Taef Agreements had some consequential implications regarding its reconfiguration. These can be summarized under three major points: (1) the reallocation of the sectarian proportions in the power-sharing formula, (2) the redefinition of the state's Arab identity, and (3) the revision of the relationship with Syria.

Regarding the first point, confessional *consociationalism* was reconfirmed (Karam, 2012), but the sectarian quotas' repartition was revised from the previous 5 to 6 proportion to equality between Muslims and Christians (Taef Agreements, 1989). Nonetheless, the agreement stipulated a "disclaimer" according to which political sectarianism must be gradually abolished from all of its institutions (Taef Agreements, First- General Principles and Reforms, II. Political Reforms. G., 1989). And this must be a "national objective" (Maalouf Monneau, 2015, p. 50). In addition, the President of the Republic's prerogatives were reduced and transferred to the Council of Ministers. The executive power was to be practiced from now on in a collegial way (Maalouf Monneau, 2015). This transfer of power from the Maronite President to the Council of Ministers marks the end of the "political Maronistism" (Maalouf Monneau, 2015). It opens the door for "political Sunnism" - characterized by the rising practical power given to the President of the Council of Ministers (the Prime Minister) who must be always Sunni Muslim - which defines the Rafik Hariri era of the 1990s (cf. Corm, 2003). This constitutional reconfiguration is also marked by a shift from Christian-Muslim political division towards a Sunni-Shia rift (Bahout, 2016). This must be understood under the general regional geopolitical context characterized by the shift towards a balance of power driven by the ideological prominence of Iran and Saudi Arabia with their respective Islamist ideological agendas. Concerning the second point, the Taef Agreements led to an important change of the state identity's definition. In this respect, instead of being a country with an "Arab face", Lebanon became "Arab in identity and belonging" (Taef Agreements, I. General Principles, 1989). This close was to be integrated in the constitution's preamble, in a will to definitively close the debate around this question (Nammour, 2007). Finally, the Taef Agreements acclaimed Syria as enjoying "privileged relations" with Lebanon (Reinkowski, 1997). This was to drive the post-war era which consecrated the role of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and its direct involvement in its internal politics on all levels, with the compliance of the local political elite (cf. Hanf, 1993). In this respect, beyond simply administrating the country, the Syrian "tutor" imposed a vision of close relationship through, among others, the 1991 "Treaty of Brotherhood" which was considered by Theodor Hanf as one of the possible means towards the "syrianization" of Lebanon with time (Hanf, 1993, pp. 643-644). Indeed, the pro-Syrians were promoting the idea of "two states, one people" (Chalcraft, 2006; Balanche, 2005). As Balanche (2006) notes it, Hafez El Assad might have been making allusion to the Chinese "one state, two systems" saying. So, Lebanon was seen as Syria's own Hong Kong: Syria would be the

"controlling China", while Lebanon's liberal economy and its integration in the world's economic and financial systems would make it "Hong Kong" (Hanf, 1993). The contrast between this economic identity led by the policy of Prime Minister Hariri, and between the continuous guerilla actions of Hezbollah against Israel made later the influential *Annahar* newspaper to compare this dichotomy as of an "existential choice" to be made between the "Hanoi" and the "Hong Kong" models (Baidatz, 2001). In parallel, the Syrian occupation maintained a democratic façade, but systematically persecuted the opposition, and promoted instead its own direct governance of tutorship through establishing the so-called *Troika*[44] which consecrated the tendency for decision-making outside of the state's institutions (Abi Khalil, 2021).

Last but not least, on the societal level, communitarian religious affiliation seemed to become more and more secondary. It was now coming after the overarching supra-sectarian identity belonging to Lebanon, showing by that the maturity of the Lebanese national identity among its population (Hanf, 1993). All what they aspired to now was peace, reconciliation and coexistence. The Taef Agreements were somehow a concretization of this will, of course, along the fatigue of a long civil war. According to a more simplistic interpretation, the belonging to Lebanon and to its people as a feeling exists "among a great part of the Lebanese" (Reinkowski, 1997, p. 494). In this respect, national identity is not the direct result of a nationalist ideology, rather, it can be simply based on the common history of existence, suffering and failure (Reinkowski, 1997). The post-war period is also marked by growing resentment of the Lebanese population towards the Syrian regime's occupation. In fact, most of Lebanese perceived Syria as an invader and an occupier. And this perception was quite understandable[45]. It somehow reinforced the demarcation of the distinct Lebanese social identity by distancing itself from the Syrian "other". Lebanese, and especially Christians, viewed the flood of Syrian workers who came to the country in the 1990s as a direct threat to its sectarian balance, culture and identity (Chalcraft, 2006). Unfortunately, and due to the Syrian regime's occupying tactics relying on a vast cohort of civilian spies and informers, it resulted in associating all Syrians to their regime (cf. Chalcraft, 2016; Maalouf Monneau, 2015;

[44] The *Troika* describes the informal decision-making mechanisms that involved consensus between the President of the Republic Elias Hraoui, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri under the Syrian occupation's overarching supervision which marked the political life of the 1990s. See in this respect Georges Corm (2003) and Gaelle Abi Khalil (2021).

[45] The Syrian occupation as well as the Syrian workers in Lebanon were committing numerous exactions on all levels. For a brief summary of these behaviors, see Chalcraft (Les travailleurs syriens au Liban et le rôle de l'État : économie politique, ambitions populaires, 2006).

Bou Khater, 2017). This will have major implications on the general perception and attitude of the Lebanese society towards the Syrian refugees. But before jumping there, the growing resentment was translated into political action which waited to the appropriate local and international geopolitical contexts to achieve independence. The favorable circumstances finally came in 2005 with the so-called "Cedar Revolution".

(2) The "Cedar Revolution" and its Consequences

Consequently, the second phase of the Lebanese post-war identity shaping's process marks its milestone in 2005. In this regard, triggered by the assassination of Hariri on the 14th of February, and having enough of the Syrian occupation, the Lebanese joined massively the streets (Maalouf Monneau, 2015; Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). Youth and elderly chanted together slogans such as "Syria out" and "Freedom, sovereignty and independence" (Ciezadlo, 2011). It gave the people new hopes for a transcendent trans-confessional Lebanese identity for the first time since 1943 (Frangié, 2009). The mobilization lasted for months, but the highest numbers of participants was reached on the 14th of March, which came as a reaction to the massive pro-Syrian protest organized by Hezbollah and its allies on the 8th of March. The events were soon politicized, and the two dates gave their names to the two major political coalitions which were to draw the political life of the following decade by dividing vertically the entire domestic political field along this line. It also took a sectarian turn. In fact, while most of Christians, Druze, but also Sunnis rallied to the 14th of March *independentist* revendications, the majority of the Shia community led by Hezbollah, joined the opposite camp (cf. Abi Khalil, 2021). This vertical scission exposed the country to a Sunni-Shia confessional confrontation, replacing by that the traditional broader Christian-Muslim one. This might be explainable by the demographic changes in which these two communities gained the first two positions in terms of numbers, but also by the growing role and prerogatives that their leadership acquired after Taef at the expenses of the Maronites. The reappearing sectarian discourse that followed made Samir Kassir to declare that 2005 was an "unachieved spring" (Maalouf Monneau, 2015, p. 87). But this "*intifada*" (revolt in Arabic) left the country with an "aftertaste of a new collective consciousness" (Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008, p. 9). What is interesting for us here, is that finally, after decades of resistance, the Sunni community adhered to the idea of a sovereign Lebanon. The "Lebanon first" slogan of Saad Hariri, who inherited his father as the most prominent Sunni leader, shows that the Sunni Muslims have finally

overwhelmingly rallied to the *Lebanist* idea of Lebanon (Nammour, 2007). In contrast, the Shiite community which was previously more or less convinced by the idea, developed its own competing concept of a different Lebanon. These dynamics must be understood under a broader regional political trend that started to develop and gain popularity in the 1980s, namely *Islamism*, and its radically different approach and discourse about the state and its identity.

While *Islamist* political formations started to rise simultaneously in both Sunni and Shia milieus, Shia *Islamism* took in Lebanon a considerable weight on the political scene. In this respect, the Hezbollah became in the last two decades the strongest and most influential political formation (cf. Mervin, 2008). Therefore, it is a must to analyze it in a few sentences. In fact, by addressing the social frustration of a deprived and neglected Shia community, but also by taking over and monopolizing the resistance against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, the Hezbollah managed gradually to become the major representant of Lebanese Shiites. This intra-communitarian social revolution led to the replacement of the traditional- mostly feudal- Shia political elite which could not address the aspirations of the booming sect (cf. Corm, 2003; Hazran, 2009). The militant group's ambiguous position towards the Lebanese state evolved through time. In the 1980s, and as a reaction to the Maronite *exclusivist* and *isolationist* discourse, Hezbollah was openly advocating for the establishment of an Islamic republic in Lebanon (Hazran, 2009; Daher, 2017), based more or less on the model of its Iranian sponsor's "*Wilayat Al Faqih*" (Mervin, 2008). Interestingly, the Taef Agreements provided a structural boundary for the *Islamicist* velleities: in its text, the Lebanese state was defined as democratic and parliamentary, and stipulated that the source of power must emanate from the people, contrasting by that the *Islamist* understanding that only recognizes the sovereignty of God (Maalouf Monneau, 2015). In the 1990s, the militant group switched towards a more moderate position by engaging partially in the institutional life of Lebanon. In this respect, the "*Lebanonization*" process (Mervin, 2008, p. 18) made the Hezbollah to participate in the consecutive parliamentary elections (Daher, 2017). Later, as a reaction to the 14th of March anti-Syrian mobilization, the Hezbollah changed again its strategy, and participated in all the governments after 2005 (Daher, 2017), by naming ministers according to its parliamentary and sectarian quotas. The party's discourses stress on the importance of maintaining the confessional power-sharing formula and its concept of coexistence (Daher, 2017). But the militant group is also an *entrepreneur* of identity which competes with the official identity of the state by promoting a "society of resistance" (Le Thomas, 2008). Furthermore, its

substantive weapons' arsenal and military formation makes it to appear and behave as a state within the state, putting it de facto in the position of a competitor with the state itself.

(3) The Doha Agreement and its Consequences

The Syrian army's withdrawal from Lebanon in mid-2005 led the country towards what is called by some as "the second independence" (Frangié, 2009). This reality had major consequences on the domestic political power dynamics. In fact, the political system of Lebanon was relying on the Syrian regime, which played as an external regulator (Bahout, 2016). With the absence of such an external force, the Lebanese system became chaotic (Bahout, 2016). On the other hand, the rising Sunni-Shia fracture continued to develop dangerously towards direct confrontation along the 8th and 14th of March coalitions. The main debate was evolving around questioning the legitimacy of the weapons of Hezbollah, which pushed the militant group into a defensive attitude. On the 7th of May, 2008, triggered by a ministerial decision to dismantle its wired communication network (Haddad S. , 2009), Hezbollah initiated a small "civil war" that recalled the ghosts of the past. The violent clashes that led to the death of hundreds needed again to be treated by an agreement. As a result, the political leaders met in Doha, Qatar, under regional and international patronage (Salamey, 2009). There, they negotiated and signed the document of "The Lebanese National Dialogue Conference" that reconfigured once again the power-sharing formula, hence impacting on the state's identity. Beside representing the culmination of the Shiite long empowerment's process over the Lebanese state (Hazran, 2009), the Doha agreement has some interesting elements that are worth to be mentioned here. As usual, the agreement reiterated the Lebanese formula based on coexistence, also known as the "vivre-ensemble" (Doha Agreement, 2008). Beyond that, the agreement consecrated the practice of "national unity" governments' formation in which all parliamentary blocs are represented according to their respective weights, and most importantly, through which the opposition is granted a blocking third with a veto power over governmental decisions (Haddad S. , 2009; Young, 2022). In other words, sectarian *consociationalism* was once again consolidated, this time within the Council of Ministers itself. It became a mere reflection of the parliament, where numbers of ministerial portfolios are allocated accordingly (Noun, 2008). This reconfiguration was nonetheless a habile maneuver that granted Hezbollah – and consequently the Shia community - control over the executive, even when in a parliamentarian minority position. But its direct result was translated in practice into the paralysis of the executive,

which, from that moment, needed consensus for effective decision-making (Young, 2022). It is in this particular context that the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war started in 2010-2011. This episode had a lot to tell us about the Lebanese identity, but its analysis is tackled in the last chapter.

3.4.7. Actors of Lebanese Identity

We have seen through the previous paragraphs how promoting actors and entrepreneurs of the Lebanese identity managed to impose, negotiate or adapt *their* vision for *their* Lebanon on the state through modern history. Entrepreneurs of the nascent Lebanese identity can be thus categorized into three groups: first, the Maronite church and catholic missionaries such as the Maronite Patriarch Elias Howayek and the French Jesuits (cf. Kaufmann, 2001); second, the thinkers and activists such as Boutros Nujaym, Charles Corm and Michel Chiha (Salameh, 2020; Firro, 2006a); and third, the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon which subsisted from the *Mutasarrefate* era (cf. Simon, 1995) as well as the French mandate itself. Later, actors and entrepreneurs of Lebanese identity were the political elites such as Riad El Solh, and Bechara El Khoury. They represented the merging interests of the city's merchants and the mountains' notables (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 93). In other words, these merchants saw a unique economic opportunity in the creation of Lebanon, and therefore joined the Maronite notables of the mountains who wanted to grant autonomy for what they perceived as a peculiar Christian distinct identity for the mountain. This synergy became a basic component of the Lebanese state identity. Afterwards, other elites took over identity construction. We can list here Camille Chamoun and Bachir Gemayel among many others, but also the actors of the Taef and Doha Agreements, as well as the elites of the 14th of March "revolution". Finally, the Syrian occupying regime and other actors such as the Hezbollah for instance also took part in the identity construction of the Lebanese state as we saw, by imposing their vision on the state for the former, or on consequents parts of the society for the latter. In addition to all these, we have to mention the role of other foreign powers and actors who at some point influenced in shaping this identity. The best illustration here is the Pope John Paul II who described Lebanon as a "message" of freedom and pluralism for the West and East in his discourse held while visiting the country in 1997 (Aubin-Boltanski, 2008). His slogan was adopted and used later by political formations (Aubin-Boltanski, 2008). Nevertheless, we have seen that these actors and entrepreneurs were not alone. Others were constantly challenging and contesting this

construction. The next sub-section maps quicky the different competing narratives of these actors who contested and challenged the adopted Lebanese national identity through modern history.

3.4.8. Competing Actors and Narratives

The previous paragraphs give us already a comprehensive overview of the many actors who challenged and contested the Lebanese state's identity from its conceptualization as an idea, to its creation as a state, up until the early 21st century. These contesting actors based their rejection on their own narratives which competed with the adopted - and constantly altered- Lebanese formula. Each era had its own challenges. In the very beginning, the Lebanese formula had to compete with Arab and Syrian nationalisms. Later, it was confronted to the leftist and progressist narratives, and finally, to the rise of Islamism(s). It is noteworthy to point out that many movements and political organizations that fall under these narratives often "coalized" and acted together against the Lebanese official state's identity. Also, many of them have an eclectic ideology that mixed sometimes Arabism with Socialism for example. Therefore, dissecting them each one alone is not evident, but seems necessary in the mapping effort that we are trying to deliver below.

Arabism and Pan-Arabism

We have previously explained how identity construction in the Arab world was partially marked by the history of Arab nationalism, and its ideological variations such as Arabism (*'uruba*), Pan-Arabism (*qawmiyya 'arabiyya*) such as Baathism or Nasserism (cf. Manduchi, 2017). The story started during the *Nahda*, when many Arab thinkers started to develop Arab nationalism in parallel with other competing narratives such as *Syrianism* and *Lebanism*. As a movement, Arab nationalism was concretized for the first time during the Great Arab Revolt led by Sharif Hussein against the Ottoman Empire in 1916 (cf. Salibi, 1998). Many Lebanese Muslims joined and cheered the plan but were soon to be frustrated by the creation of Lebanon. The Sunnis soon became the greatest detractors of the Lebanese state which they considered as a French conspiracy against the realization of their Arab nationalism (Salibi, 1971). Some of their leaders considered France as serving the "separatist elements" that were the Maronites (Firro, 2006a, p. 19). The *Najjada* party was created during that period and called for Arab unity (Traboulsi, 2007). Even after the National Pact of 1943, Lebanon remained for them *Arab* and "its people not a separate Lebanese nation, but part of a larger Arab nation" (Salibi, 1971, p. 84). Therefore, their irredentism stayed latent and waited for the right context to achieve their *Arabist* goals. This context was to be

given by the rise of Nasser in Egypt, and his Pan-Arabist project, to which many Lebanese Muslims adhered (Rabil, 2011). During these years for instance, the Sunni leader Saeb Salam became the main spokesman of Nasserism (Sorby, 2000). The Lebanese Pan-Arabism embraced the Palestinian cause and besieged *Lebanonism* of the Christian Maronite dominant elite, who were left with no other choice than sticking to the status quo of the National Pact and pushing for the country's neutrality (Rabil, 2011). This is a perfect example of how identity from below alters the state's identity through contestation. Pan-Arabism was also translated into structured political parties such as the *Murabitun* among others, who challenged the Lebanese established formula in 1958 and 1975 by participating in the country's armed conflicts.

Syrianism and Pan-Syrianism

We saw previously that *Syrianism* is the idea that considers Greater Syria as a nation by itself. Boutros al-Boustani was one of the firsts to put down the idea of *Syrianism*, which later aimed at the creation of a Greater Syria (Firro, 2006a). With the creation of the modern states after 1920, *Syrianism* became *Pan-Syrianism*, since it aimed at reuniting these entities that it viewed as artificial into one paramount Syrian state. Interestingly, the Pan-Syrianist ideas were supported by many non-Muslims as well, especially by the Melkite Greek Orthodox and Catholics who saw it as a way to challenge *Maronitism*. In fact, if Maronites were in majority in Lebanon, Greek Melkites were in majority among Christians in the Greater Syria (cf. Salibi, 1988, Traboulsi, 2007). These ideas were translated into political action mainly with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) of Antoun Saadeh. He aimed for the creation of a Greater Syria in what he considered as its natural boundaries, including Iraq and Cyprus (Corm, 2003; Traboulsi, 2007). His party was perceived as a serious threat by the *Lebanist* elites. It promoted a mix of fascist nationalist ideas along with secularism (Traboulsi, 2007). Soon, the party was accused of plotting against the state, and Saadeh was condemned and executed in 1949 (Traboulsi, 2007). In 1961, SSNP-affiliated army officers tried a military coup that was aborted and followed by a severe repression against the party (Traboulsi, 2007). The SSNP also challenged the Lebanese formula by taking part in the 1958 and 1975 armed conflicts (cf. Traboulsi, 2007). During the 1970s the SSNP leaders reoriented their ideology towards the left-wing that identified more with Arab causes (el Khazen, 2003).

Leftism

Leftist movements and ideas have a long tradition in Lebanon. In fact, the Lebanese Communist Party was among the first political parties to be founded in the country (el Khazen, 2003). Its narratives should be inscribed in the broader discourse of Soviet Communism (el Khazen, 2003). But Leftist movements are also very diverse. For example, other than the Communist Party, Lebanon saw in the 1960s the rise of the New Left which was simultaneously anti-Soviet, anti-(Nasserist and Baathist) Pan-Arab, and most surprisingly anti-Arab Communist (Guirguis, 2019). Later in the 1970s and up until the first years of the civil war, under the leadership of the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, the founder of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) regrouped all progressist and pro-Palestinian parties, and contested the *Lebanist* Maronite right-wing establishment through political action and armed militantism (cf. el Khazen, 2003; Traboulsi, 2007; Haugbolle, 2013). It also engaged in resisting the Israeli occupation way before the Hezbollah. But in a broader understanding, members of the Communist, Democratic Left, and even the SSNP, the PSP, and other Pan-Arabist parties, can be all categorized under Lebanese Leftism (Haugbolle, 2013). According to Sune Haugbolle (2013), the broader Lebanese Left, "*al-yassar*" in Arabic, aimed to transgress in its discourse and behaviors, especially through their militia actions during the civil war, the symbolic social boundaries of the Lebanese sectarianism, which is in turn defined by the state-society nexus (Haugbolle, 2013). In other words, the Leftist discourse saw Lebanon as a "borderland" instead of a "nation-state" made by the many imagined frontiers between communities that needs to be contested (Haugbolle, 2013). In addition, Leftist ideologies were also obviously confronting the liberal *laissez-faire* economic model of *Lebanism*. Culturally, Lebanese Leftism constituted – and still is- one of the most thriving "kitchens" in searching for alternatives to the Lebanese sectarian formula as well as for anti-system activism, along with other global topics such as feminism, socialism or anti-imperialism for instance (cf. Haugbolle, 2013). Remarkably, many of its core concepts[46] were reused by the Shia Islamist militant group Hezbollah for instance (cf. Haugbolle, 2013). This takes us to the next paragraph.

[46] The three core concepts according to Haugbolle (2013) are: social justice, sectarianism and imperialism.

Islamism(s)

The last few decades witnessed the rise of Islamism and its radically different discourse about state and its identity. In Islam, the sovereignty comes exclusively from God (Rostoványi, 2013, p. 42). In this interpretation, humans are only executors of divine law on earth (Rostoványi, 2013). Consequently, these concepts oppose the very existence of any territorial state and its democratic essence, Lebanon being no exception for that. Beyond that, the rise of Islam as a political ideology is more complex than its religious aspect. Analyzed from a social perspective, the origins of the tensions might reside in the following: Muslims in Lebanon felt as "prejudiced" by the unequal distribution of wealth within the Lebanese formula that gave privileges to Christians, who, in contrast, saw it as a "guarantee" against their fear from Muslim hegemony (Abu Khalil, 1991, p. 390). Both Shia and Sunni Islamism were to challenge once again the Lebanese state's identity.

As we mentioned it before, the Sunni community in the Arab world witnessed the rise of political Islam through Jihadist Salafism, modernism and quietism (Schuck, 2013), or Sunni Takfirism and local militant formations (Cofman Wittes, 2008). Among these, fundamentalists and radicals prone – with some divergences- for *Da'wa* and *Jihad*[47] against temporal territorial states that have not yet embraced their understanding of Islam-as-polity (Dévényi, 2013). Lebanon was no exception for these movements. Beyond the more global Al Qaeda and Daesh terrorist groups, we can give the examples of the *Tawhid*[48] movement of Tripoli during the civil war, but also the *Ahbash*[49], as well as other more radical groups that have violently confronted the state through terrorist actions such as in Donniyeh in 1999-2000[50], or Saida in 2013[51]. Most of them led a radical discourse that

[47] *Da'wa* is the propagation of Islamic faith, understood as a way of propaganda by neo-fundamentalists or Salafis, while *Jihad* refers to the religious "effort" of believers which has many ambiguous interpretations, like the holy armed fight (Dévényi, 2013).
[48] The *Tawhid* movement was created in 1982 in Tripoli. It is a militant Islamist Sunni movement that urged for the liberation of Lebanon from foreign invaders and the creation of an Islamic Republic in the country (Lefèvre, 2021).
[49] *Al-Ahbash* is a quietist Sunni Islamist association that does not promote the creation of an Islamic state (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2002).
[50] On the 1999-2000 New Year's Eve, the Sunni radical "*Takfir wal Hijra"* group attacked the Lebanese Armed Forces in the rural area of Donniyeh, North Lebanon. Its Takfirist ideology not only targeted the Lebanese state (through its army, which retaliated by conducting a vast military operation to irradicate the group), but also its civilian Christian population and non-observant Muslims (Gleis, 2005; Lebanese Army Command - Directorate of Orientation, 2022)
[51] Sheikh Ahmad El-Assir, a radical Sunni cleric led an Anti-Hezbollah and anti-State movements that escalated in 2013 into an armed conflict with the Lebanese army, resulting in the disappearance of El-Assir who was later arrested and sentenced to death without being executed. See in this respect Aljazeera (2017).

challenges the Lebanese formula in drastic ways, by advocating for an Islamic state ruled by the *Sharia* in which for example Lebanese Christians would be subordinated to *Dhimmitude*[52].

On the Shia side, the Hezbollah represents the most relevant Islamist political formation, which also became recently one of the most prominent actors on the Lebanese political scene. The previous paragraphs showed how the "Party of God[53]" had evolving positions towards the Lebanese state through time. From advocating for the establishment of an Islamic Republic (Hazran, 2009; Daher, 2017) based on the Iranian "*Wilayat Al Faqih*" model (Mervin, 2008), the Hezbollah gradually engaged in the Lebanese state's politics. It participated in the elections, then in governments, undertaking by that a "*Lebanonization*" process (Mervin, 2008, p. 18). The gradual engagement of the party in the state's sectarian system can be grasped through its renewed Manifesto of 2009, which, similarly to the Manifesto of 1985, recognizes that the sectarian political system is a major issue for the country's development, but postpones its changes to an undetermined future (Daher, 2017). Paradoxically, Hezbollah denounces and condemns political sectarianism but praises in the meantime the Lebanese sectarian system and its formula of coexistence (Daher, 2017). In summary, the party through his actions was to some extent sucked into the system, pushing its discourse to readapt with a certain level of inconsistency.

3.4.9. Conclusions

All in all, the Lebanese national identity was first formulated, then constantly adapted, changed and challenged through negotiation between actors who were promoting it, and those who were contesting it. The resulting formula was then imposed in a top-down way on the society. This nation-building process is now a reality. Nevertheless, the trans-confessional transcendent national identity might be differing from a person of a certain sect to another. In other words, each person of a certain confession has his own understanding of the Lebanese identity. While this might be true anywhere around the world, in Lebanon, the gap between the different understandings might be somehow wider. Maybe the best way to describe this observation resides in the quote of the famous Gibran Khalil Gibran who wrote: "you have your Lebanon, and I have my own" (Gebran, 1923). We can finally sense that all actors of competing narratives tended through time to somehow

[52] *Dhimmi* or *ahl al dhimma* refers to the protected status enjoyed by the people of the book (Christians and Jews) that Islam grants in return of the payment of a special tax called *jizya*.
[53] *Hezbollah* in Arabic *Hezb Allah*, literally means the "party of God".

coalize and work together pragmatically against the *imposed* state identity, until their eventual entering into power, as it is the case of Hezbollah, which was consequently somehow sucked into the system and had to adapt and "lebanize" its discourse and actions, but contributed in altering some of its aspects.

The analysis of the Lebanese identity construction echoes back to the theories that were presented in the previous chapter about the important role of actors' discourses and actions in this process. Beyond that, what is the basic source of state identity on which nation-building is elaborated? Again, the previous chapter informed us that state identity is determined by domestic culture, as well as by the structure that results from it. This takes us to analyze further in the next section the various determinants of the Lebanese identity.

3.5. Determinants of Lebanese State Identity

Up to this point, it is clear for us that Lebanon owns some peculiar *determinants* of identity that shaped, through its history, the actions, interests, perceptions and norms of its different actors involved in the construction of its state identity. Determinants can be cultural or exogenous. Together, they lead to the formation of a domestic state structure which in turn, becomes a key determinant of identity that binds within its frame the capacity of actors and entrepreneurs in promoting or contesting the constructed identity. The following section examines the main cultural and exogenous determinants of the Lebanese identity, and keeps the analysis of the resulting *structure* – namely the Lebanese political system – to a later section. The main cultural determinant of Lebanese identity is *sectarianism*, also called *confessionalism*, *communalism*, or *religious communitarianism*. But *sectarianism* is deeply intertwined with *tribalism*, that constitutes the second most important cultural determinant of Lebanese identity. In addition to these two, Lebanon owns other cultural and exogenous determinants that are worth to be mentioned. The following paragraphs are dedicated to this task.

3.5.1. Sectarianism

Defining *sectarianism* is one of the most problematic challenges faced by anyone who intends to analyze and study the Lebanese culture and its peculiar political system. Concepts such as *sect*, *community*, *minority* or *nation* were used without any questioning or precaution (Corm, 2003, p. 22). This gave these words an essentialist connotation. Brubaker (2004) names the *reifying* process

of categorization as "grouping". For him, this can be defined by a general tendency towards treating ethnic or religious groups as monolithic units for the sake of social analysis, by attributing them unified interests and agencies as blocs (Brubaker, 2004). According to this logic, instead of talking about Muslims, Druze, Maronites, we must talk about *the* Muslims, *the* Druze or *the* Maronites, in the same way as Brubaker does when analyzing the Hungarian and Romanian communities of Cluj/Kolozsvár (cf. Brubaker, 2004). *Groupness* can thus be highlighted and used in some contexts of exacerbated inter-communal tensions like during civil wars for example.

But what is *sectarianism*? The issue with this word is that it is too much politicized, overused, and leaves "too much room for subjective interpretation and personal whim for it to be useful as a category of scholarly inquiry" (Haddad, 2017, p. 364). In fact, *sect* is "*ta'ifa*" in Arabic, while *sectarianism* is "*ta'ifiyya*" (Haddad, 2017, p. 368). From a primary grammatical analysis, *sectarianism* can be then defined as the "fact of having sects". But how to overcome this simplistic lazy essentialist explanation? By extrapolating Brubaker's definition of *ethnicity*, *sectarianism* might be understood as a cognitive phenomenon as well as a way of seeing and interpreting the world. Sects are then nothing else than constructed categories by *sectarianism* itself. Furthermore, *Sectarianism* is for some the *politicization* of religious differences, in contrast with religion, which is a constitutive part of social identity (Cammett, 2019). *Sectarianism* was developed by Colonialism and Orientalism that simplified, romanticized and essentialized it (cf, Makdisi, 2000; Corm, 2003). For Ussama Makdisi (2000), *sectarianism* as an idea and a practice must be included in its historical context, namely the modern times: it is a modern creation forged by European powers and local elites and must be defined as a type of politics of religion in the context of the emerging Western-style nation-state system of the 19th century.

From a constructivist perspective, *sectarianism* is therefore nothing else than the modern expression of sectarian identities through their politization process. As a category, *sectarianism* is one among the many discourses of religion-in-politics: it is hence related to a political project which has *sectarianization* as its political process (Hurd E. , 2015). Therefore, it is as fluid as religious belonging might be. It goes against the essentialist assumption that sees sects as making people act in predetermined ways at all times. It is then contextual and constructed by those actors or entrepreneurs who use it for the sake of their particular agendas (cf. Hurd, E. , 2015). In this sense, we must avoid developing universal theories of *sectarianism* that lack historical and

structural contexts (cf. Makdisi, 2000). In Lebanon, the changing historical and structural contexts had an impact on the alignment of sectarian trenches: it is according to the varying contexts that these lines shifted from a Maronite-Druze rift in the 19th century towards a Christian-Muslim one in the 20th century, and finally to a Sunni-Shia one during the last few decades. For Suad Joseph (2008), *sectarianism* is closer to an imagined intra-social group identity formation, construction and consciousness. In other words, *sectarianism* is how sectarian differences are socially constructed and perceived by group members. Instead of being a primordial *thing*, sectarianism is the process through which religious identity becomes politicized for the aim of using it in the struggle for power (Makdisi, 2000). So, the debates in the literature goes on between those who consider it as existing outside of politics, and those who believe that it is a product of politics (Haddad, 2017).

Hachemi and Postel (2017) underline the role of the "new orientalism" in giving an essentialist connotation for Middle Eastern sectarianism. According to them, the United States and the West played a major role during recent years in oversimplifying Middle Eastern sectarian conflicts by narrowing them down to a primordial hatred between Sunni and Shiites for instance, that goes back to the origins of Islam (Hashemi & Postel, 2017, p. 1). In opposition to that, they propose the concept of *sectarianization*, which they define as being an "active process shaped by political actors operating within specific contexts, pursuing political goals that involve the mobilization of popular sentiments around particular identity markers" (Hashemi & Postel, 2017, p. 3). This statement rejoins Hurd's (2015) definition presented above. Socioeconomic classes, state structures and geopolitics also shape this process. For the first one, if the majority of the members of a particular sect are from the lower class belong to a specific sect, the class struggle might be easily overlapped by a sectarian struggle[54]. For the second one, if the state structure is based on sectarianism, the structure has an impact on the process[55]. For the third one, if a foreign regional power has interests in promoting the power of a specific sect, sectarian mobilization would be exacerbated[56]. In this sense, *sectarianization* can be seen as a sort of *populism* based on sectarian identities. Sectarian identity can be mobilized by actors when inter-group differences in collective

[54] This is the case of Bahrain (2000s) or Lebanon (1970s), where socioeconomic and political deprivation was overlapped by sectarian Shiism, since Shia constitute the bulk of the deprived.
[55] Lebanon, with its institutionalized sectarianism (see the next paragraphs) provides the best example for this case.
[56] This is the case of both the Iranian and Saudi regimes' regional foreign policies which are to some extent based on the active promotion and support of Shia and Sunni Islamist ideologies and communities respectively.

memory and beliefs push the group to act collectively on the basis of their shared identity (Hashemi & Postel, 2017, p. 4). Once again, the context is then crucial in triggering this process: on the domestic level, weak or fragile state structures are ideal for the development of such tendencies, while on the international level, geopolitical struggles can exacerbate these latent differences (cf. Hashemi & Postel, 2017, p. 5-7). As we saw it in the previous chapter, fragile states are characterized by the presence of local, regional, religious or ethnic competing identities and the inability of the central state to impose an overarching national identity. This suggests that ethnicity and religion are manipulated and instrumentalized by leaders in order to stimulate identity mobilization, based on existential fears, in-group similarities and out-group differences (Hashemi & Postel, 2017, p. 4). This is exactly what happened in Lebanon. After its creation by both colonial powers and the local elite, the sectarian construction was first institutionalized within the Ottoman *Mutasarrefate* of Mount Lebanon. This historical precedent was preserved and institutionalized further with the creation and independence of the country, through the "stubborn (…) corporate *consociational* power-sharing arrangement" that kept on embedding *sectarianism* in the state structure (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab, & Mikaelian, 2015, p. 12). Later, as Bassel Salloukh et al. (2015) have argued, the Lebanese political elite has successfully kept on destroying and sabotaging any form of alternative trans-sectarian mode of mobilization. This was facilitated by the weak nature of the Lebanese state, especially during the civil war, that was intentionally maintained like that during the post-war period in order to serve the interests of the sectarian elite (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab, & Mikaelian, 2015). As a result, even "horizontal" syndical and associational movements were *sectarianized* along "vertical" communal lines. It is a perfect illustration for how the contextual structure - defined here by the fragility of the state - is exploited by actors to impose or maintain their own interests, which later becomes the new structure, which in turn becomes a determinant of state identity as explained in the previous chapter (cf. Chapter 2.3.4. Determinants of Identity). The outcome of *institutionalized sectarianism* is a Lebanese state that remains tightened by the religious confessions and their links with their respective foreign sponsors (Corm, 2003, p. 32).

In summary, *sectarianism* as a sociopolitical construct of modernity is a major determinant of Lebanese identity which was progressively institutionalized in the Lebanese state and its identity through the continuous discourse of the *sectarianizing* political elites along with the complaisance of Western powers. *Sectarianism* is the constructed sense of belonging and identification to a

religious group, while *sectarianization* is the process of utilizing this belonging in politics. In other words, *sectarianization* is the religious aspect of identity-politics. In simple terms, *sectarianism* is a constructed feeling of religious belonging that cuts the Lebanese society in vertical lines rather than the other "normal" horizontal lines that differentiate among socioeconomic classes. But for Kamal Salibi (1998), religious communities in Lebanon are nothing more than mere tribes. The game between them is therefore a "tribal game" (p. 55). In this sense, *sectarianism* is nothing more than the phenomenon through which religion – understood as the social belonging to a religious group and not as belonging to a certain faith - functions as a tribe. Rather than a simple contest between different visions for the national identity of the state, the competing identities are a set of tribal rivalries covered by national ideologies (Salibi, 1998, p. 55). These statements imply that *sectarianism* and *tribalism* are deeply intertwined. The next paragraph elaborates more on this subject.

3.5.2. Tribalism

The conceptualization of *tribalism*, "*qabaliyya*" in Arabic, is often linked by scholars to the "*asabiyya*" concept of Ibn Khaldun, which is simultaneously defined as "group feelings", "social solidarity", or "tribalism" that the medieval author viewed as the organic extension of kinship based mostly on blood relationship (del Río Sánchez, 2019, p. 369). For other authors such as Kais Firro through the case of the Lebanese Shia, "*asabiyya*" is defined as the communal identity which is composed of the tribal belonging on one hand, and the sectarian religious one on the other (Firro, 2006b, p. 535). In a more general understanding, "*asabiyya*" is defined as "blood solidarity" (Picard, 1993, p. 30), "tribal fanatism" (Elhrabi, 2017), or as the binding cement of society, tribe, family, and religion (Das R. , 2016). Beyond the ambiguities around these debatable nuances, the various definitions of "*asabiyya*" reveal the inextricable links that bind *tribalism* to *sectarianism*.

While often associated with Bedouin stereotypes of a romanticized desertic nomadism, *tribalism* as a social and anthropological phenomenon is in fact well incrusted in the broader Arab Levantine society (del Río Sánchez, 2019). And Lebanon is no exception in that. Traces of tribalism and kinship can be found on various degrees in almost all the socioeconomic, cultural and religious segments of the Lebanese society. In the historically rural and predominantly Maronite and Druze Mount Lebanon, latent tribalism made people to rally around leaders who solely represented their respective communities (Salibi, 1998, p. 182). The lineages of these – principally – feudal leaders

are still existing. The feudal lord is nowadays called *zaim*, but continues to play a social and political role of leadership in his respective community. The best example here is Walid Jumblatt, who is the main *zaim* of the Druze community for instance[57]. He inherited the title from his Father Kamal, and passed it recently to his son Taymour. The loyalty of the Druze majority to his person can be best described as a mix of sectarian and tribal "*asabiyya*". In other places, tribalism is embellished by the individuals' sense of belonging to their extended families, as well as the inter-family links that bind families together. Suad Joseph refers to it as "kin contact" that she describes as the notion according to which "all citizens belong to families prior to membership in the state and that families claim the primary and primordial loyalties of citizens" (Joseph, 2005, p. 149). The origins of this "family tribalism" described above were already well-documented by Alixa Naff (1972) through her exhaustive social historical analysis of the Christian city of Zahleh. Family and kinship factionalism and interrelations show the prominent role of both *sectarianism* and anthropological *tribalism* in the behaviors of Zahleh's inhabitants. In parallel, Naff thoroughly explains the concept of "*abadayship*[58]", which reflects on the values inherited from a patriarchal and tribal mindset of the local population (Naff, 1972). Beyond Zahleh, it is important to note the interesting link that continues to bound most of Lebanese - at least superficially – with their town or village of origin. In fact, family names can easily be recognized as being originated from a certain region or village, in a sort of territorial tribal localism that often reflects also on the sectarian identity of a given family.

In contrast, other communities continue to cherish and lean on their tribal mindset and behaviors. This is the case of Shia "*'acha'ir*" (clans) of the Beqaa for instance, who still act and think according to their clan-based rules of *vendetta* and honor. In the anthropological typology, "*'acha'ir*" refers to pastoral primitive tribalism of the nomads who live at the margins of direct state control (del Río Sánchez, 2019, p. 371). But in Lebanon, this term is often used to describe

[57] For a better understanding of the Druze community and their sectarian dynamics, see Firro (A History of the Druzes, 1992), Obeid (The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid, 2006), or Hayek et al. (The Druze: two feet in the revolution, 2020).

[58] In its modern understanding, an *abaday* is a strong man who is valued for his courage. Yet, Alixa Naff (1972) describes the concept of *abadayship* in Zahleh as it was understood by the townsmen in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to its modern definition, the old concept incorporated elements of Arab tribal references such as taking up nicknames of heroes from Arab legends such as *Abu Ali* or *Abu 'Ajaj*, and promoting values of *vendetta* and clan belonging. Many elements of *abadayship* continue to thrive among Lebanese in general, and *Zahalni* in particular. The author of this thesis can personally relate to and recall many of these values since his own family is originated from Zahleh.

the Shia clans of the Northern Beqaa. There, families still have strong loyalty to their affiliated clans, which tends to influence their daily lives such as marriage choices for instance (Hamieh & Usta, 2011, p. 8). For example, one of their families – the *Moqdad* clan - did a kidnapping operation in 2012 that was revendicated by the family's "military wing", in retaliation for the kidnapping of their clan members in war-torn Syria (Samaha, 2012). These clans date back their ancestries to the early Islamic times and operate under the mentality of taking justice by their hands instead on counting on the state's relevant institutions. They are organized in confederations[59], the two most important ones being the *Al-Shamas* (which includes the *Allaw*, *Dandash*, and *Nasreddine* clans) and the *Al-Zaiter* (which includes the *Jaafar*, *Moqdad Hajj Hassan*, *Shreif*, and *Amhaz* clans among others), and fall all under the historic *Hamadeh* "*asabiyya*" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, 2015).

Finally, Lebanon has an Arab Bedouin population who has their own tribal traditional institution. The Bedouins of Lebanon are marked by a history of social and institutional marginalization[60]. In fact, and as for the entire Syrian region, Bedouins are identified by other Lebanese as "Arabs" or "Arab tribes", "*'acha'ir 'arabiyya*" (cf. del Río Sánchez, 2019).

3.5.3. Other Determinants of Lebanese Identity

In addition to *sectarianism* and *tribalism*, Lebanon has other determinants of identity that needs to be listed here. These determinants can be divided into two main categories: other *cultural* determinants, and *exogenous* determinants. The first category includes the remaining cultural traits that exists in Lebanon, such as ethnicity, language, but also pop culture and art. Concerning *ethnicity*, we have presented earlier that Lebanon is home to a myriad of ethnic and ethnoreligious minorities such as the Armenians, Kurds and Dom people. On various degrees and in one way or another, their presence has definitely had an impact on the Lebanese identity construction. While these are very interesting to be analyzed, they remain mostly out of the scope of the current analysis. Concerning pop culture, we cannot but mention the role of art in the Lebanese identity construction from below. The best example resides in the Rahbani brothers and Fairuz, who can be definitely labeled as *entrepreneurs* of identity. As Christopher Stone (2007) demonstrates it,

[59] And also have a Facebook page named "*ittihad 'acha'ir Baalbeck wa El-Hermel*", which stands for "The Confederation of Baalbeck and Hermel Clans" (Facebook, 2022).

[60] For a comprehensive overview of the Lebanese Bedouin populations see Chatty (Bedouin in Lebanon: The Transformation of a Way of Life or an Attitude?, 2010), Chatty et al. (Bedouin in Lebanon: Social discrimination, political exclusion, and compromised health care, 2013; Statelessness and Tribal Identity on Lebanon's Eastern Borders, 2013), and Siren and UNHCR (Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Akkar, 2021).

the Rahbani brothers, through their numerous folkloric musicals and songs – that were mostly sang by the diva Fairuz – boosted the Lebanese nation-building formation from the 1960s and onwards[61] through the joint processes of "appropriation of the popular" and "classicization of tradition" (Chatterjee, 1999, as cited in Stone, 2007). This musical repertoire constitutes today an important cultural bond among Lebanese of all ages, regions and sects, and the folk culture that they vehiculate plays the role of a romanticized Lebanon.

The second category is made of the exogenous determinants of identity. In the previous chapter, we have seen how in the theory of state identity construction, the success and failure of nation-building is determined by some exogenous factors such as topography or population density (Wimmer, 2018). An abrupt topography characterized by the presence of high mountains might have led in the past for a missed opportunity in integrating highlanders into the *created* nation. While this seems to be relevant for 19th century Europe, it is interesting to note that the presence of high mountains and remote plateaus in Lebanon could have been an additional challenge for the successful integration of the entire Lebanese population. In fact, some Lebanese highlanders continue to live at the margins of the state's institutions, and sometimes transformed these remote areas into a refuge for outlaws who reject any central authority[62]. Beyond that, the peculiar nature of Mount Lebanon's topography may have influenced the mentalities of the actors and entrepreneurs who imagined the Lebanese identity at its dawn. At the end, the fact of being semi-isolated and curled up in difficultly-accessible high mountains can influence individual perceptions about the other, and thus, can push him to imagine an *isolationist* formula for his national identity. The same can be applied on the merchants of Beirut who could be convinced by the Lebanese idea as state because of the trade prospects that they saw in the potential prominent role that their city could take. In fine, Lebanon was created upon an alliance between the notables of the mountains and the merchants of the coastal city (cf. Corm, 2003).

[61] See also Mehmet Fahri Danis (2019) who gives a precise analytical account on Fairuz's career and her role in the Lebanese identity construction.

[62] See the example of Akkar's *Jurd* as detailed by Gilsean (Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narratives in an Arab Society, 1996), which is the traditional refuge of outlaws who challenged their integration in the state for decades.

3.6. State Identity Through State Policies

Now that we went through the different stages of the Lebanese national construction, the actors who engaged in its shaping, and the determinants of its identity, it might be interesting to trace back how the crystallized national identity has been imposed on the citizens. In other words, after the previous presentation of identity from below, we need to understand the mechanisms of identity from above. It also informs us that identity from below and identity from above are deeply interrelated and in constant interaction. The preliminary analysis of this top-down nation-building can be made through the state's policies. Two fields constitute ideal examples to be examined here: the Lebanese state's educational policies, and the adopted symbols and national holidays. This can help us also later in defining the Lebanese state's institutional structure.

3.6.1. Education as a Marker of State Identity

The Lebanese state's educational policy has been marked by two major features that give us a substantial indication on the state's identity itself. One resides in its choices during the adoption of official languages for its educational system, and another concerns its stances towards a unified history book.

Lebanon has institutionalized Arabic as the only official language in the country in its Decree no. 6968 of 1946 (Shaaban, 1997). It also stipulated that it can be used as a medium for the education of everyone, along French and English which could be both used in the teaching of all sort of scientific fields (Shaaban, 1997). In addition to that, private schools were granted freedom to teach their own curriculum beside the Lebanese official one (Shaaban, 1997). This is extremely important since nowadays, the majority of Lebanese students (60%) attend private schools which are run as religious schools by various Christian and Muslim congregations (Yoder, 2015). Here again, the Lebanese state's actions, through its education-related policies, account for the identity conflict that pulled the country during that period into two separate directions (Shaaban, 1997). The first one wanted to grant Arabic - the mother tongue of the population – an important place in education, while the second one wanted to minimize its role and promote an openness towards the West. This is completely well explained by the context of that period, and can be interpreted as a clear reflection of the National Pact's essence itself. Later, the Taef Agreements came to reinforce the role of Arabic as the official national language of the country, but did not reduce the role of foreign languages (mainly French and English) in the education system. On the contrary, the

intensive use of foreign languages was even promoted by two regulations: One in 1994 that extended the use of foreign languages in public schools for the teaching of all subjects at the elementary and pre-school levels, and another in 1995 that introduced the teaching of a third language in the intermediate cycle (Shaaban, 1997). More generally, Ghait and Shaaban (1996) argue that the state has taken wrong actions or has not taken actions at all. And the tendency goes towards a policy of inaction rather than action. This might be an indicator for the inability or unwillingness of the state to take the initiative of trenching sharply between the various identity narratives. But inaction can also lead to consequences. The outcome of the state's educational policy in recent history resulted in a strong culture of bilingualism[63] which, primarily pushed by missionary schools, was endorsed by the state during the mandate. Later, it was progressively imposed on the entire society (top-down) in a soft manner, to become in current days an important component of social identity (cf. Ghait & Shaaban, 1996). The best illustration for the evolution towards a multilingual society can be resumed by expressions that combine three languages in one single sentence such as "*Hi, kifak, ca va?*" or "*Please maître el hseb*"[64], which became integral parts of the pop culture and can be found on mugs or shirts for example. In summary, as Ghait and Shaaban perfectly put it:

> decisions and policies regarding the use of one language or another in education, whether they are made by colonial powers, public officials, or by those in charge of private educational institutions (…) have also had an impact on the individual and communal sense of identity and belongingness, on the principles and practices of political, social, and psychological unity of the citizenry (…) (Ghait & Shaaban, 1996, p. 96).

The previous statement is a perfect example of how – multiple choices of - identity from below, pushed and negotiated by some actors of identity, was imposed on the state, which in turn adopted it and institutionalized it, before imposing it – through action or inaction - in a top-down manner on the citizens who in turn, adopted it as mainstream feature of their social identity.

[63] About the social causes of preferences between French and English and their respective importance as a second language to be studied in Lebanon see Rula L. Diab (University students' beliefs about learning English and French in Lebanon, 2006).

[64] These two expressions are composed of three words each, each of them are from a different language: "*hi*" is in English, "*kifak*"is"*how are you*" in Lebanese Arabic, while "*ca va?*" means "*good?*" in French. Same applies to the second expression which means "*please waiter, can I ask for the bill?*".

The case of language in education has endorsed a different path than the one related to the policy of the Lebanese state regarding the adoption of a single, official, and unified history book. In fact, the Lebanese history book sharply ends its narration at the date of 1943 which marks the independence of Lebanon (Messarra, 2003). Students are left then without any official story about the entire following period. It is like if Lebanon adhered to "the end of History" paradigm (Messarra, 2003, p. 418). Here again, the sectarian political factions, parties, and ex-militias are to be blamed (Bahous, Nabhani, & Rabo, 2013). They entered the post-Taef political scene, and had no interest in unifying the narrative around the civil war, since it would inform students about their role in the violence. In this respect, Lebanon seems to be quite unique (Yoder, 2015). Despite that the Taef Agreement has tasked a governmental organ to develop a unified history curriculum about the civil war in order to promote a post-war national identity (Yoder, 2015), the Lebanese state is still not able to deliver any concrete document, which is leading to a "collective and permanent amnesia" of the Lebanese society (Bahous, Nabhani, & Rabo, 2013). From Paul Yoder's (2015) review, we can distillate the two main consequences of the inexistence of a state-driven official national history curriculum: first, since education is run principally by private religious schools, history teaching is influenced by the diverging views of the different religious congregations and missionaries, which causes the teaching of multiple history narratives. Second, the educators are left with no other choice than piecing up their own history curricula (p.141). In conclusion, the state's inaction on this front creates a void in the identity from above, which leaves the citizens with choosing between developing their own individual history narratives, and between endorsing the various narratives of the private schools and teachers.

3.6.2. Symbols and National Holidays as Markers of State Identity

Before starting to elaborate on the Lebanese national holidays, it is important to note that the Lebanese national calendar of celebrations and commemorations reflects on the sectarian pluralism of the country. In a sense, the state aimed at including the different sectarian groups into its calendar through a proportional representation of the major religious groups. If we check on the official list of public holidays in Lebanon, we quickly realize that the days are arithmetically divided equally between Muslims and Christians (Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2022). Out of a total of 17 days, 7 are related to Christian religious and cultural celebrations, 7 are allocated to various Muslim religious celebrations, and only 2 have a secular or national character.

The remaining day, namely the Annunciation Day, is a recently-created celebration that aims at uniting Christian and Muslim communities around the figure of Virgin Mary who is venerated by the two religions[65]. This said, the effort of nation-building in Lebanon through a shared calendar collides with the confessional system (Podeh, 2011).

The examination of the different mechanisms that regulate the instauration of national holidays and commemorations in Lebanon leads to four main observations. First, it makes us to acknowledge a relative rigidity in the Lebanese state identity as a structure. Second, it shows how the Lebanese state managed to successfully impose on the general population some elements of its constructed narrative through top-down nation-building. Third, it informs us more on the margin of maneuver that actors have in their initiative to achieve identity change in a bottom-up approach. Fourth, in contrast, it reveals the fragility of the state and its recurrent failure in imposing a monopolized narrative against rival competing narratives in given contexts. All of these observations evolve in given historical contexts which cannot be underestimated in the analysis.

First, unlike the surrounding Arab countries, Lebanon has maintained since its independence some sort of consistency in its national symbols such as its flag or anthem, and barely changed in its national holidays (Podeh, 2011). Moreover, national celebrations managed to survived the civil war period in which the state and its institution completely collapsed and failed. In this respect, the nation kept on celebrating itself through parades and officials' discourses (Podeh, 2011). Indeed, if the state authority collapsed, some features of the Lebanese nationalism were intensified during that period (Hanf, 1993). Podeh (2011) argues also that the national calendar that we exposed above has not really altered majorly throughout the last 70 years. Thus, the Lebanese state identity demonstrates a sort of structural resistance and rigidity against major changes in its symbols' content. This might draw an initial conclusion that stipulates that the Lebanese state identity is quite resilient and not easily alterable.

[65] "United around the Virgin Mary" is the concretization of the initiative of Nagy Khoury, who leads the International Center for the Dialogue between Religions, and Sheikh Mohammad Nokkari, a highly-ranked Muslim cleric of Dar Al Fatwa. This new construction was imposed in 2010 as an official holiday. It aims at reinforcing the *vivre-ensemble* formula between the two religions, in which Lebanon wants to take a leading role. See in this respect Rotivel (2010) and Centre catholique des médias (2019). The Jesuit school Notre-Dame de Jamhour, in which Khoury is a prominent responsible, organizes a yearly celebration (see for example (Aoun Fakhouri, 2016)), which hosts important international figures such as the Polish Lech Wałęsa who was invited to the school in 2010. The author of this thesis was also present in person as an alumnus and met with the Polish leader.

Second, the Lebanese nation-building managed to impose some overarching elements that led to the constitution of a thin unified national identity layer that transcends all diverging narratives on identity. To do so in a sustainable way, the state had to accept and integrate some new commemorations that were pressured on it from below by the competing narratives of some actors. The best example of imposing its narrative from above resides in the commemoration of the independence of 1943, which was set of the 22nd of November, and is one of the two non-religious secular national days listed in the first paragraph. The National Pact's elites not managed to impose it as a unifying trans-sectarian holiday celebrated every year through military parades and schools' events – even during the civil war –, but also succeeded in embedding it as a founding myth of the Republic (cf. Podeh, 2011).

Third, a closer analysis of the national symbols and commemoration days' construction processes reveals that the state was permeable for the ideas of some *entrepreneurs* of identity and accepted to include elements of their narratives in the national identity. The best illustration for that is the Martyrs' Day which was pushed upon the state by the Lebanese civil society in the early period of the Lebanese state's creation. As Podeh (2011) demonstrates it, this commemoration was initially an *Arabist* one. It aimed at remembering the anti-Ottoman Lebanese and Syrian opponents who were executed by the Turkish troops during the World War I. The pressure of the civil society made the state to adopt it as national day, but switched its narrative gradually from describing the martyrs as Arab heroes towards a more *exclusivist* interpretation that made of them purely Lebanese heroes (Podeh, 2011). On the level of symbols, the main square of downtown Beirut was renamed as the Martyrs' Square, and was later gifted with a monumental statue that represents the sacrifice of these heroes (Podeh, 2011). The statue survived the civil war and is still a major visual element of Beirut's landscape. The second example is to be understood under the recent rise of Hezbollah as a main actor on the Lebanese political scene. As we saw it in previous sections, Hezbollah undertook a process of *Lebanization*. But in parallel, the Party of God managed to impose some of its concept on the Lebanese state identity. The most noteworthy example for it can be found in the establishing by the state of the Resistance and Liberation Remembrance Day as an additional holiday on the 25th of May, which celebrates the victory of the resistance – Hezbollah – on the Israeli occupation following the withdrawal of *Tsahal*[66] from South Lebanon

[66] Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), in other words, the Israeli Army.

in 2000 (cf. Podeh, 2011). This development must be framed in its right context, which is defined by the weakening of the Christian *Lebanist* narrative following the Taef Agreements, and the rise of the Shia, specifically Hezbollah as the stronger actor of Lebanese politics. The latter could also explain why the liberation of Lebanon from Syrian troops in 2005 was not established as a national celebration, since it goes against the narrative of the Party who is a strong ally of the Syrian regime. The importance of the context can also explain why the Army Day of August 31st was revived in the post-Taef period. This is quite understandable considering the symbolic role that the Army got in the post war nation-building process (Podeh, 2011).

Fourth and finally, the focus on the state's official celebrations does not mean that the various actors of the competing narratives are not continuing to practice their own celebrations. This might be explained by the weakness and fragility of the state that deprive it from imposing a "state monopoly" on the public celebrations. The Lebanese state has to share the public spaces with actors of the competing narratives. Whereas through the parallel unofficial celebrations held by various political parties, militant groups and paramilitary organizations like Hezbollah's "*Yawm Al Quds*" (the Pro-Palestinian rally of Day of *Al-Quds*), or the yearly "military" parades of the Phalangists or the SSNP among others, the official state's identity is constantly being challenged (cf. Podeh, 2011).

In conclusion, and based on the analysis of Podeh (2011), the Lebanese state managed through symbols and commemorations to impose on the society some of its unifying narratives by adapting these to the different needs of the various segments. But also, the state tried to stay "neutral" and equidistant towards all the religious communities in its way to celebrate the nation.

3.7. The Lebanese Political System

After the thorough presentation of the Lebanese nation-building process, the multiple actors who shaped its construction through their various narratives and actions that were based on a series of *endogenous* and *exogenous* determinants of identity, as well as the change mechanisms, time has come to analyze the end result: namely, the Lebanese political system. It also constitutes the binding structure or the frame in which any change can be made. This goes back to what was developed in the literature review stating that cultural determinants lead societies to build a structure, which in turn becomes a *determinant* of state identity. This comes in line with the

concept of the interactive relationship between *agency* – of contesting or promoting actors and entrepreneurs – and *structure*, namely the state's institutional system.

We have seen before that the actors of Lebanese state identity tried through time to impose their ideas about Lebanon. As a result, the official state endorsed some key concepts such as *coexistence*, or such as being a vocational land of dialogue between Islam and Christianism. In addition, Lebanon wanted to be a bridge between the East and the West, an *inclusive* model of pluralism, and consequently, a counter-model to the *exclusivist* nature of the Israeli neighbor (Corm, 2003, p. 30). So how were these notions translated into the state's political system? And how could the system provide sufficient safe-guards for the religious communities by conciliating and including their diverging interests within a single state?

3.7.1. State Confessionalism or *Consociational* System

The Lebanese political system is often described as a peculiar form of government which regroup in itself a variety of concepts such as *consociationalism*, *power-sharing*, *consensus*, or *proportionality*, which are often used mechanically by mainstream literature, without any deeper interpretation of their meanings. Furthermore, the Lebanese democratic system is defined as being *consensual*, *consociational* or *confessional* interchangeably. While these reflect on a unique type of governance, some minor theoretical and linguistic nuances do exist between them. For the sake of simplification, we will consider here that *consensual* reflects on one particular element of the *consociational* political system, namely the fact of seeking for political consensus. And *confessional* – in the meaning of *sectarian, communitarian,* or *communal,* as presented earlier in this chapter - reflects on the specific case of Lebanon in which the religious *confessions*, also called *sects*, or *religious communities*, are the segments that works as *consociations* within the political system.

Consociationalism

Consociationalism is based on a "syncretistic nationalism" that seeks to institutionalize the communities and to organize their coexistence (Kabbara, 1991; Hanf, 1993; Reinkowski, 1997, p. 499). It is a method of political management for any kind of religious, linguistic or cultural diversity (Maalouf Monneau, 2015). *Consociational democracy* as a type of political system was theorized by Arendt Lijphart (1969; 1977) which he defined as a type of government in plural

societies that are divided around *differentiating* objective social segmental cleavages (1977, p.3). According to him, Lebanon's political system falls into this category. From that day, the literature has used it to define the Lebanese system without much of critical thinking. The *consociational* model is theorized around four main principles that aim to regulate conflict. The political system that meets these principles can be qualified as *consociational*. These four principles are the following (Messarra, 2003, p. 43): (1) grand coalition which consists of the collaboration of the country's main segments' leaders in the government as opposed to majoritarian regimes; (2) mutual veto which secure the minority group within the coalition with a guarantee for its rights against the majority; (3) proportionality which grants all constitutive segments with a representativity quota based on their respective weights; and (4) the autonomy of segments which can be implemented through decentralization or federalism. For the third point, the quota-based proportional representation of all segments is also called *power-sharing* (Messarra, 2003). Whereas for the fourth point, Antoine Messarra (2003) points out that Lebanon opted for what he calls *personal federalism*, which is explained later under the personal status law. In addition, one of the favorable conditions for *consociationalism* is the non-existence of a single majority group within the society, which implies an "all minority situation" (Messarra, 2003, p. 44). Finally, the *consociational* or *consensual* system of government is not a political regime but a category that includes many different variants such as Belgium, Switzerland, South Africa and Lebanon among others (Messarra, 2003, p. 18). In Lebanon, the segments that are described in the theory of *consociationalism* are the religious communities. In this sense, *consociational democracy* is both a descriptive and a normative model for a system in which *power* is shared between representants of the religious segments rather than distributed according to the rule of majority/minority (Picard, 2005). The consequence for that is "sectarian politics" (Picard, 2005). As it was presented earlier, this is achieved through *sectarianization*. The following few paragraphs present how these four principles of *consociationalism* are to be found in the Lebanese political system.

Grand Coalition

The unwritten National Pact of 1943 and later the Taef Agreements of 1989 have both provided the Lebanese system with the basic rules of grand coalition (Fakhoury, 2014). According to the essence of these agreements, the exercise of power is not based on the rule of the majority and the opposition of the minority. Rather, all the representative factions and elites must join in a grand

coalition government which reflects on (1) the equal representation of all religious groups through predetermined quotas, and (2), the fair representation of the political formations according to their respective parliamentary weights (cf. Messarra, 2003). The first point is guaranteed by the above-mentioned agreements which had explicitly allocated the major representative seats for the different sectarian groups. In other words, the President of the Republic must always be a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni, while the Speaker of the Parliament a Shiite, and so on (cf. Fakhoury, 2014). As for the second point, communities are proportionally represented in the cabinet (Fakhoury, 2014). We have seen how the Doha agreement consolidated this principle through the practice of "national unity" governments' formation in which all parliamentary blocs are represented according to their respective weights (Haddad S. , 2009; Young, 2022). Therefore, no political party or formation can rule the country alone and outside of a trans-sectarian coalition.

Mutual Veto

In the same logic of grand coalition, the Taef Agreements have given to the Council of Ministers - in which all political forces within the parliament are collegially represented - the means of collective decision-making (cf. Messarra, 2003). Furthermore, the power-sharing formula is based on *consensus*, according to which each group has been granted with a veto right. This right was first institutionalized in the 1926 Constitution, then reinforced again through the Taef Agreements (Picard, 2005). But as we saw it already, the Doha agreement took it further by allocating a "blocking third" for the numerically smaller group within the government, reinforcing by that the veto power over governmental decisions (Haddad S. , 2009; Young, 2022).

Proportionality

The Lebanese system has divided the various posts of the state according to sectarian-based quotas that aimed to reflect on the demographic weight of each community. The repartition leans on the principle of "*munasafa*" (parity), which adopts equal representativity between Muslims and Christians (cf. Messarra, 2003). While this division is applied on almost all governmental and institutional posts, the best example remains in the allocation of the parliamentary seats. The parity was reached under the Taef Agreements which dropped the old 6 to 5 for a 1 to 1 ratio among Christian and Muslims (Faour, 2007). Since then, the parliament has 128 seats which are equally divided between Christian (64) and Muslim (64) seats. Within each, religious communities are allocated with quotas, based on their estimated demographic weights (cf. Faour, 2017). Hence, the

64 Muslim seats are distributed among the Shia and the Sunnis with 27 seats for each, the Druze with 8 seats, and the Alawites with 2 (cf. Law No. 44: Election of the Members of the Parliament, 2017). In turn, the 64 Christian seats are allocated to the Maronites with 34 seats, the Greek Orthodox with 14, the Greek Catholics with 8, the Armenians with 6, and other minorities with 2 seats (cf. Law No. 44: Election of the Members of the Parliament, 2017).

Personal Status Law

The Lebanese political system provides relative autonomy to the religious communities. In fact, autonomy is given through delegating personal status regulation from the state to confessions. Personal status refers to the given rights of a citizen in terms of marriage, divorce, heritage, and parental custody. In Lebanon, these statuses are directly ruled by the sectarian institutions as inherited from the Ottoman Millet system (Picard, 2005). For example, civil marriage does not exist in Lebanon[67]. Therefore, Muslim Shia, Sunnis, or Christian Maronites who are willing to divorce, will have different rights and outcomes depending on their respective "religious" tribunals' decisions. Messarra (2003) defines this autonomy as *personal federalism*. It contrasts with territorial federalism since the individual's personal rights and statuses change according to their respective confessions, independently of their actual territorial location. In other words, while *territorial federalism* implies that a person might have different rights depending on *where he is*, *personal federalism* implies that the person of a certain sect has specific rights depending on *who he is*. Michal Chiha tried qualified the Lebanese personal federalism as "*legislative federalism*" (Messarra, 2003, p. 51). In fact, members of the parliament access to power through the quotas of their religious communities. These communities are made of persons who reside anywhere on the national territory. In other words, if territorial federalism aims for the representation of autonomous territories[68], personal federalism aims for the representation of groups of persons who belong to a certain religious community, independently from their presence on the territory (cf. Messarra, 2003).

[67] With the absence of a unique civil personal status law, non-religious civil marriages are difficult to be recognized since there is no clear family law to regulate them. Lebanese couples who insist of getting married through a civil law opt to seal their unions abroad, in Cyprus or Greece for instance, and would come back to register their marriage in Lebanon that would be regulated by the personal status laws of the countries where these marriages were signed (Khoury, 2020).

[68] such as Cantons in Switzerland.

Limits and Criticisms of Lebanese Consociationalism

Antoine Messarra is one of the most prominent Lebanese scholars and advocates of the Lebanese political system. For him, the system is not a failure by essence. But he acknowledges that *consociationalism* has risks: it is the governing actors who push it towards failure and crisis through their denaturalizing actions (2003). For instance, one of the many risks of the proportional representation resides in the "*muhasasa*", the French *fromagisme*, in which the Lebanese political elite excels. This corrupted version of proportionality implies that the seats of the administration are shared among the different segments like a cheese in order to keep a balance ("*tawazun*") between them (Messarra, 2003, p. 47-48). In this respect, Lebanon went in this direction, especially in the post-Taef period up until today, when *muhasasa* was coupled with corruption, clientelism and nepotism (Apprioual, 2016). While some - like Messarra - defend the system by putting the blame of its failure on external factors, others argue that the Lebanese model hardens the sectarian identities, prevents the rise of trans-sectarian mobilization, which leads to recurrent crises (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab, & Mikaelian, 2015). In this regard, the Lebanese political system can be identified in theory as a *biding structure* for different *agencies* and change entrepreneurship.

While undertaking an extensive presentation of all the criticizing arguments against the Lebanese system fails out of the analysis' scope, it is useful to at least highlight some of them. One of the criticisms comes from Nawaf Kabbara, (1991) who moderates Messarra and Lijphart's theories by arguing that in practice, the problems and conflicts in Lebanon are not always confessional. The best example for that, notes Kabbara, is that the civil war era witnessed the clashes of intra-group factions like the intra-Shia fights between Hezbollah and Amal, or the intra-Christian fights between Michel Aoun and Lebanese Forces. In addition, consociationalism is *reductionist* in the sense that it fails to address the multiplicity of identities beyond the sectarian ones: the argumentation shed light on the existence of other social identities within Lebanese society such as class, regions or gender for instance, which are not reflected in the system (Kabbara, 1991, p. 355). Following this logic, many scholars have argued against the categorization of Lebanon as an actual consociational democracy. Haddad (2009) for example qualifies the Lebanese political system as *hybrid*. He argues that the system has some features of consociationalism but cannot be entirely defined as such. He thinks that the system fails at providing a safe space to consensus,

which leads to the addressing conflict resolution outside of the institutional frame that was created at the first place to fulfill this particular task (Haddad, 2009). Tamirace Fakhoury (2014) presents the inconsistencies and contradictions that lay within the state's documents. The contradictory nature of the state's self-discourse appears for instance in the 1926 Constitution's Article 95 that calls for the fair sectarian distribution of ministries, but designates political sectarianism as "transitory" (p. 240). Taef continues the legacy of contradictions: as a legitimization tool of sectarian power-sharing (Picard, 2014), the agreement restores sectarianism but intends at abolishing it without providing a clear timeframe for its implementation (Fakhoury, 2014). All these are also in sharp contrast with Article 7 of the Constitution that states that "all Lebanese are equal under the law", and that they enjoy equal political and civil rights and obligations without any distinction (Haugbolle, 2013, p. 429). It leads to the conclusion that the Lebanese political system self-refutes its confessional identity, but in the meantime fails at implementing its own expressed "wishes". These divergences between discursive statements and real actions seem to be endemic to the Lebanese state, as it was already shown through its educational policies.

3.7.2. The System and Demographic Status quo

The previous paragraphs make us realize the fragility of the Lebanese political system. In addition, it sheds light on the importance given to the regulation of coexistence between the different religious communities that live together and share the national territory. But beyond that, this primary observation does not explain explicitly the deep reasons and drivers of the choice for power-sharing. If we have to think about it in a little deeper way, we will quickly realize that confessions are actually afraid from each other. What alternative explanation should be then given to their insistence on having safeguards such as equal representation through quotas or veto power? Isn't it to mitigate this latent apprehension that religious confessions, through their various national narratives, engaged in through what Kamal Salibi (1998) calls a "confidence game"? Following this logical reasoning, the major goal of the confessional political system resides undeniably in creating and maintaining a status quo between sects. Yet, the sectarian status quo is based on a precarious element. In this respect, the allocation of sectarian quotas is linked to the demographic weights of the respective religious communities. This statement makes demography to play a key role in the Lebanese political system and its stability. Therefore, any major change in the

demographic balance between sects would lead to the questioning of the status quo. This was already proven empirically throughout Lebanon's modern history.

The history of modern Lebanon has been a great example of the relationship between religion, demography and politics (Faour, 2007). In this respect, the public positions of state were distributed among sects according to their demographic sizes (Faour, 2007). For example, the first repartition was based on the only official census that was conducted in Lebanon, namely the 1932 Census (Maktabi, 1999; 2000; Faour, 2007). According to this census, Maronites were estimated to represent around the third of the population, while both Sunni and Shia communities were estimated to be together around 40% (Faour, 2007). It is based on these proportions that (1) Maronites got the Presidency of the Republic, the Sunnis the Prime Minister seat, and the Shia the Parliament's Presidency; (2) the parliamentary seats were divided along a 5 to 6 ratio in favor of Christians (Faour, 2007). In order to maintain this fragile status quo, the Lebanese state adopted an undeclared policy of denial, and refused to conduct any official census that might question the adopted sectarian repartition (Faour, 2007).

But this could not prevail for long because of two main reasons: on one hand, the numbers of the Census were actually distorted and manipulated by the Maronite political elite in order to advantage their shares (Maktabi, 1999), and on another hand, the growing proportions of the Muslim demography (Faour, 2007) led to growing contestation. We have already noted earlier how the early division of posts created discontent and frustration among Muslims. The end of the civil war with Taef as an outcome, and the fall of Christian Maronite predominance over the state, reconfigured this repartition by installing parity within the parliamentary seats and the switch of the executive prerogatives from the President to the Council of Ministers (Faour, 2007; Picard, 2014). The demographic "taboo" kept on maintaining itself in the recent decades. In this regard, despite the general belief that Muslims are today in numerical majority, the status quo of equal representation among Christians and Muslims is left unchanged, and the blind eye policy of not conducting a census continues (Faour, 2007).

The brief overview proves the fragility of the Lebanese political system as depending deeply on a very floating variable such as demographic change. Finally, as Faour notes:

> Basing political representation in Lebanon on the numerical size of religious groups is bound to create political instability. A host of political and socioeconomic factors could

> lead to changes in the demographic [behavior] of groups, thereby modifying their growth rates. Groups that are growing in size are expected to demand revision of the existing distribution of political power, whereas groups that are declining in size would resist such demands for fear of losing some of their power and privileges (Faour, 2007, p. 910).

In this sense, any major factor that leads to change in Lebanon's sectarian demographical balance would constitute a threat to the established power-sharing status quo. Is the influx of a million and a half of – predominantly Muslim Sunni – Syrian refugees into the country following 2010 not a sufficient factor of demographic change? The following chapters are addressing this particular question. But before that, it is interesting to have a final look on how the fear of demographic change was translated into the legal structure of Lebanon. These laws aim at safeguarding the status quo. Therefore, they became part of the biding structure of the Lebanese state in order to prevent any demographic change, which would ultimately alter its state's identity.

3.7.3. The System by the Laws

The final sub-section of this chapter is dedicated for presenting briefly the legal translations of the fear from demographic change. The main concerned legislation is the Lebanese Citizenship Law. The legislation that regulates access to citizenship in Lebanon can be traced to the French mandate period, during which most of its content was to be finalized. In this respect, the citizenship law is based on some contrasting elements between the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 and the Lebanese adaptation of it through a variety of decrees and policies.

The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 had the primary function of setting a legal base for the former territories of the Ottoman Empire that was dislocated after World War I. Lebanon was thus included. The Treaty stipulated 7 articles related to the acquisition of the nationality by these territories' people (Frontiers Ruwad Association, 2011). These articles informs us that the Treaty (1) granted citizenship in the new states according to the *jus soli* principle, (2) gave option for any former Ottoman subject to choose his new nationality if based on an ethnic difference, (3) accorded rights for emigrants to acquire the nationality of their origins, (4) prevented discretionary actions of newly created states in according rights to citizenship for people who might be "racially" eligible to it, and (5) institutionalized patrilineal filiation of citizenship by giving men primacy in status over wife and children (Lausanne Treaty, 1923).

Following that, the French High Commissioner implemented the treaty's provisions through Decision no. 2825 of 1924 which established the base of Lebanese citizenship (van Waas, 2015; Jaulin & El Koury, 2012). Later on in 1925, the French authorities issued the Decree no. 15 on Lebanese Nationality. The decision was mainly based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* through patrilineal affiliation, and maintained the principle of *jus soli* for exceptional cases only, such as in the case of births on the Lebanese territory which are from unknown parents (Jaulin & El Koury, 2012). The Decree remains the main source for Lebanese citizenship right. It denies matrilineal *jus sanguinis* as well as *jus soli*.

But the legislations are not enough to understand how at that time Lebanese became Lebanese. The decision-makers also had some role in this. In fact, the Census of 1932 was a perfect opportunity for the Maronite elite that ruled at that time for boosting Christian demographics in an artificial way such as working for the registration of as much as Christian emigrants as possible (cf. Maktabi, 1999; 2000). Oppositely, these tailoring policy implementations had a secondary effect of creating the bulk of statelessness, since many Muslims were unaware, refused, or were simply denied of their rights to register (Maktabi, 1999).

Until today, the state – through its political actors – refuses to undertake any amendment regarding the citizenship legislation, despite the many demands for women's rights in transmitting their nationality to their offspring (Human Rights Watch, 2018). This is being categorically rejected by the political elite who considers that allowing women to pass their nationality to their children would endanger "the demographic sectarian equilibrium in the country and the homeland's paramount interest" (Saghieh & El-Hajjar, 2020). In fact, the adoption of matrilineal *jus sanguinis* would favor Muslims against Christians, since – the political elite considers that – there are more Lebanese Muslim women married to – Palestinian and Syrian – foreign men than Christian (cf. Saghieh & El-Hajjar, 2020). Once again, the citizenship law is an excellent illustration of the genuine fear of Lebanese and their sectarian political elites regarding sectarian imbalance through demography.

3.7.4. Conclusion

All in all, the Lebanese political system is obviously the concurrent end result of the long construction, based on the peculiar nation-building process that was undertaken by various actors at various times. One of the most important aims of this peculiar system resides in its ability to

provide safeguards to the mutual fear that religious groups might have. But the sectarian status quo is based on demographic proportionality. It implies that any major change in the demography of sects would ultimately question its system, thus its state identity. As a product of nation-building, the political system became also a structure. It hardens sectarian identities and organizes their expression. Its structural frame defines and constrains the agencies of actors. As a structure, any change can only happen within its boundaries.

3.8. Conclusions and Implications

Through the review of the Lebanese nation-building process, this chapter has enlightened us on the different actors and narratives that shaped the Lebanese identity. It also provided us with a deeper understanding of what determines genuinely identities in Lebanon. We have also seen the end result, namely the Lebanese political system which seems to be quite fragile, since based on a precarious sectarian status quo in which any demographic change is perceived as a threat. Finally, we have to list below some of the major implications that allow us in grasping the problematic of the next chapters, namely, the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Lebanese state's identity. In this respect, the most noteworthy points are the following:

- The Lebanese national construction evolved through different phases. At each stage, it adapted to the various contexts which structured its content.
- Each phase is characterized by the presence of particular actors who promoted their visions as *entrepreneurs* of identity. When their ideas were imposed and broadly accepted, they altered the national identity. When adopted by the state, the altered official identity was imposed through a top-down mechanism on the society
- Actors and entrepreneurs of the Lebanese identity managed to impose, negotiate or adapt *their* vision for *their* Lebanon on the state throughout modern history.
- In contrast, the nation-building process witnessed the emergence of other actors who contested the mainstream Lebanese national identity. They based their rejection on their own competing narratives The main competing narratives were Arab and Syrian nationalisms, leftist and progressist movements, and more recently, Islamism(s) such as Hezbollah.
- The main determinants of Lebanese identity are sectarianism and tribalism. These are coupled with other cultural and exogenous determinants.

- Concerning the end result, namely the Lebanese political system: *consociational democracy* is a unique type of governance, in which *consensualism* reflects on the fact of seeking for political *consensus*. In Lebanon, religious *confessions* are the segments that works as *consociations* within the political system.
- *Consociationalism* leans on four main principles: grand coalition, mutual veto, proportionality and relative autonomy of the sects.
- The allocation of sectarian quotas is linked to the demographic weights of the respective religious communities. Therefore, any major change in the demographic balance between sects would lead to the questioning of the status quo. This fear makes confessions to perceive any demographic change as an existential threat.
- This last point is translated in regulations such the Citizenship Law which still denies matrilineal filiation because of sectarian considerations.

The next chapter elaborates in details on the Syrian refugee crisis that seems at this point to be a logical candidate for a perceived existential threat.

Chapter 4: The Syrian Refugees' Crisis in Lebanon

4.1. Introduction

Lebanon faced through its recent history a variety of events that turned out to be crucial milestones in the shaping of its destiny. Since its very creation in 1920 as a modern state, but also after its independence in 1943, the small Levantine state witnessed a series of minor and major, local and regional destabilizing unrests, wars, but also political and socio-economic crisis caused by the aggregation of local, regional and international actors and agencies. Each of them affected durably the configuration of the country on different levels. These multiple levels vary from security to economic but also cultural and demographic effects among others, and are in most of the cases deeply intertwined. One can mention here as illustrations, (1) the consequences of the Armenian genocide during World War I causing the settlement of a considerable number of Armenians on the future territory of Greater Lebanon; (2) or the outcomes of the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 that resulted in the influx of thousands of Palestinian refugees, and the several issues linked to their presence on the Lebanese territory since then. This general setting sounds to be "normal" in this very unstable part of the world. Nonetheless, it seems highly relevant to trace back these events in order to have a better understanding of such a fragile and small entity as Lebanon. But what if these events were to happen "next door"? And what if their magnitude is considered so far as being among the most prominent adversities faced in today's world? The region witnessed in the last decade a spectacular succession of dramatic upheavals and unrests, namely the so-called "Arab Spring", which had a worldwide impact. Syria was not spared from this wave. But the events there took a tragic turning point, which deeply affected its neighboring countries, among which Lebanon.

The Syrian civil war that started in 2011 has had a variety of different strategic, military, security and geopolitical impacts. Most of these impacts were not only confined to Syria itself, but spread across the region to its neighboring countries, and, to some extent, to the rest of the world. One of these impacts and maybe one of the most important ones, is linked to the humanitarian effects of this conflict. This war's consequences on human lives concretize in two main aspects. The first aspect is the high number of casualties, culminating with a contested death toll estimated around half a million (Salahi, 2020). While the second aspect is the intensive population flux generated by the violence, both locally and internationally. Indeed, from Syria's initial population estimated

around 22 million people (Syria's drained population, 2015), more than the half either died, went missing, or had to flee their homes (Syria's drained population, 2015). Among those who had to flee, some chose to seek refuge in different parts of the country, while others chose to escape to other neighboring or farther countries. Consequently, the Syrian crisis is considered to be until now the 21st century's worst humanitarian tragedy (Amnesty International, 2015; United Nations, 2018). According to some sources, the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) exceeds 6 million (UNHCR, 2018), whereas those who crossed an international border while fleeing is somewhere around 7 million. Obviously, the most affected countries by this massive influx are Syria's direct neighbors. Turkey is on the top of the list of countries hosting the highest number of Syrian refugees, with around 3.7 million (UNHCR, 2018). The second one on this list is Lebanon with an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2019a), while Jordan comes on the third place with 1.2 million (Federman & Akour, 2019)[69]. The remaining 1.5 million are divided between regional host countries, such as Egypt or Iraq, or are located in Europe as well as in other Western countries (Connor, 2018).

Albeit Turkey's hosting for most of Syrian refugees, the weight of the refugees' presence there is nothing to compare with Lebanon. Indeed, Lebanon is the country that has the highest rate of refugees per capita in the world, where refugees count for more than 30% of the total population (UNHCR, 2018). According to United Nations' official data, there is one refugee for every six Lebanese citizens, while other sources present a 1 to 3 ratio (European Commission, 2020). This unprecedented high rate was never seen in modern states' history. And this is exactly what defines the peculiarity of the Lebanese case. It is important to note here why different sources offer divergent estimations. As it will be developed later in this study, one reason is that the last population census in Lebanon goes back to 1932, at the time of the French Mandate. Consequently, there is no current official or consensual data about the number of Lebanese citizens. Another reason is that a lot of Syrian refugees are not registered in the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) database, for reasons that will be explained later in the text. Furthermore, the arrival of the Syrians as refugees constitutes only an added, yet a very important, layer to the already existing refugee population in Lebanon, namely the nearly half million Palestinian

[69] These numbers reflect on the situation at its peak, which culminated in 2015-2016, then dropped continuously up until 2019-2020. It is noteworthy to remind the readers that this thesis has a timeframe that covers the situation until summer 2020.

refugees who are living in the country since 1948. In addition to these "a priori" superficial number-linked issues emanating from this refugee crisis, stand out those issues that threaten the very essence of the fragile Lebanese socio-religious sectarian configuration. Undeniably, any demographic change can lead to questioning or weakening the sectarian status quo which both defines and constitutes the essence of the Lebanese state's system. The aggregation of all these mentioned issues pushes us to analyze in depth the situation of the Syrian refugees of Lebanon.

Yet, the relevance of examining the Syrian refugees' crisis in Lebanon is not only restricted to the above-mentioned statements. It is important to point out in a few sentences the elements that award this study with the characteristics of being a novelty in its related academic literature. These elements can be classified under three main properties. First, this work inserts the Syrian refugee influx under a broader historical framework of the various population migrations witnessed by Lebanon. Second, this study is the first of its kind in giving a multileveled picture of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as the various issues related to their presence. Moreover, it tries to combine all the relevant existing literature with empirical and practical findings conducted on the field by the author. Third, the following study is one of the first academic works trying to theorize and conceptualize the dynamics and nature of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In other words, it puts this case-study in the global framework of migration and refugee theories. The text presents a new innovative theoretical concept applicable for the analysis of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It also set the bases for understanding the Lebanese state's policy response towards the crisis, which is a crucial step for interpretating the potential impact of Syrian refugees on the Lebanese state's identity. But this specific question is tackled in Chapter 6, which covers the explicit results related to Lebanon's state identity itself.

The chapter's first section covers the background and context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, while its second section gives a descriptive account of their situation in Lebanon. Finally, the third section confronts the data with the various empirical findings and observations made by the author on the ground during his fieldwork visits to Syrian refugee communities in North Lebanon.

4.2. Definitions and Context

This section covers the background and context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Its first sub-section provides definitions for some main concepts. Then, its second sub-section puts the

Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon in its relevant historical context, through the different migration patterns encountered by the country along its modern history. Finally, the last sub-section draws some key implications that are extremely useful for the analysis ahead.

4.2.1. Definitions

Dealing with population flows, as it is the case for all other subjects in social sciences, pushes researchers to use a large number of technical words and terminologies. The precision of an analysis can only be valid and accurate when it provides the reader with correct definitions. This sub-section delivers definitions of the most relevant and most frequently used technical words used in this thesis. This is done by sharing the most consensual version of a given concept, or by sharing its official definition. The various interpretations and critics of these definitions will be presented later through this study. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the most commonly used terminologies.

***Migration, migrants*:** Encyclopedia Britannica defines human migration as "the permanent change of residence by an individual or group; it excludes such movements as nomadism, migrant labor, commuting, and tourism, all of which are transitory in nature" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). Migrants are the subjects of migration, those who actually move. However, the UNHCR does not consider refugees as migrants, although usually there is consensus on considering refugees as a "special" type of migrants. For the UNHCR, migrants "choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons" (Edwards, 2016).

Emigration and immigration: the easiest way for understanding the difference between these two words is the following: migrants who leave a country to another one, are emigrants of their country of origin, while they are immigrants for their host country. It is just a matter of perspective which is relative to their location. Cambridge dictionary defines emigration as "the process of leaving a country permanently and going to live in another one", while immigration is "the act of someone coming to live in a different country" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Economic migration: economic migrants are all the people who enter a state in order to perform different kinds of economic activities. Among these, a narrower group labelled as labor migrants are those who move in order to get a job or to be employed (Usher, 2004). But most of the time, economic migration refers mainly to this narrower category of labor migration.

Forced migration: This type of migration as it can be understood in its name, is a migration that was unwillingly achieved. According to the European Commission, a forced migrant is "a person subject to a migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g., movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine or development projects)" (European Commission, n.d.). As we can see it in the next definition, a forced migrant is a displaced person.

Displaced person: a displaced is a person "who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters" (International Organization for Migration, 2020). In other words, a displaced person is a migrant who was directly or indirectly forced to flee his home, regardless of the destination which can be local or to another country. The next definitions specify according to this particular division.

Internally displaced person: for the UNHCR, "an internally displaced person, or IDP, is someone who has been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border. These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it—in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even forests and fields. IDPs, which include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, are the largest group that UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government" (UNHCR, n.d.).

Refugee: according to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention Article 1A (2) as modified by the 1967 protocol, a refugee is any person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership to of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country" (United Nations, 2010). This definition was actually "intended to exclude internally displaced persons, economic migrants, victims of natural disasters, and persons fleeing violent conflict but not subject to discrimination amounting to persecution" (European Parliament-Member's Research Service, 2015).

Asylum seeker: Unlike a refugee who is de facto recognized as such, an asylum seeker is someone who declares to be a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been evaluated as eligible for this category (UNHCR, n.d.). Although in the case of evident reasons related to war for instance, especially if the fleeing people are masses with no capacity for the different agencies in conducting individual evaluations, these groups are "often declared as *prima facia* refugees" (European Parliament-Member's Research Service, 2015).

Stateless person: the UNHCR says that "a stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights" (UNHCR, n.d.).

In summary, migration, as a social process among others, is a change of residence that has several aspects. It can be an economic migration if driven by economic prospects or causes, or a forced migration if happening as a consequence, or simply as a fear, of life-threatening events. The forced migrant is a displaced person. If his migration happened on a domestic level, from one region to another within his home country, he is considered as an internally displaced person (IDP). If during his migration, he crossed an international border, fled exclusively because of human-made activity (so environmental migrants are excluded), and is recognized as such by the international community without further explanations, the person is a refugee. If his case as an individual is not already recognized, but asks to be considered by local authorities as such, the person remains an asylum seeker until further notice. A first comment about these definitions, which mostly have a legal connotation or background, is that they seem to be confined in very rigid categories. The following sub-sections tend to show how these categories are usually much intertwined in practice. This study might deconstruct and redefine these notions in a more nuanced way.

4.2.2. Migration Patterns in Lebanon

The globalized modern world is partly characterized by a high mobility of capital, goods and people. Different disciplines of social sciences raised a particular attention to people's mobility, especially during the recent years (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2012). This was more a celebration of mobility, rather than a simple interest (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2012). Thus, it led to the emergence of a postmodern field called "mobility studies". Yet, human migration is not a new

phenomenon and people's mobility was quite the norm for millennia. After all, humans as a species are biologically meant to be mobile rather than sedentary, as showed by the metabolic flexibility of hunters-gatherers (Freese, Klement, Ruiz-Núñez, Schwarz, & Lötzerich, 2017). But migration flows were often seen by modern researchers' perspective as an "irregular" phenomenon, led by their normative bias in which "sedentarism" was the norm (Malkki, 1992). Modern Lebanon is no exception for this reality. Moreover, the little Levantine state can be considered as a pioneer in the amount of migration outflows and inflows that it had to face, both during its ancient and recent history, but also during the present times. The following sub-section gives a summary of all the different migration flows that this country had witnessed both before and after its creation, and up until present days.

The different migration waves that occurred in nowadays Lebanon can be analyzed through the scope of three main axis: the first axis separates between *immigration* (inflow) and *emigration* (outflow), the second divides between flows that happened prior to the creation of the state of Lebanon and those which occurred after, whereas the third one maps these flows according to their motives. Merging these three axes of analysis give us a comprehensive reading grid that helps us in schematizing a holistic trans-temporal migratory picture for the country. This can lead us, by contextualizing it, to have a better understanding of the Syrian refugee-related issues. Concerning the third axis, it is to be understood in this section through the traditional approach of *push* and *pull* factors in migration studies (cf. Velazquez, 2000). This approach is used uncritically by most of non-academic writers, and is considered to be theoretically weak (de Haas, 2011) as we will see it in the following chapter[70]. These factors are all the economic, security, social, political or even environmental causes that force or incite a person to leave a particular country (push), and the reasons (pull) that attract him to another one (European University Institute, n.d.). Other theories and approaches are also highly relevant in understanding the various flows that occurred on Lebanese territory. But their in-depth analysis is out of the scope of this section.

According to the above-mentioned axis of analysis, one can outline the following migration categories: outflows from Lebanon before and after its creation in 1920 and their respective *drivers* and *causes*; inflows towards Lebanon before and after its creation and their *causes*.

[70] The choice for push and pull factors in this preliminary analysis is intentional. It is used as a way to reassess Syrian refugees from a different theoretical framework in the next chapter.

Outflows from Lebanon

For the outflows, Lebanon is a traditional land of emigration since even before its creation in 1920 by the authorities of the French Mandate. The narrower autonomous Ottoman territories of Mount Lebanon, which lately became the core body of a larger "Greater Lebanon", witnessed a first wave of emigration towards the two Americas starting from the second half of the nineteenth century (Fersan, 2010). The main *push* reasons were a mix of political and economic drivers (Fersan, 2010). The cycles of sectarian violence of 1840 and 1860, mainly between the Druze and the Maronite Christian communities of the mountain, followed by international intervention that led to the establishment of a special autonomous regime, constitute the main political reasons. The persecutions against Eastern Christian communities are often inflated. But this version of the story must be minimized since, on one hand, a lot of Christian emigrants used this narrative to make the authorities of the receiving countries feel empathetic towards them, while on the other, Druze migration rates were higher in some regions than their Christian counterparts (Khater, 2017). Economically speaking, the collapse of the silk production, coupled with a rapid demographic growth, were the most preeminent reasons for emigrating (Tabar, 2019). Moreover, Khater (2017) in his article, presents an inverse correlation chart between silk prices and migration rates, which clearly indicates that the economic *push* factors had a decisive role in the outflow wave. The *pull* factors related to this wave are to be understood by the economic growth in the USA as well as the population need in South American countries such as Brazil or Argentina (Fersan, 2010). The trauma caused by the great famine that killed almost one third of Mount Lebanon's population caused a second wave, which was later on toned-down by both the creation of the state of Lebanon in 1920 and the great depression of the late 1920s. We must note that these waves were "circular": at least one third of the emigrants returned to their homeland, hence bringing with them economic and cultural capitals that were necessary for the birth of a middle class, which happened to be an essential driving force in building the modern Lebanese state during the 1920s (Tabar, 2019). This point is a concrete example of how migration can impact the nation-building process of a given state. A third wave covers the period that goes from the end of World War II until the Lebanese civil war in 1975. During this period, outflow trends continued, with the strengthening of new destinations such as West Africa, Australia and finally the emerging Gulf states. In 1973 and 1974 only, which are the last two years preceding the start of the civil war, more than 160,000 persons left Lebanon (Fersan, 2010). The fourth wave is undeniably linked to the Lebanese civil war (1975-

1990). Researchers agree on the number of one million emigrants during this timeframe (Fersan, 2010; Tabar, 2019), with obviously *push* factors being linked to the escalation of violence, but also the economic and social impacts of the war. Tabar (2019) states that this number represents almost 40% of the total pre-war Lebanese population. The end of the hostilities didn't stop this tendency. In contrary, it witnessed a fifth wave of emigration that stretches from 1990 to the present[71]. This last wave is characterized by a brain drain type of migration concerning both highly qualified manpower as well as students who seek for better job opportunities (Fersan, 2010). Indeed, Lebanon has a record-high number of more than 40 working universities in which half of the youth are enrolled (De Bel-Air, 2017). But the post-war structural economic problems, in addition to the rising corruption, clientelism, inflation, political persecution, disorder and chronic security issues linked to the general local and regional instability, pushed altogether the Lebanese to search for alternative countries of substitution. Some of these countries, such as the Gulf States, are considered as temporary destinations, while others like the European and American States are permanent ones (Migration Policy Center, 2013). This depends on the strictness of the various legal migratory policies in these respective states. Indeed, in opposition to Western countries, Gulf States tend to deliver only work permits rather than citizenship (Thiollet, 2016). Yet, we do not have unanimous official statistics concerning the numbers of emigrants (Tabar, 2019). The estimations are often very contradictory and subject to controversies, especially among local sectarian political actors.

[71] The 2019 social, economic and financial collapse is not taken into account in this study. Some already argue that the current crisis initiated a new 6th emigration wave.

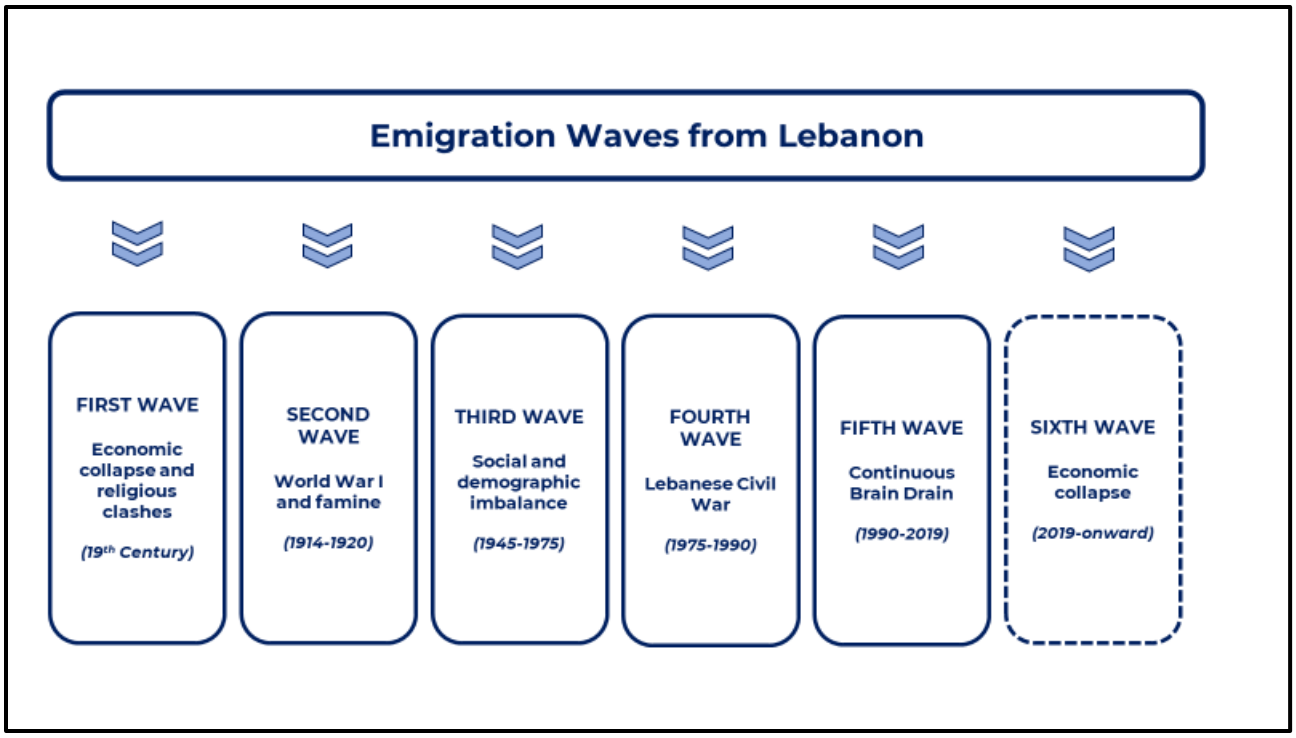

Figure 6. Emigration waves from Lebanon

The Lebanese diaspora is often estimated between 4 and 13 million (De Bel-Air, 2017). This considerable gap is explained by the fact that only a small proportion holds a Lebanese passport, the rest only possessing a Lebanese ancestry (De Bel-Air, 2017). Nevertheless, the size of this diaspora is substantial, taking into account the country's size and demography. Here again, the speculations on the diaspora's religious identity play around the fragility of the sectarian status quo, thus with the political balance of power (De Bel-Air, 2017). For instance, right after the creation of Lebanon, the Maronite political elite who had an overwhelming control over the state's institutions, tried to boost the Christian demographic numbers by including a significant proportion of emigrants in the 1932 census (Maktabi, 1999). The main reason was that 85% of these included emigrants were Christians, while only 15% were non-Christian (Maktabi, 1999). Knowing that this census' results were used afterward as the statistical basis for the confessional repartition of the public official political seats according to their respective sizes (Faour, 2007), this action proves the magnitude of the links between migration and state identity. Furthermore, the allocation of the citizenship itself to emigrants was controversial. Actually, the right for Lebanese citizenship derives from the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 according to which people were granted the freedom in choosing their country of belonging (Aziz, 2011; Maktabi, 2000). So technically speaking, the

emigrants, who were actually until then Ottoman subjects, could go to the French consular representations in their respective host countries and ask for the new Lebanese citizenship. This was only carried out by around 100,000 emigrants out of 250,000 (Aziz, 2011). These "insufficient" results could only be achieved with: (1) the active role of the Maronite church and elite who pushed, mainly the Christians, to register; (2) the continuous extension of the Lausanne Treaty's legal effects until the late 1940s, which was originally only valid for two years (Aziz, 2011). Finally, while these mostly Christian emigrants received the citizenship without proving their residency on the Lebanese territory in 1924 - as stipulated by the law-, a large number of Muslims, effectively residing in Lebanon, but unable to prove it with documents, were denied from this right (Maktabi, 1999, 2000). These people constitute the biggest portion of the stateless persons of Lebanon[72].

Inflows to Lebanon

Concerning the inflows, we can identify up to five different populations. The first one is the group that came prior or around the creation of Lebanon. This is mainly composed of Armenians who settled down in the country just before and during its creation. The second, and most important group in terms of numbers, are the Palestinian refugees who fled Palestine after the *Nakba*. A third group includes all the foreign economic migrants working in Lebanon, which is composed of Asians, Africans as well as Arab workers mainly from Egypt (cf. De Bel-Air, 2017). It is important to note that Syrian nationals constituted for decades the largest workforce in this group, but the Syrian refugee crisis blurred their categorization and thus is subject to conflicting estimations. Another group of people includes a patchwork of various religious and ethnic minority groups who found refuge in the country for different reasons throughout the last century. We can list here the small Greek community, the Kurds, but also some Syrian Christians who came in the 1970s, as well as more recently, several Iraqi refugees with various religious backgrounds. The Syrian refugee crisis must be situated within this historical context of former waves.

Beyond this description, the analytical categorization of these various groups is a must since it helps us in catching some elements related to *state identity*. The best way of doing so is by

[72] The statelessness-related issues are developed in the next paragraphs. Concerning statelessness in Lebanon, see also the two extensive research reports delivered by Siren Associates for Tripoli (The Plight of the Rightless. Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Tripoli, 2019) and Akkar (Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Akkar, 2021). The author of this thesis collaborated in the research and redaction of the latter report.

approaching the groups through the scope of the different legal statuses under which they are granted residency. In this respect, each group was subject to a different treatments and statuses at arrival (Sfeir, 2017). This encourages us to catch the official state's position towards each one of these groups, from which we can deduct its hidden motives. It could maybe give us some clews for seizing the linkages between these motives and their identity-related drivers. The legal statuses under which these populations live are mainly the following: naturalized Lebanese citizens, various forms of (officially not recognized) refugees and/or asylum seekers, temporary work permits or visas, and stateless persons.

The migrant groups who were granted Lebanese citizenship are mainly the Armenians, but also partially and in smaller proportions, some members of the various ethnic and religious minority groups. Interestingly, it also included all the Christian and the wealthy Muslim Palestinian refugees who came in 1948 (Ghandour, 2017). These wealthy Palestinians received this privilege by dint of the potential advantages of investing their assets in a yet underdeveloped Lebanese economy (Ghandour, 2017). The naturalization process did not encounter simultaneously for all groups. It rather came in waves from the 1920s up until the late 1990s. Curiously, the discretionary role of the Lebanese state in granting citizenship throughout its existence is highly suspicious and needs a bit of attention here. In fact, tracking back the naturalization process, scholarship found convicting evidences proving that the Maronite Christian decision-maker elite of early Lebanon, worked a lot in order to maintain the state's demographic Christian predominance (Maktabi, 1999). For this reason, they rarely missed an occasion in granting citizenship to Christian migrants, but also, when they could, to deny it for residing Muslims, as stated previously. This policy is one of the main factors that led to the creation of the stateless category in Lebanon. Indeed, a lot of today's stateless people in Lebanon are the descendants of those who, despite residing in the country, could not justify their residency back then, and thus, were denied from the Lebanese citizenship and were registered as "foreigners" in the 1932 census (Maktabi, 2000). As Rania Maktabi shows it, "the Lebanese preferred to rely on control mechanisms [among them the political citizenship] (…) in order to maintain the prerogatives of the Christian-dominated government" (Maktabi, 2000, p.178). The 1932 census was a central implementation of the 1925 naturalization law (Hourani, 2011). In other words, the people who could prove their residence in Lebanon in 1924, as stipulated by the 1925 law, were censed in 1932 as being Lebanese and received automatically the

citizenship. The Armenians[73] who came to Lebanon fleeing the genocide, as well as some other Christian Chaldean and Melkite newcomers, were among those who received it (Maktabi, 2000). Others, generally Muslims in majority, such as the Kurds immigrants who came with the Armenians for instance, as well as some Bedouins living around the Lebanese-Syrian borders, were to be stateless[74]. Most of these people received an identity card with the mention of "Unknown Nationality[75]" when censed as non-Lebanese in the 1932 Census. While those who failed to register were later classified under "Veiled Nationality[76]". Later on in the 1960s, some of these stateless, among them the few thousands of Kurds, were upgraded to "Nationality Under Study[77]" (Hourani, 2011). Holders of this card are not allowed to vote in the elections, to buy property, to serve in the Lebanese army, or to work in the public sector for instance (Hourani, 2011). A large number falling under this category were finally given the citizenship after the Naturalization Decree of 1994. This policy-shift can only be understood under the broader changes in the sectarian status quo brought by the Taef Agreements, which diminished the Maronite Christian political power over the Lebanese State. Numbers concerned by this decree are estimated around 154,000 people (Hourani & Sensenig-Dabbous, 2012). Nonetheless, the proportion of stateless, among which we find Kurds and Bedouins, was only of 36% (Hourani, 2011). The rest was composed of Syrians (42%), but also Palestinians (16%). These Palestinians were the Shia inhabitants of the so-called "Seven Villages[78]", who came into Lebanon as Palestinian refugees in 1948 (Kaufman, 2006).

All in all, we can conclude that the access to citizenship for immigrants in Lebanon has two main characteristics: the first one is the discretion of the state (based on random *ad hoc* decisions in the

[73] The Armenian community of Lebanon is considered by the Armenians to be the second biggest and culturally, religiously and politically one of the most vibrant *diasporas* worldwide. For more details about the history and the situation of the Lebanese Armenians, refer to the very interesting study of Scott Abramson (Lebanese Armenians; a Distinctive community in the Armenian Diaspora and in the Lebanese Society, 2013).

[74] The larger stateless Bedouin community is found in Wadi Khaled, Akkar. For more information, see Siren and UNHCR (Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Akkar, 2021).

[75] "*Jensiyya Ghayr Mouayyana*" in Arabic (cf. Hourani,2011).

[76] *"Maktum al Qayd"* in Arabic (cf. Hourani,2011).

[77] *"Jensiyya Qayd Al-Dars"* in Arabic (cf. Hourani,2011).

[78] The "Seven Villages" are territories that were initially considered as part of Lebanon in 1920, but they later became under the jurisdiction of Mandatory Palestine. This happened following the Paulet-Newcombe agreement of 1923 which set the precise borders between French Mandatory territories (Syria, Lebanon) and British ones (Palestine, Jordan, Iraq). Yet, before this agreement, the -overwhelmingly- Shia inhabitants of these seven villages were already registered as Lebanese. But after the creation of the State of Israel, these inhabitants fled to the Lebanese hinterlands as and with other Palestinian refugees. They were later granted Lebanese citizenship under the naturalization decree of 1994 after years of lobbying. Their number was of 32,500 persons in 1994. (cf. Ghandour, 2017; Kaufman, 2006).

lack of an adequate legislation), which is in turn linked to demographic, sectarian, and in some cases economic and clientelist considerations. The naturalization process was achieved in three main waves: a first one during the French Mandate (1920-1943), a second (1950s, 1960s) under the rule of strong Maronite presidents (Ghandour, 2017), and a third with the naturalization decree of 1994. The main concerned populations of the first wave were the Armenian refugees, who were 34,000 in 1932 (Maktabi, 1999), estimated to be nowadays somewhere between 80,000 and 250,000 persons (Toghramadjian, 2017), as well as a small number of other Christian groups. The second wave concerned the Christian Palestinian refugees who, in opposition to their Muslim peers, had the privilege of accessing to the Lebanese citizenship. These two waves were motivated by the will of the Maronite ruling elite of maintaining Lebanon as a Christian-majority state. These (Christian and wealthy Muslim) Palestinians were approximately 32,000 (cf. Ghandour, 2017). The last significant wave of 1994 granted citizenship to a few thousands of Kurds, as well as to 32,500 Palestinians of the "Seven Villages", among other stateless persons (Ghandour, 2017). For showing the diversity of these groups we can also mention the case of the Greeks who were also naturalized under this decree[79].

The second legal frame under which the immigrants can be classified are the refugees and asylum seekers. This category is very complex to define since the Lebanese state did not ratify the 1951 United Nations Convention on the status of Refugees, neither its protocol of 1967. These are the two most important and primary legal international instruments made for the protection of refugees in the world (Janmyr, 2017). Beside the many hidden reasons for opposing their ratification (cf. Janmyr, 2017), there is a much flagrant one that seems to generate the biggest fears. This reason is again more or less related to the demographic worries that were developed earlier. Here also, the long-lasting problem linked to the fate of Palestinian refugees is the one that haunts the Lebanese officials (UNHCR, 2006). In fact, even though their presence was "sold" to the Lebanese "as a short duration problem" (UNHCR, 2006), their issue is still unresolved after more than 70 years and thus constitutes the main obstacle that prevents the state of adopting the convention's text (Janmyr, 2017). Because of that, the Lebanese authorities insist that the stay of non-

[79] The author has several acquaintances of Greek origins and whose families came to Lebanon from various parts of the back-then Ottoman Empire. A lot of these families received the Lebanese nationality with the 1994 naturalization decree. About Greek communities in the Levant see the article of the Cyprus Mail (Chrysostomou, 2017) talking about the documentary made about this subject by George Eid, in which the community is estimated to be between 10,000 to 30,000 persons.

Palestinians must be as short as possible (UNHCR, 2006). This is true despite the fact that Palestinian refugees were legally separated from the rest of the world's refugee population (Janmyr, 2017). Unlike other refugees who fall under the UNHCR mandate, the UN created an exclusive agency for the Palestinians, namely the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition, and maybe also as a consequence, refugees and asylum seekers in Lebanon can be arrested, fined or even deported, since they are considered illegal migrants by law (UNHCR, 2006). This threat, even if not always applied, puts these populations at a high risk of marginalization (Janmyr, 2017).

Speaking of numbers, the most significant group that falls under this category is the Palestinian refugee population. Today, their estimated numbers vary between 300,000 (De Bel-Air, 2017) and 475,000 (UNRWA, 2019). The gap between the different estimations is due to the divergent political agendas of the parties behind each of them (De Bel-Air, 2017; Ghandour, 2017). In short, out of the half a million UNRWA registered refugees, it is believed that only half of them is still residing in Lebanon (Andersen, 2016), while the other half emigrated to third countries (Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of Statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). These Palestinians are all descendants of those who fled their land after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. At that time, around 100,000 to 110,000 found refuge all across Lebanon (Ghandour, 2017). Most of them settled in camps that are scattered around the country's main cities. These camps became, with the eternalization of the conflict, permanent settlements that gained throughout the decades a morphology of slum enclaves, similar to the Brazilian Favelas. The problems linked to their presence shifted from humanitarian to demographic-sectarian, and finally to security-political. Indeed, as we saw it earlier with the Armenians, the main fear of the Maronite political elite was to maintain the country's Christian demographic predominance. But the vast majority of Palestinians are Muslim Sunnis. We saw earlier that naturalizing their Christian peers was not a problem at all. But the rest of this population constitute until today a major nightmare for the Lebanese ruling class. This fear was even translated in the founding legal texts of Lebanon. The most prominent example for it can be found in the preamble of its Constitution added after the Taef Agreements (Janmyr, 2017), in which we can read: "There shall be no (…) settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon" (Lebanon Const., pmbl.). In Arabic, the word for "settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon" is simply "*tawtin*", naturalization, literally "giving nationality". It shows how the Palestinian presence impacted on the shape of the state's

identity itself through the content of its constitution. According to Peteet (1996), the Palestinian presence in post-war Lebanon gave to the Lebanese national identity some cohesion. This was concretized by uniting the very diverse political factions around a common denominator, namely the problem of the indefinite presence of Palestinians (Peteet, 1996). Indeed, this fear was somehow justified with the actions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) who, chased and expelled from Jordan, chose Lebanon as its headquarters for its anti-Israeli guerilla actions. This was seen as a major factor of destabilization for the Lebanon of the 1960s and 1970s (Hudson, 1978). These Palestinian-related issues are also perceived by many as one of the main triggers[80] of the Lebanese civil war that took place between 1975 and 1990 (Jalkh, 2021; Khawaja, 2011). All these elements enlighten us further in catching the implications linked to the actual Syrian Refugee presence on Lebanon. On a more practical aspect, the Palestinians faced many legal barriers which lowered their chances of integration. They "do not enjoy several important rights; for example, they cannot work in as many as 39 professions and cannot own property" (UNRWA, 2019). Alongside the Palestinians, in the recent years, Lebanon was targeted by other refugee groups that are less significant in numbers. But these people fall under the UNHCR competencies. Most of them are Iraqi refugees who fled their country after the US invasion of 2003. They are estimated to be around 20,000 people, out of which more than 17,000 were UNHCR registered in 2015 (De Bel-Air, 2017). Other refugees and asylum seekers are also registered at the UNHCR. These 3,000 people are from various African, Arab and Asian countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, the Philippines and Egypt among others (De Bel-Air, 2017). Nonetheless, these groups are nothing compared to the Syrian refugee numbers who can be classified in this category. But their case is the topic of the following sections.

The last legal frame under which falls the jurisdiction of the remaining immigrant groups that are present in Lebanon is the one conferred to economic migrants. These groups are regulated by work permit-based temporary residencies. The work permits are issued by the Lebanese authorities but are built, as it is the case in many other countries of the region, on a sponsorship system named *"Kafala"*. The *Kafala* system is based on sponsorship granted by the local job providers. A job-seeker migrant is legally bounded to a local "sponsor" who in turn provides him a job and a work

[80] There is a common and predominant perception within the Lebanese society and political elite of portraying the Palestinian refugees as being the main responsible of the civil war. In fact, the civil war has several and complex causes. See in the respect Khawaja (2011), Sune (2011) and Gaube (2015).

contract (International Labor Organization, n.d.). In other words, the migrant worker cannot enter the country, and then change employer, or even leave the country without the explicit agreement of his employer, "*kafil*" in Arabic (International Labor Organization, n.d.). The sponsor has consequently a discretionary power over his employee, which is considered to be a modern form of slavery (International Labor Organization, n.d.). Migrant workers are completely dependent vis-à-vis their sponsors. This system aimed to control and regulate in a strict way the conditions of temporary migration, in order to avoid Western-style work migration (International Labor Organization, n.d.), where it opened the door to permanent settlement or naturalization[81]. A lot of human rights violations are linked to this status, even in Lebanon, where basic rights of migrants are almost systematically violated. The persons concerned by this category are mainly low-skilled workers coming from various African and Asian countries. The majority of these workers are domestic workers dealing with "housekeeping" (De Bel-Air, 2017). In fact, around 250,000 migrant domestic workers are registered in Lebanon (Chaaban, Chalak, Ismail, & Khedr, 2018). About 99% of these are women who work as *live-in* domestic helpers (Chaaban, Chalak, Ismail, & Khedr, 2018). These women are usually brought and inserted directly in a household, where they work, live and sleep. They are mostly coming from Ethiopia followed by The Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other Asian and African countries (Chaaban, Chalak, Ismail, & Khedr, 2018). This population is very vulnerable since the *kafala* regime prevents them from basic legal safeguards (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Since they live at their workplace, a lot of them usually work outside any kind of pre-established fixe daily working hours schedule and in some cases, are confronted to employers' abuse or violence. These housekeepers are followed by a mostly male workers category. Most of these workers come from Egypt (80%), followed by Sudanese, as well as other Asian and African citizens (De Bel-Air, 2017). Their number was of 85,000 in 2014 (De Bel-Air, 2017). They work for instance as service providers at gas stations, or as concierges in buildings. We have to stress on that due to the toughness of this *kafala* system, many of these migrants switched to illegality by escaping from their respective sponsors. Nadine Labaki in her movie "Capernaum" (Mouzanar & Merkt, 2018), focuses on the main issues encountered by this population. A very small proportion of Palestinian and Syrian workers benefits from this system

[81] The *kafala* system is not specific to Lebanon. It is used by many other Arab countries, especially in the Gulf states, to regulate their economic migrants. See in this respect Júlia Palik (The Challenges of Dual-Societies: The Interaction of Workforce Nationalisation and National Identity Construction through the Comparative Case Studies of Saudisation and Emiratisation, 2018).

as registered and declared legal workers (De Bel-Air, 2017). In summary, the 340,000 economic migrants are mostly coming from Arab, African and Asian countries as low-skilled workers[82]. Their presence is meant to be temporary, but they constitute a highly vulnerable segment of the Lebanese society[83].

Analyzing the dynamics of migrant inflows to Lebanon let us realize the rising importance of the country as a receiver destination. Despite being a country of emigration, it went through a progressive switch during the recent decades, attracting a substantial amount of people who became actors of a "replacement migration" (Tabar, 2019). After being for decades a destination for refugees (Armenians and Palestinians mainly), Lebanon shifted to be a receiver country for a parallel economic migration.

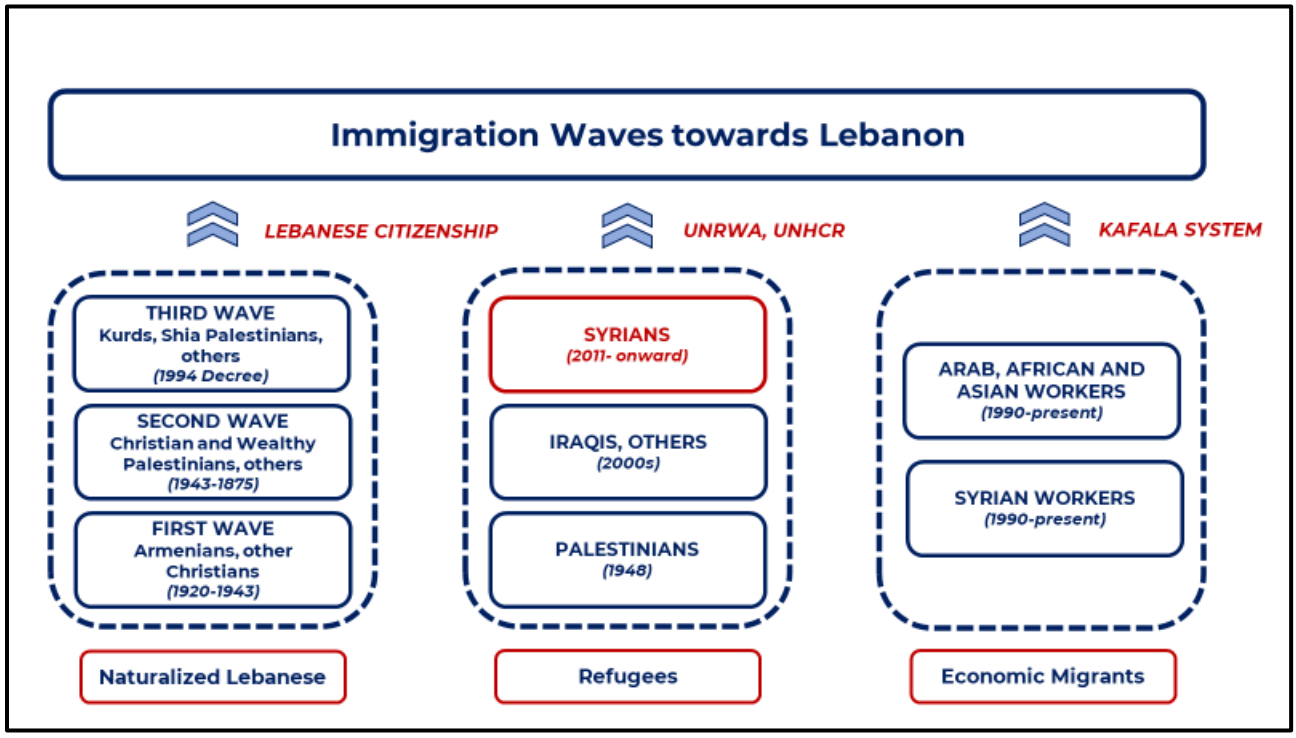

Figure 7. Migration inflow towards Lebanon

[82] Here again, these numbers reflect on the pre-crisis period. The economic and financial crisis started in early 2019.
[83] And their legal status (*kafala*) is somehow designed not to represent a threat for the Lebanese sectarian status quo.

4.2.3. Implications

The previous paragraphs lead us to summarize some key implications from the migration flows of Lebanon. The efforts of contextualization give us indeed a better understanding of the Syrian refugee crisis. In this respect, we have seen that Lebanon is both a country of emigration and immigration. Migratory flows were constituted of various groups which enjoy a set of different treatments. Treatments reflect on motives, which in turn inform us on the Lebanese state's perceived interests.

Regarding the outflows from Lebanon, the country witnessed five major waves of emigration, while a sixth one is currently in the making. These waves teach us that:

- The Lebanese diaspora's size is substantial regarding the size of the country.
- Speculation around religious identity of emigrants plays an undeniable role regarding the domestic political balance of power through the potential leverages that it can bring in the state's sectarian status quo based on demographic weights of each religious community.
- Including Christian emigrants in the Census of 1932 by the back-then Maronite political elite is the best illustration for the important links between migration and state identity in Lebanon.
- While citizenship is accorded through patrilineal *jus sanguinis* principles, ad hoc decisions, based on confessional considerations, can be made for naturalization.

On another hand, the review of the inflows towards Lebanon informs us about the state's motives. In this respect, the state's attitudes towards different immigrating groups are potentially based on its perceived interests, which are in turn reflecting on the state's identity. Immigrant groups can be categorized according to three main legal statuses. Each one reveals some important implications:

- The first category includes those who were granted Lebanese citizenship. This includes Armenians, Christians, and wealthy Muslim Palestinians. For that, the Maronite elite pushed towards the Christian predominance of Lebanon. With the end of the civil war, Christian power regressed compared to Muslim Sunni and Shia power. Their elites pushed towards naturalizing (1) Sunni non-Palestinian stateless (such as Kurds and Bedouins in the 1994 decree), and (2) Shia Palestinians of the seven villages.

- The second category regroups refugee immigrants. In this regard, Lebanon did not ratify the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its Protocol in order to avoid "*tawtin*", naturalization of Palestinian refugees. Moreover, Palestinians remained a taboo and a cement for Lebanese national identity. Furthermore, denying their access to Lebanese citizenship was integrated into the constitution.
- The third category refers to economic immigrants. Here again, the *kafala* system proves the will of the state in maintaining its identity through its religious demographic status quo. Indeed, *kafala* is a way of containing any prolonged settlement of migrant groups.

It is in this context that Syrian refugee started flooding in to Lebanon. The next section is dedicated to a general multileveled overview of this crisis.

4.3. The Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: A Multileveled Crisis

At this point, a descriptive presentation of the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon seems to be more than essential. This section unveils some of its key numbers and facts, in order to deliver a holistic picture of this long-lasting humanitarian catastrophe. It also analyzes the drivers and patterns of the Syrian refugee migration through a comprehensive narration based on empirical evidences found in the relevant literature.

4.3.1. Refugees in Numbers

Some general numbers and facts were already mentioned in the chapter's introduction. As a reminder, Lebanon is considered by the UN as being the country with the highest rate of refugees per capita in the entire world. With refugees counting for more than 30% of the total country's population (UNHCR, 2018), it seems to be one of the biggest displacement-related issues since World War II. But beyond, we must stress here that numbers and rates are often subject to controversies. Before digging deeper in the topic, one can realize the many obstacles faced by any researcher willing to examine exact numbers and rates. The best illustration for this statement is the inexistence of a reliable or an official population census in Lebanon since 1932, as it was already explained. Not having a unique and reliable number of citizens or residents falsifies any published rate or ratio, since the equation's denominator is subject to diverging estimations. This is the reason for the existence of different rates about numbers of refugees per capita in the country, which can vary from 3 to 1 to 6 to 1. But these ratio problems reside also in the fraction's numerator itself. Indeed, there are different estimations concerning the exact numbers of Syrian refugees

present in Lebanon. This problem has a lot of reasons. But the most important one is linked to the fact that not all the Syrian refugees are UNHCR registered.

Subsequently, we can find varying estimations delivered by the Lebanese state on one hand, as well as those delivered by the different local and international organizations on the other. But the most precisely documented numbers over the years remain the ones provided by the UNHCR. In this regard, after an exponential increase in the first few years of the Syrian conflict, the number of UNHCR registered Syrian refugees peaked in April 2015, when it almost reached 1.2 million (UNHCR, 2019b). In recent years, this number dropped below the one million. According to the UNHCR, the number of registered refugees by the end of autumn 2019 was of 918,974 persons (UNHCR, 2019b). In the meantime, the Lebanese state continues to give the number of 1.5 million Syrian refugees as its official estimation (UNHCR, 2019a). The next paragraph tries to explain this gap.

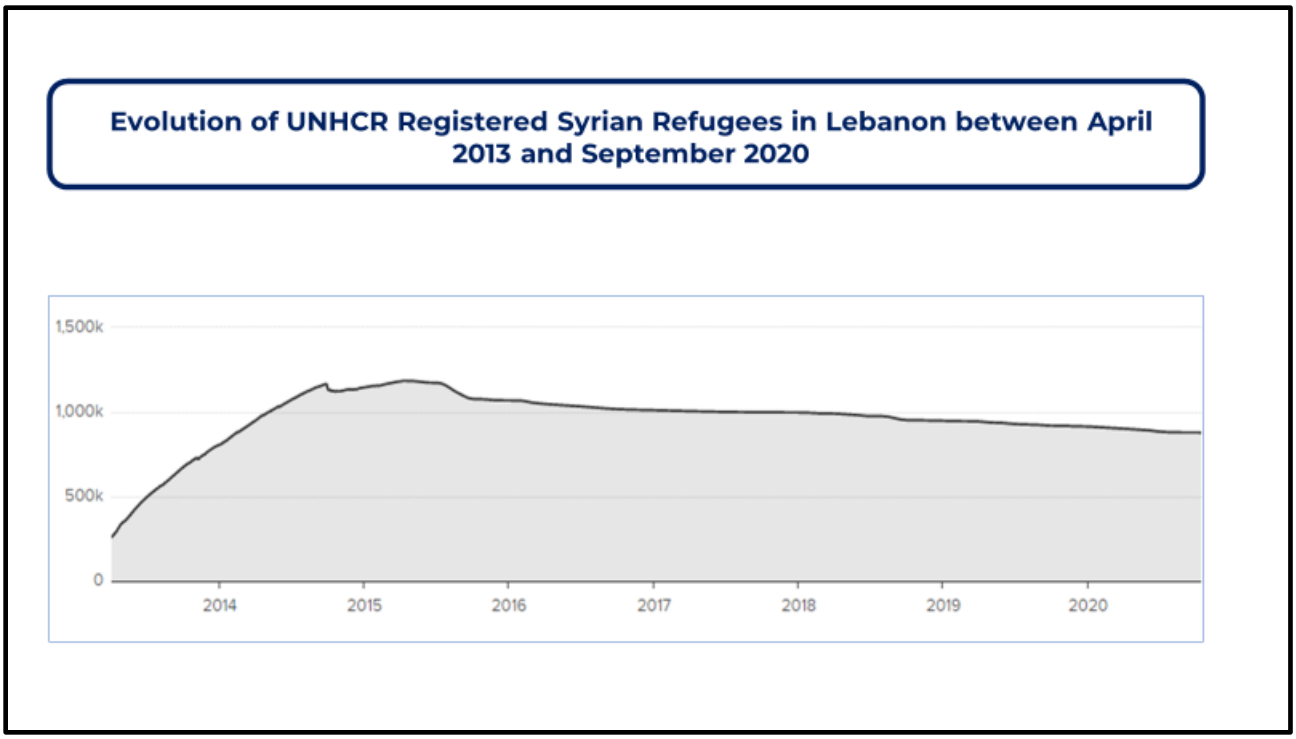

Figure 8. Evolution of UNHCR Registered Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (Source: UNHCR, 2020)

Diverging Estimations

There are many reasons that explain the gap between estimated numbers of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Perhaps its most interesting aspect resides in the dynamics of the UNHCR registration process itself. In this regard, it is important to underline that many Syrians actually failed to register as refugees. One of the assumptions for that can be the overloaded capacities of the UNHCR administration, which, due to the huge numbers of Syrians who flooded into the country, was unable to finish the task of registering everyone. But if this argument might be valid for the first few years of the crisis, it cannot be considered as relevant anymore since numbers stabilized and then started to drop starting from mid-2015. Moreover, this argument loses completely its relevance, knowing that the Lebanese authorities explicitly asked the UNHCR to freeze the registration procedure in May 2015 (Balanche & Verdeil, 2019). In parallel to these structural causes that are tackled later on in the next chapters when addressing the Lebanese state's responses, this phenomenon has also some agency-linked explanations. Without any doubt, the initial porosity and fluidity of the Syrian-Lebanese borders, where citizens from both countries could move back and forth freely and visa-free for decades (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018), could sound enough comforting for some Syrians who, by simple nonchalance, were procrastinating to register as refugees. Maybe those who were already established and working in Lebanon are even more concerned by this trend. Another agency-related reason can be attributed to the mentality of honor to which some Syrians adhere. In other words, a non-negligible number of Syrians deliberately chose not to register as refugees because they perceive it as being a violation to their pride (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). Interests, political affiliation and prospects of return are also viewed as leading to non-registration. In this respect, by trying to understand why Christian Syrians were not registering themselves as refugees, Marwan Kreidie (2016) found a multitude of reasons: (1) loyalty towards the Syrian regime[84] - in contrast with other more frightening belligerents such as Islamist rebels- makes them more likely to stick to the idea of a prompt return; (2) fear of being stigmatized by the status of refugee; (3) fear of being perceived disloyal by the regime if registering as refugees, since they have more advantages at stake to loose -such as properties and governmental job positions for which they are still getting paid-; (4) an overall wealthier and higher educated backgrounds which make them less reliant on financial aids acquired by registering as

[84] When mentioned in this thesis, the Syrian regime refers always to the Assad regime.

refugees (Kreidie, 2016). The last sentence is especially relevant in understanding the divergent estimates between UNHCR registered and non-registered refugees. In fact, the civil war pushed also the wealthier middle and upper classes to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Because of its geographical, social and familial proximity, Lebanon was seen as a natural destination for these segments. Whereas transitional or long-lasting, many wealthy Syrians moved to Lebanon, bought or invested in real estate, and registered their children in the country's prestigious private schools and universities[85]. Many could also rely on preexistent family ties that they have with Lebanese. Some were even hosted for free by their Lebanese relatives. These cases are developed later.

Palestinian Refugees of Syria

Alongside with Syrian refugees, there is a less well-known population group who also fled the atrocities by crossing from Syria towards Lebanon. This group is composed of those who are called the Palestinian Refugees displaced from Syria (PRS). In fact, and similarly to Lebanon, Syria witnessed in the aftermath of the 1948 *Nakba* a substantial influx of Palestinian refugees who settled in various peripheral areas around some of the country's main cities. The hostilities affected also some of these neighborhoods, which caused inevitably the displacement in large numbers of the Palestinians of Syria. Some of these Palestinians, as their Syrian compatriots, found refuge in neighboring Lebanon. The UNRWA had to elaborate a new specific category for these refugees: the PRS are therefore those Palestinian refugees who despite being registered by the Agency in Syria, took refuge in Lebanon as a result of the Syrian war since 2011 (Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of Statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Actually, the vast majority of the PRS come from the so-called *Yarmuk* Palestinian refugee camp located in the suburbs of Damascus (Astih, 2018). This camp was the theatre of extreme violence and scenes of starvation during the first few years of the Syrian civil war. Most of these Palestinian newcomers sought refuge in the preexisting Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon, more specifically in those of the coastal cities of Tripoli in the North and Saida in the South, respectively named the *Beddawi* and *Ayn el Helweh* Palestinian camps (Astih, 2018). As for other refugee groups, PRS numbers are also subject to diverging estimations. While the Lebanese state

[85] Based on the personal experience of the author who has many family connections with Syrian families from the middle and upper classes, who fled and settled in Lebanon after the beginning of the war in Syria. Many of those are businessmen who registered their children in Lebanese private schools and universities while they continue to move between Syria (when the security situation allows it), Lebanon and other European and American countries.

has a number of approximately 54,000 persons (Astih, 2018), others estimate them to be initially more than 90,000 out of which only 20,000 are still residing in Lebanon, while the rest either returned to Syria or found a third country of resettlement (Astih, 2018). All these numbers came to boost the previously-existing Palestinian refugee demographics which constitute since 1948 the most prominent group among migrants (cf. Chapter 4.2.2. Migration patterns in Lebanon).

Religious Affiliation

As it was the case for Palestinian refugees, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees are religiously affiliated to Sunni Islam (Eldawy, 2019). There is obviously no official data concerning the exact statistical repartition of the Syrian refugees' religious backgrounds. But estimations confirm largely the above-mentioned statement. We saw how when we speak about demographics in Lebanon, religion do matter. It enhances fears and vehement passions, especially among groups that might perceive to be threatened by these trends. It is precisely why it is worth mentioning here the religious affiliations of Syrian refugees. In addition to Sunni Muslims, the Syrian refugee population of Lebanon includes also members of the Christian, Alawite, Druze but also Isma'ili and Yezidi religious communities (Minority Rights Group International, 2019).

Geographical Distribution

In contrast with other refugee recipient states, Syrian refugees in Lebanon were not grouped in state-controlled and organized camps along the bordering regions. Instead, they are scattered all along the country's territory. This can be explained by the state's inaction in regard of the influx's organization and support. Hence, it led to the creation of ad hoc situations in which refugees entered and settled in the country without any sort of a state-level palpable coordination. As a result, the entire territory of Lebanon is impacted by the refugee crisis on various degrees. Obviously, the peripheral regions which share borders with Syria are hosting the bulk of the refugees. In this respect, the Beqaa Governorate at the Eastern fringe of Lebanon is the country's first recipient of Syrian refugees, where 37% of their total population is located (UNHCR, 2020). It is followed by North Lebanon with 26%, Beirut with 25%, and South Lebanon with 11% of the total number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2020). Also, it is noteworthy to mention that in some Lebanese towns and villages, the number of Syrian refugees surpasses the number of local Lebanese residents. The best example is the town of *Ersal* in the Beqaa, where Syrian refugees account for 120.000 persons, while local Lebanese residents are only 40,000 (Yee, 2018).

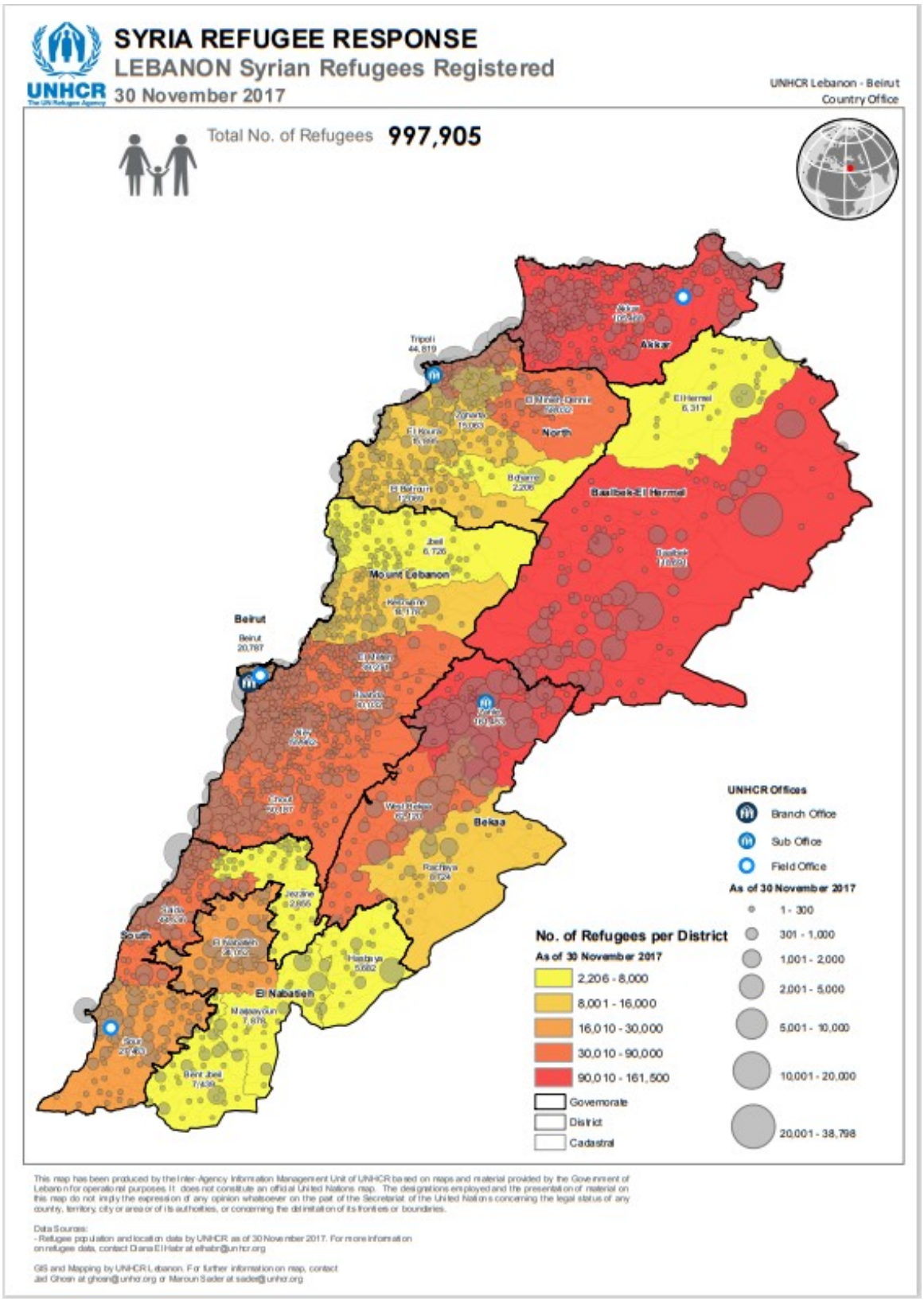

Figure 9. Repartition of UNHCR Registered Syrian Refugees across the Lebanese territory (Source: UNHCR, 2017)

Types of Housing

Refugees are settled across Lebanon in a diverse way and according to different housing patterns. In rural areas, the majority live in poorly organized camps, since only a minority of households can afford to rent other forms of shelters. Many find refuge in agricultural, engine or pump rooms as well. Other sorts of shelters found in both rural, urban or suburban regions, are usually either dilapidated shelters made of relatively more robust material than tents, such as abandoned buildings or garages, or flats that have a poor infrastructure. Some refugee households are also forced to squat in abandoned, half-finished or active construction sites. In numbers, as of 2018, 19% of Syrian refugees lived in non-permanent structures (mainly informal camps), while 15% lived in non-residential constructions (Yassin, 2019) such as the above-mentioned technical rooms and garages for instance. Others bring in their family members to shelters provided by their employers. This is the case of concierges for example[86]. Many others have chosen to settle in Palestinian refugee camps where rental fees are more affordable for them (Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of Statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Nasser Yassin (2019) provides some interesting facts and figures about the types of housing. Regarding the statistical numbers, as of 2018, 35% of Syrian refugees lived in shelters that are below standard. In fact, the trends are towards a worsening situation, since it was 26% in 2016 and 32% in 2017 (Yassin, 2019). Moreover, the dilapidated situation of these substandard shelters is confirmed by numbers: 83% have a leakage in their roof, whereas 62% have no proper doors and windows (Yassin, 2019). In summary, Syrians are to be found all across the country, living mostly in poor conditions, and are almost totally left alone to their fate.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Situation

As we can imagine, the vast majority of Syrian refugees are poor. In this regard, the UN vulnerability assessment identified that 69% of Syrian refugee households were living under the poverty line in 2018 (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). Their monthly average expenditure was of 113 USD per household. The study also revealed that less than 67% of households have an acceptable food consumption, while 23% have a borderline consumption (2018). All these

[86] The author's own residence in Lebanon, constituted of a flat in a residential building, has a Syrian concierge who is allocated with a small room at the building's ground floor, where he lives. The concierge brought in his wife and two children who since the beginning of the war in Syria live all together in the $20m^2$ flat. Many other cases of the author's circle of friends and relatives dispose with Syrian concierges who followed a similar pattern.

numbers show the high probability of a social implosion's risk, especially with the worsening of the economic crisis that started in 2019. In this respect, many Syrians are finding it difficult to cover their monthly basic expenses. Indeed, 40% of their labor force was unemployed in 2018 (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018), while 90% of households acquired debt, out of which 72% did it to buy food (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018).

The gender division among the refugee population is quite balanced, with 50,5% of women and 49,5% of men (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). The demographic distribution on the pyramid of age is even more important to mention. In fact, the refugee population is composed of about 52% of under-age children (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). This high rate is very likely to represent a major challenge for Lebanon in the future, because Syrian children birth is coming to overcome Lebanese children birth numbers. In this respect, 40,000 Syrian babies were born in 2016 compared to 71,000 Lebanese (Karas, 2017). Knowing that in 2018 around 75% of Syrian refugee adults were married (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018), and that 58% of Syrian refugee households had children under the age of 5 (Yassin, 2019), the proportion of Syrians in the overall Lebanese population will continue to grow if they will become to stay in the country. With these prospects, it would not be surprising at all if the Lebanese population perceives them as a potential existential threat. But this is discussed later on in this thesis.

The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Lebanon

All the previously-presented numbers push the reader to assume that this refugee crisis must be heavily impacting Lebanon's economy, society, security, infrastructure, healthcare system, and environment. And indeed, these assumptions might be validated through numbers. Regarding Lebanon's macroeconomy, it is important to note that there are diverging opinions about the negative impact of the refugee crisis. For example, while the government of Lebanon and the World bank estimated the cost the crisis between 2012 and 2015 to be around 13 billion of USD, other researches show that it caused economic growth (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). Concerning healthcare, the shortage in funding constitutes an additional burden on the Lebanese healthcare system in providing a sustainable quality service provision for both refugees and vulnerable host communities (Yassin, 2019). We can also imagine the pressure on the Lebanese

infrastructure, like the sewage system for example, and the huge impact that informal settlements can cause to the environment. But all of these repercussions are out of this research's scope[87].

4.3.2. Legal Status

The Syrian refugees in Lebanon are subjects to a multitude of legal statuses that varied through time and context since the beginning of the crisis. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Lebanon did not ratify the 1951 United Nations Convention on the status of Refugees, neither its protocol of 1967. Hence, the state is not formally tightened to international regulations when dealing with Syrian refugees. And this is true despite that a large proportion of them is registered at the UNHCR as refugees. Therefore, the government of Lebanon stresses on the binding close of its constitution that prohibits the settlement and integration of non-Lebanese in the country, but abides by the principle of non-refoulement (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2015). Consequently, Syrian refugees are designated by the state as per the Arabic term of "*nazih*", which refers to *displaced*, rather than "*laji'*", which means *refugee* (Janmyr, 2017; Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). This denomination is crucial for our analysis, but its causes are developed later. Historically speaking, Syrian nationals could enjoy for decades freedom of movement between the two countries. In this respect, Syrians could enter Lebanon up until 2015 with their personal identity cards without any further visa requirement. This changed as of 2015, when the Lebanese authorities imposed for the first time in the country's history visa regulations and residency permits on Syrian nationals (Ghanem, 2015). The General Security issues nine different types on visa classes (Ghanem, 2015) among which motives of entry for tourism, real estate ownership, transit, and most importantly Lebanese sponsorship. Once again, Lebanese authorities chose to apply sponsorship, also known as "*kafala*"[88], to regulate Syrian residency. Thus, Syrian refugees were forced to select among three choices: either to find a Lebanese sponsor known as "*kafil*" (cf. Chapter 4.2.) who would guarantee them as their employer, or to pay the residency permit's fees of 200 USD per year for every person above the age of 15 (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018), or to switch towards an illegal status. Undeniably, since most of refugees adhere to the deprived category with a low-income, a consequent proportion of Syrians switched to an illegal status. Numbers confirm this trend, with around 73% of Syrian refugees above 15 not having legal

[87] The political effects, especially those linked to the Lebanese state's policy response, are tackled and analyzed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.
[88] See in this respect this chapter's first section.

residency as of 2018 (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). The regulation had a multitude of impacts on Syrian refugees. It reduced their mobility since most were now fearing to be arrested at checkpoints. For example, the UN inter-agency's Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees of 2018 reported that 35% of those Syrians who experienced insecurities in the last three months (3% of the surveyed) declared to be arrested or put into detention (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). Reduced mobility can affect other variables such as access to aid or assistance (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021), health or education, since refugees will think twice before visiting a medical facility or taking their children to school. Moreover, these measures might also be one of the causes in the overall lack of legal documentation. In fact, by 2019, 79% of refugee families were not completing the birth registration process for their children (Yassin, 2019). This might lead to a higher risk in the formation of a new stateless category in the future.

4.3.3. The Story of an Influx

Up to this point, and after the detailed account of the Syrian refugees' situation in Lebanon, some questions remain still unaddressed. For example, why did Syrians choose to come in these high numbers into Lebanon and not elsewhere? And why did they choose to settle in different locations and shelter types instead of others? The following few paragraphs try to provide answers to these kinds of questions, by reviewing the existent empirical evidences found in different sources. Answers are coupled with preliminary analytical inputs. But the theoretical and conceptual analyses are tackled in the next chapter. Again, the importance of such demarche finds its relevance in providing the contextual tools for the interpretation of the crisis' impact on Lebanon.

Causes and Drivers of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Initial Assessment

Why did Syrians decided to leave Syria? Without any doubts, the Syrian civil war, with its loads of extreme violence and brutality, is the main primary cause of the Syrian refugee crisis that flooded Lebanon. But beyond the solely security-linked reasons, the Syrian conflict caused in parallel the collapse of the Syrian economy, its healthcare system, as well as its education system on various degrees. For example, between 2010 and 2018, the number of physicians in Syria fell from more than 5 to less than 3 per 10,000 persons (World Bank, 2020, p. 26). In addition, the compulsory conscription imposed on young men by the Syrian army constitutes another cause for many to either flee or to stay reluctant for any return into their home country (Kreidie, 2016). All these factors constitute logical and obvious causes that pushed Syrians to flee their country. Now

why Syrians choose Lebanon as a host country? Through a basic brainstorming effort, the answer can be folded into a set of logical elements. The simplest answer is that Lebanon enjoys a relatively higher stability and security than Syria, which makes Syrians to feel safer. But then again, why Lebanon in particular? Lebanon constitutes an easy and reachable destination for Syrians. In this regard, the country is geographically adjacent to Syria. Furthermore, it shares with Syria a common history based on strong sociocultural, linguistic, kinship and economic interrelations. In addition, Lebanon hosts the UN and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations, a relatively developed healthcare system, and can potentially provide easy job opportunities. All these reasons seem to be structure-based. Undeniably, the investigation in the literature confirms most of the listed probabilities with accuracy. First, Lebanon was for decades an easy destination for Syrians as they could enter the country freely with their identity cards and without any further visa restriction (Ghanem, 2015). This freedom of movement came to a sharp end in 2015, when Lebanese authorities tried to restrict the influx of Syrian refugees by imposing visa regulation for Syrian nationals (Ghanem, 2015). However, in addition to the designated official border crossings, the Syrian-Lebanese frontiers are crisscrossed by countless illegal smuggling routes and border-crossing points. These paths are frequently used by those who choose to enter Lebanon illegally (Mouawad, 2018). In fact, the border is not effectively controlled. This is partly due to the porosity of the borders between the two countries, which in turn can be linked to the inexistence of an officially-recognized border line, since its precise demarcation was never achieved (Mouawad, 2018). Ironically, some small territories are even contested between the two states (Mouawad, 2018). Beyond these two causes, it is important to note that Lebanon was way before 2011 a major recipient for Syrian workforce migration. Prior to the conflict, approximatively half a million of Syrian low-skilled workers were already residing in Lebanon (Bou Khater, 2017). The majority constituted a seasonal manpower in the construction and agricultural sectors (Bou Khater, 2017). With the beginning of the unrests in Syria, many of these economic migrants stayed and brought their families into Lebanon. Finally, it might be important also to elaborate in a few points the reasons *why* most of Syrian refugees are not considering to returning home anytime soon. In this respect, the World Bank (2018) maps four general structural factors that prevent refugees from returning home. These factors are: (1) peace, security and protection, (2) livelihood and economic conditions, (3) Housing and property, (4) infrastructure and services (World Bank, 2020). Both objective data and refugee perceptions on these four factors seem to indicate that Syrians are far

from being ready to return. While three of these factors present obvious and undebatable answers, it is interesting to develop the factor of housing, land and property. Beyond looting and damage, Syrian refugees are deeply concerned by the risk of expropriation. Indeed, several governmental decrees in Syria have put land and housing ownership at stake (World Bank, 2020). The Law Number 10 of 2018 represents a good example for it. This law is considered to legalize state-led real estate expropriation and is seen as endangering ownership and pre-civil war demographic setup[89]. Thus, it is a great illustration of how political decision-making in the home country can influence return's means and perceptions.

Settlement Patterns

After examining the *why*, it is useful to dedicate a short paragraph to the *how*. In this regard, empirical evidences lead us to identify three main settlement patterns for Syrian refugees coming into Lebanon. These patterns help us to better understand the specific dynamics of the Syrian migration into Lebanon. The first identifiable pattern includes those Syrian nationals who benefit from older well-established economic connections within Lebanon. This group is mainly constituted of Syrians families who joined their relatives who were already working in Lebanon before the conflict[90]. As we can imagine, these households and individuals are distributed across the entire territory. Previously presented numbers and figures confirm these trends. The second pattern consists of those who entered Lebanon without any prior connection with Lebanon. Both patterns are mostly applicable to Syrian refugees coming from the more deprived and lower-income categories. Some of them initially settled with families or friends, but when the crisis prolonged, they resorted to rent out relatively highly-priced accommodations or moved to Palestinian camps, abandoned buildings or tented-settlements (ILO, 2014). The high turnover in housing can also be caused by what was identified as an important trend of evictions (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). The third pattern regroups a smaller group of Syrian refugees composed of the wealthier middle or high-income category. There are many reasons that pushes us to separate the trends of this category from the others. On one hand, as developed above in this section, middle and high-income Syrians who fled to Lebanon avoided to register as UNHCR

[89] For more details about the Law Number 10 and its interpretations, see Arab Reform Initiative (Law n°10 on Reconstruction: A Legal Reading of Organized Mass Expropriation in Syria, 2018) and Abu Ahmad (Assad's Law 10: Reshaping Syria's Demographics, 2018)

[90] These cases were already presented under the housing patterns.

refugees. On another hand, many of them consider Lebanon as the first stop in their migration process: in fact, some have relatives or household members living abroad in Western third countries. These are awaiting and helping them to join. Furthermore, in many cases, wealthier Syrians cannot be listed under the traditional understanding of refugee. In fact, according to the UNHCR definition, a refugee is unable or unwilling to return to his country of origin according to a well-founded fear of persecution (United Nations, 2010). Therefore, a person who is going back to Syria cannot be strictly included per se in this category. However, despite the ongoing civil war, many Syrians living in Lebanon continue to visit their home country periodically. There are various reasons explaining this reality: it can be either families going back for short periods when the deescalating security situation allows it, or head of households visiting their relatives who decided to stay in Syria, or businessmen wo continue to commute regularly between the two countries for the sake of their businesses[91]. In addition, many wealthy middle-class Syrian families have Lebanese relatives who they use to visit even before the civil war. An illustration for this is related to the Christian and Armenian communities of Aleppo, who moved to their cousins and relatives in Lebanon. Their children enrolled in various well-known private schools and universities, started to practice their liberal jobs in Lebanon, or were simply hired by their relatives in their companies[92].

4.3.4. Implications

Several important implications can be filtered out from the previous section. The following bullet points summarize the key elements that we need to bear in mind during the remaining parts of this thesis:

- Facts and numbers show the real magnitude of the crisis. No wonder if the crisis has an impact and is perceived as a threat by the Lebanese state and society. This would be the same in any other country around the globe if faced with this magnitude.

[91] Many of these patterns are based on anecdotal experiences encountered by the author because of his local social network.

[92] Here again, the author has numerous friends and acquaintances who are either Lebanese with Syrian origins (especially Christian Syrians from Aleppo who got naturalized in the past century) and took care of their Syrian cousins and relatives when they migrated to Lebanon after the beginning of the unrests, or Syrian nationals who are now living, working or studying in Lebanon or in third countries. All of them followed the same patterns developed in the text.

- The diverging estimations of refugees are linked to many factors. The most interesting one is definitely the diversity of Syrian refugee population: some are economic migrants, other are strictly refugees, while some others continue to keep links with Syria or commute regularly between both countries.
- Refugees' religious affiliation is overwhelmingly Sunni Islam. It somehow legitimates the assumption that perceives them as constituting an existential threat to Lebanon. Its logic can be based on what was developed in first section by extrapolating the Palestinian case about how Lebanon dealt with this population.
- Regarding the geographical distribution of refugees, we can conclude the followings: (1) Syrians are settling mainly in bordering regions at the periphery of Lebanon, but also everywhere around the country, and in some places, they outnumber local residents. (2) This means that the public opinion, and therefore, potentially, the political actors and elites, would be deeply concerned by their issue. (3) Especially that this population is very deprived and living in precarious conditions (housing types for instance). Also, many do work, so our assumption is that they might be perceived as an economic threat for some Lebanese citizens.
- When it comes to their legal status: as expected, Lebanon deals with this population as it did in the past with other populations. The state is still not adhering to the Refugee Convention, refers to Syrian refugees as "*nazih*" rather than "*laji'*", and regulates their presence through expansive residency permits or kafala. It results in the prominence of a clandestine and illegal status for the majority of Syrian refugees.
- Concerning the observed causes and drivers, Lebanon is relatively near, easily accessible (even for clandestine migration), shares the same culture, language, religion, and in some cases, Lebanese and Syrians share kinship, tribal and family ties.

4.4. Akkar Case-Study

After the developed historical contextualization and the presentation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the following section aims at complementing and confronting desk research with empirical findings from the field. Therefore, the next paragraphs present the most relevant findings encountered by the author through his case-study field research conducted in Akkar Governorate, North Lebanon. These findings give an extra layer of depth on the micro-level. The gathered data

and observations can help in a better understanding of the crisis by comparing and extrapolating the results with and to the national level. Moreover, the section provides concrete examples and illustrations that can help the interpretation of the crisis' impact on the Lebanese society. After a brief summary of the field work's scope, the sub-sections below give an account for the social, religious, cultural, tribal, economic, security and educational situations of Syrian refugees in Akkar. They also reflect on their complex relationship with local host communities, and try to extract some useful implications.

4.4.1. The Scope of the Research

The field research was conducted during the month of January 2019 under the frame of Beirut Saint-Joseph University's Arab Master in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA). Its topic was about understanding *Refugee Challenges in Akkar.* It focused mainly on refugee education and general living conditions. The implementation consisted of three phases: a preparatory phase, a field visit and data collection phase, and a data cleaning and analysis phase. The qualitative research consisted of several focus groups and semi-structured interviews, while the quantitative research comported survey questionnaires for Syrian refugee adult parents and for refugee children.[93] The following observations were gathered during field research which took place between January 21 and January 25, 2019. Their geographical context follows the location of the survey forms which were conducted in five different camps and two villages. Locations reflect on an accurate representation of Akkar's regional diversity[94]. The next sub-sections are synthesized from the author's personal field notes as well as from some of the research's findings[95].

4.4.2. The Akkar Governorate

The choice of Akkar Governorate as a case-study takes its relevance in its location as a bordering region with Syria. In fact, most of refugees tend to settle in these areas, which are directly accessible after crossing the borders. Obviously, peripheral regions are Lebanon's most deprived areas, in which the central government failed to invest for decades. The periphery is composed of

[93] For a detailed overview of the field research methodology see Chapter 1. Section 4. Sub-Section 5 of this thesis.
[94] Akkar Governorate is composed of three distinct geographical regions. Each has its own socioeconomic specificities. These three areas are: the plain, the hilly middle region, and the highlands or *Jurd*. One village in each region was chosen for the field research. The camps are spread across these villages.
[95] The research's findings are unpublished. They were consolidated by the research team in a document and were compiled in a presentation that was shared with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Lebanon's representation as well as with other key stakeholders.

three different regions: South Lebanon, the Beqaa valley, and North Lebanon. The latter includes the Akkar Governorate, which is considered to be Lebanon's most deprived area (OCHA, 2014). With a surface of 788 km^2 (OCHA, 2014), it represents roughly 7.5% of Lebanon total area. In general, the North is the second largest recipient of Syrian refugees in Lebanon after the Beqaa, with around 275,000 UNHCR registered refugees as per 2018 (UNHCR, 2018). Akkar is very diverse on many aspects. From a geographical point of view, it includes a vast fertile plain on the seaside, a hilly region, as well as highlands. Each of these has its own social and economic specificities[96]. While mostly rural (Mobayed, 2013), Akkar witnessed during the last decades the growth of some "chaotic" urban and peri-urban areas which stretch along the seaside road up until the town of *Halba*, its administrative center. Religiously speaking, the governorate is mainly inhabited by Muslim Sunnis (80%), followed by a substantial Christian -Greek Orthodox and Maronite- minority, in addition to a noteworthy Alawite community (cf. OCHA, 2014). The ancestral feudal system that regulated the region faded away quite late compared to other Lebanese districts, but it remained relatively underdeveloped (Gilsenan, 1996; Mobayed, 2013). Traditionally, the seaside plain hosts the core of the Alawites. They were subjects to almost slavery-like exploitation from Sunni landlords (Gilsenan, 1996). Later, many of these Alawites emancipated and bought lands that they continued to cultivate. The hilly regions were dominated by the Christian clergy, as well as by Christian and Sunni feudal landlords. Their lands were farmed by Sunni and Christian peasants alike. Concerning the highlands, they became a refuge for outlaws and different rebellious clans (Gilsenan, 1996). These social dynamics are essential in understanding the different situations to which incoming Syrian refugees are confronted, depending on the regions in which they settled upon arrival. For example, while most of refugees have a resentment against the Assad regime in Syria, Lebanese Alawites are generally supporters of the Syrian regime. Consequently, the dynamics between local Alawite host communities and Syrian refugees in the coastal area are particularly interesting to catch. For the field research, the visited Syrian refugee settlements were chosen in a way to represent all three of the socially distinct regions alike. Finally, it is important to reiterate and underline the direct proximity of Akkar with Syria. In this regard, the governorate is directly bordering 27 Syrian villages and towns (OCHA,

[96] For a detailed presentation of these specificities from a historical perspective, see Michael Gilsenan (Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narratives in an Arab Society, 1996).

2014). Therefore, many Akkari citizens have close social and family connections within neighboring Syria.

Syrian refugee numbers must be understood under this particular context. In this respect, as of 2019, out of Akkar's 428,000 residents[97], only 59% are Lebanese, while the rest are composed of Syrian (36%) as well as Palestinian (5%) refugees (OCHA, 2019). The vast majority of the Syrian and Palestinian populations is made up of Sunni Muslims (OCHA, 2019).

4.4.3. A Diverse Population

As mentioned above, the field visit included a total of seven different locations that were chosen in order to best represent the social and geographical diversity of Akkar. Five of these locations were camp settlements composed of tents. The remaining two other locations were villages. There, refugees live scattered in all kind of dilapidated constructions, in tents that are pitched at the edges of farmlands or orchards, and even in garages. All of the visited camps were located in the coastal plains nearby the villages of *Tell Abbas* and *El Hissa*. As for the villages with a scattered form of settlements, one is a Maronite Christian village called *Bqerzla* which is located in the hilly region, and the other one is a Sunni town called *Meshmesh* which is one of the main two highlands' strongholds. The social and ethnic backgrounds of the encountered Syrian refugees are quite diverse. Some are sedentary villagers, while others have urban or suburban backgrounds. Some others are from Bedouin origins. They tend to have a distinguishable Levantine Bedouin dialect, along some other peculiar characteristics regarding their way of life and clothing. Interestingly, one of the camps in *El Hissa* had a significant number of refugees originated from the *Dom*[98] minority. This minority lives at the margins of the society in a segregated way. Beyond their social and ethnical diversity, Syrian refugees of Akkar come from different geographical locations in Syria. But both qualitative observations and quantitative results from the conducted surveys inform us that the vast majority of these refugees come from the nearest places within Syria that witnessed

[97] Again, numbers should be handled with prudence since Lebanese are still registered and counted under their place of origin rather than their place of residency. In other words, some Lebanese citizens might be censed in Akkar, while their place of residency might be Beirut or Tripoli for instance.

[98] Dom people, also referred to as *Nawar* or *Ghajar* by Lebanese in general, and as *Riyyes* by Akkaris, are the Gypsies of the Levant region (as the *Roma* are for Europe). This understudied ethnic minority is extremely marginalized and stigmatized. Many of them are either Lebanese or Syrian stateless (Siren Associates and UNHCR, 2021) in an undistinguishable way. Some of the only two serious studies that were conducted on their conditions are Siren and UNHCR's work on statelessness in Akkar (2021) and Terre des Hommes (The Dom People and their Children in Lebanon, 2011).

armed conflict. In this respect, around 78% of the adult Syrian refugee respondents are originated from the Governorates of Homs, Hama and Idlib, with 37% for Homs alone. If we look at the map of Lebanon and Syria, we realize that Homs constitutes the biggest part of Akkar's borders with Syria. The remaining parts being constituted by Tartus, which (1) remained relatively peaceful during the conflict, and (2) is inhabited by an Alawite majority (Qutrib, 2017) who remained loyal to the Syrian regime (Balanche, 2015). In contrast, Homs, Hama and Idlib witnessed heavy fights and are predominantly Sunni regions. We can conclude here that since Akkar is located at the vicinity of these regions and is also predominantly Sunni, many refugees chose to flee towards this Governorate.

4.4.4. Different Migration and Settlement Patterns

The refugee's choice for particular settlements and locations are very interesting to mention. In this respect, the patterns seem to be ruled by some essential social and economic structures, which have an impact on their human agencies. In this respect, we could sense from our observations three main categories of settlement patterns.

The first category englobes those who came and settled in Akkar following a traceable mechanism, based on extended family connections and preexisting ties with local hosting locations. A consequent number of Syrians living in camps around the coastal villages of the plains make their living as a cheap labor in the local agricultural sector. Some of those who work on these fields were already regularly crossing the borders, even before the start of the Syrian war, as seasonal agricultural workers. Local employers and landlords were usually used to allocate these seasonal workers with a small parcel, generally at the margin of the agricultural fields, where these workers use to pitch tents in which they lived for the season. After the start of the Syrian civil war, many seasonal workers extended their staying in these tents beyond the working season itself. Then, with the intensification of the conflict, they started to evacuate their remaining family members who were still in Syria. In this way, the number of tents grew gradually and the settlement became a camp: relatives, neighbors from the same village, and other acquaintances continued to populate the camp in the making. Later, this community either stayed or were asked to move further by the army or local authorities to another land. The same pattern is applicable for the Maronite Christian village of *Bqerzla*. But there, the settlement mechanisms were regulated by local authorities in a stricter and more restrictive way. There, the municipality refused to let in and host "strangers". It

is only the extended families of those Syrians who already used to work as concierges or seasonal agricultural workers in the olive tree's orchards who were allowed to settle in the village. Concierges' families are settled with them in their small rooms. Agricultural workers' families are housed in the small summer homes or technical rooms found next to the cultivated fields. Some others are left with no other choice than renting out garages in and around the village. And finally, a small proportion are pitching tents among olive trees. In *Bqerzla*, we noticed that those living in tents were from Bedouin origins, while those who were concierges were mostly *fellahs*[99], some of whom were Alawites and Christians. Almost all of these refugee groups were paying a yearly or monthly rental fee for their housing. For those living in tents, landowners collect a yearly rental fee for the parcel on which the tent is pitched.

The second pattern of migration regroups the category of refugees who came to Akkar without any former notion or connection with it. Some of these refugees came from relatively far places inside Syria, not from the bordering regions which are at Akkar's vicinity. In one of *El Hissa*'s camps, we encountered a woman who fled ISIS[100] in 2018 with her twelve-years old son. She had no relatives neither acquaintance in Lebanon and found this camp where she started to rent a tent from the camp's leadership.

Finally, a third observed pattern of settlement can be qualified as a mixture of the two above-mentioned. In some places like in *Meshmesh*, some Syrian families chose to settle in this village based on prior-established connections with locals, while others just chose to rent flats and garages there because of their availability and their relatively low prices.

Concerning the camps, in all the listed cases, the newly constituted camp's dynamics seem to be following a common pattern that can be explained by following three main steps: (1) the landlord asks for a rental fee that is usually based on an annual fee per tent; (2) the UNHCR and/or other NGOs come and start in providing some basic infrastructural support – mostly blankets, material for tents or mobile WC and shower facilities-; (3) both former points need some level of coordination and organization which are mitigated by the organic birth of a leadership that takes

[99] *Fellah* in Arabic means literally *peasant*. It is commonly used in the Levant to differentiate individuals with an anthropological sedentary villager origin from Bedouin communities who used to be nomads (and thus not peasants but shepherds).
[100] Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, also known as *Daesh*.

over the representation of this small community. The last point concerning the organization of camps is developed later in this section.

4.4.5. Complex Relationship with Host Communities

Host communities are not equally affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. These differences lay in the social, religious and economic conditions of locals. As a result, they logically evolve into divergent opinions and perceptions regarding the refugee presence in the country. In this regard, landlords who are renting their parcels seem to be quite happy about their situation. In fact, the rental fees insure them with at least the same income, if not more, than they would make in case the occupied land was cultivated, except that they don't even need to put any additional effort. In other words, it is easier for landlords to make money from renting out their lands to Syrian refugees than from cultivating and planting. The best illustration for this phenomenon is the case of an old landlord in *Tell Abbas*, who is lending his own backyard to refugees, where around 25-30 tents are to be found. According to him, before the Syrian crisis, he used the land for planting tobacco, since he owns a state license for this purpose[101]. But with the settlement of Syrians in his backyard, he asserted that he was generating a higher income than previously. In fact, renting out the parcel for the Syrians was more lucrative than cultivating tobacco. Furthermore, the old landowner confessed that he was now purchasing tobacco at a cheaper price from other producers who had no permits. He was then selling it to the state through his license, making with that an additional income from commissions on transactions. Other locals would have a totally opposing opinion: many do consider that Syrians are taking away their jobs, or at least lowering their income by offering more competitive prices for their services than their Lebanese peers. Economic resentment can also be coupled with religious and political tensions. This was the case with some Alawite landlords who would stress on the tensed relationship and even conflictual situations that they got with anti-Syrian regime Sunni refugees. Other Christian villagers confessed their fear of being "submerged by the incoming wave of Muslim Syrians". They also linked their concerns with the general decreasing trend in the number of Christians in Akkar and Lebanon, sometimes perceiving the Syrian influx and the high fertility rates among refugees as a fatal coup against their future in the

[101] Tobacco planting is a state monopoly in Lebanon. The state sells licenses for farmers who wish to plant it, and bind them to buy the totality of their production.

region. This fear partially explains the discretionary decision of *Bqerzla's* mayor for example in filtering and monitoring the settlement of Syrian refugees in his village.

The relationship of refugees with local host communities as reported above is highly contrasting with the case of *Meshmesh*. In this predominantly Sunni town located at 1200 meters above the sea level, we could sense the presence of around 200 Syrian families (approximatively 1000 refugees). There, half of the town's 18,000 inhabitants emigrated, mainly to Australia. The similar social, religious and cultural backgrounds that are shared between Syrian refugees and Lebanese of *Meshmesh* made it easy for those who remained in the town to develop quite special bonds with the Syrian newcomers. In this respect, local residents had no issues in renting out to Syrian families the empty flats and houses of their relatives who live abroad. They collect rental fees that they either send to the flat owners, or retain them for their own livelihood. In this way, instead of sending remittances to their relatives, the town's expats concede their share of the rental's revenue to family members who stayed, since the formers are not that much in need for this extra income. Beyond the strict tenant-to-landlord relationship, many locals share "coffee and tea time" with refugee families, and their children play together all day long. Moreover, the town's mayor revealed that he witnessed many mixed marriages between local men and Syrian refugee women. In this regard, it is very interesting to explain the causes and effects of such unions. Besides the cultural and religious similarities, a main cause for these mixed marriages is of economic nature. Many young men from the local community find it "cheaper" to choose a Syrian woman as a bride. Indeed, the costs of marital celebrations, the high standards of living, and the dowry required for a Lebanese bride are much more expansive than those required for a Syrian refugee bride[102]. But this trend resulted in another form of tensions. Some local women expressed a general feeling of jealously towards Syrian women. This feeling is not only the result of the competition between Lebanese and Syrian women. In fact, some Lebanese men are delightfully going for a second wife[103] that are chosen among Syrian women. In this regard, many Syrian fathers are happily grabbing the opportunity of "getting rid of" their daughters who constitute an additional "mouth

[102] We should note here that traditional Lebanese parents have some preset conditions for allowing their daughter to get married to a Lebanese man. These conditions are: having a stable job or revenue, disposing a decent flat or housing facility (owned real estate is always a favorable condition), and coming from a family that has a "good reputation". Syrian refugee parents are less strict regarding these conditions. Many young men take this as an opportunity for an easily-achievable marriage.

[103] *Meshmesh* is a predominantly Sunni Muslim town. Islam allows men to take up to four wives.

to feed". Unfortunately, in some cases, this happens at a relatively early age. Finally, here also, the economic competition between local and refugee manpower remains prevailing. For instance, Syrian plumbers, daily workers or electricians charge lower prices than their Lebanese peers for their services. This leads to some latent tensions between members of both communities.

4.4.6. Camps Organization and Power Dynamics

One can imagine that such a consequential population influx needs some forms of organization. In this sense, various camps and settlements enjoy some kind of hierarchical power dynamics which usually grew organically from the newly-created micro-social structure. Obviously, because of their nature, the camps' balance of power is more centralized than those of scattered settlements. But they all share a common denominator: namely, the existence of a local leadership that is usually concretized and monopolized under the so-called *Shawish*[104]. This position is at the top of the camp's hierarchy. The *Shawish* has several roles. He is not only the spokesperson of the community, but also the responsible of its security. He represents the settlement's interests in front of the local authorities. In some cases, the appointment of a *Shawish* was solicited by the UNHCR, Lebanese authorities, or other civil organizations in order to have someone with who to negotiate, speak, or to gather information, since it is impossible to be in direct contact with 1,5 million individuals. Usually, the *Shawish* is a person who is already well-known by locals. For example, many *Shawish* are Syrians who were already living and working in the region for many years, and who have good connections with municipality personnel and representatives. But in other cases, the position is filled by the most powerful or charismatic person of the camp, sometimes appointed or approved by the UNHCR itself. In smaller camps and settlements, becoming *Shawish* is based on the tribal and kinship hierarchies that regulate the micro-society in question. In these cases, it is the traditionally prominent member of a given group who accesses the privileged position. Nevertheless, this power structure leads sometimes to unfair situations since the fate and living conditions of the refugees are in the hands of the *Shawish's* discretionary will[105]. The diversity of the encountered situations is illustrated under the three examples below.

[104] Shawish is an Ottoman word used to designate the local police officer. It remained used in the Levant to designate the spokesperson of a group of detainees (in a prison's cell for example) appointed by themselves or by the guardians.
[105] For a detailed account of the *Shawish's* excessive power see Abu Kheir (The Syrian camps shawish: A man of power and the one controlling the conditions of refugees, 2016).

"Sheikh Abdo's" Tell Abbas camp

The first example concerns a refugee camp in *Tell Abbas* that is populated by citizens who fled the Syrian city of *Al Qusayr* after the heavy fights that opposed the rebels to the Syrian regime and Hezbollah in 2013. The camp's inhabitants are from urban and suburban origins. They are relatively educated and their standards of living are higher than those of other camps. Instead of pure tents, the 35 refugee households managed to build some rudimentary housing units made of cinder blocks and sheet metal. Some of the houses' courts are decorated with pots of flowers made of recycled water bottles. The social hierarchical structure reflects on their urban origins. Here, the *Shawish,* named *Sheikh Abdo*, was already a prominent figure in his community back in Syria. Therefore, the refugee community selected him – more or less democratically- as their representative, because they considered him the best fit to discuss and negotiate in their names with humanitarian organizations and Lebanese authorities alike. For example, he was responsible of getting the authorizations for settling down in *Tell Abbas*, he went after the bureaucratic procedures to connect the camp to the Lebanese electric network, and he is the one collecting from each household the yearly rental fees of the parcels for the landowner.

The Saudi emir's Tell Abbas camp

The second example is the very interesting case of a camp financed by a Saudi emir. The camp is also located in *Tell Abbas*. It is composed of around 50 tents or households. Although less developed than the former, it seems well-organized from an urbanistic perspective. In this regard, the camp has a unique entrance where visitors are welcomed by two bigger tents: one serves as a community center, while the second serves as a mosque. The mosque's tent is crowned by an artisanal wooden structure that serves as a minaret. The tents are all aligned equidistantly around a central alleyway. The central alleyway is provided by street lights to be able to walk in the dark. The Saudi soft power operates at all levels in this camp. According to locals, the philanthropic Saudi emir is covering all expenses of the camp. This includes the daily foodstuff costs, the electricity bills, as well as the land's rental fees. But here, the *Shawish* is directly appointed among the refugees by the emir himself. The Saudi sponsor gave him an extended power according to which he is entitled to decide about who is accepted as a resident in the camp or not. Moreover, the applicants for the camp's residency must abide some conditions that are ruled by Sharia-based strict Islamic religious principles in order to be accepted there. Indeed, the Saudi sponsor is

conservative. In this regard, women residents must wear a *hijab*, while children must be enrolled in a nearby Kuwaiti Koranic school instead of the Lebanese public school.

El Hissa camp

The third and last example is the case of the camp located in *El Hissa*, which is mainly inhabited by Syrians from both Bedouin and Dom origins. This refugee community is way more deprived, marginalized, and less educated than the residents of the two other camps analyzed above. The settlement includes a total of around 90 tents which are scattered on a muddy plough field. In this camp, the *Shawish* took his position according to specific tribal power dynamics. In other words, he is entitled to this post because he is the most prominent person of the most prestigious clan in the tribe. Therefore, him being the *Shawish* seems to be more than natural. But this does not mean that his leadership is appreciated by all. In fact, some residents fearfully expressed the questionable practices of the *Shawish* which led in some cases to some forms of exactions. Here again, the camp's morphology can tell us more about its power structure. In this respect, the *Shawish* had the biggest and most beautiful tent. It was located at the camp's entrance, in order to control the residents' movements both inward and outward. Moreover, it was coupled with another adjacent tent which was used solely as a garage for his modern and neat BMW X5 off-road vehicle. Also, the floor was covered by a layer of concrete, which is highly contrasting with other tents' conditions that are directly pitched on the mud. But the real surprise came after visiting the tent's interior. Its inside was not only very well furnished, but also equipped with a multitude of modern electronic devices. In fact, a brand-new LCD screen was hanging on one of the tent's walls. The screen was connected to a number of surveillance cameras that were posted all over the camp. This system allowed the *Shawish* to watch closely all of the residing refugees' activities. The answer to the *Shawish's* wealthy situation can be found in his behaviors. In this regard, many local NGOs, but also some of the camp's daring residents, revealed that any kind of incoming humanitarian aid needs the *Shawish's* approval, and its distribution has to pass through his person. In this way, the *Shawish* in able to take an in-kind "commission" on each and every incoming aid. Later, he sells these products to other refugees. Also, as one can imagine, he is the one collecting the annual rental fees of the tents and paying them directly to the landowner. But here again, we were told that he is asking more than what is needed to cover the total amount of the land's rental fees, and keeps the additional money for himself. Furthermore, he also works as a headhunter for the local

agricultural sector: first, he makes an agreement with farmers about the needed manpower and the price to pay per worker. Then, he recruits refugees as daily workers, and assigns them to the field after agreeing with them on a lower payroll than what he proposed to the farmer. In this way, at the end of the day, he is able to make a commission out of his "services" by, on one hand, providing the farmer with a cheap workforce, and on the other, providing job opportunities for his refugee community. On top of that, he prefers to provide the farmers with women and children who are paid half the amount of their male peers; promoting this way child labor and gender-based gap and inequality. Finally, in contrast with the two others, this camp is illegally connected to the electric network and thus, its residents do not pay for electricity.

4.4.7. Coping Mechanisms

After the description of the relationship with host communities and the settlements' internal power structures, we can have a preliminary idea about the everyday living conditions endured by Syrian refugees. These conditions became more difficult after the decision of the Lebanese authorities to require from them the obligation to have residency permits. Many failed to fulfilled these requirements due to its high cost. Hence, a substantial number of refugees shifted towards the status of clandestine illegality. Their mobility, thus their access to the job market and basic needs such as health or education, was heavily affected by this policy. In this respect, the survey revealed that about 44% of interviewed adults (mostly men) have already faced problems at military checkpoints such as being interrogated or arrested due to the lack of legal papers, even though 95% of them were UNHCR registered at the beginning of the conflict. The question remains vague about the coping mechanisms undertaken by the different segments of this refugee population for their daily survival. What are the main sources of income on which refugees rely for a living? What about their children? The following paragraphs try to address these specific questions.

Access to Services and Work Opportunities

Being a Syrian refugee in Akkar seems to be relatively costly. We have seen before that this population is often asked to pay for basic services such as housing and electricity. In Akkar, the average yearly rental fee for a household's tent parcel was as high as 600 to 700 USD before the economic crisis and the devaluation of the Lebanese Pound. In addition, refugee households have to pay for the electricity (if not illegally connected to the network). But electricity shortage and power-cuts are recurrent in Lebanon, especially in peripheral regions like Akkar. Therefore, some

refugees are also subscribed to local generators in order to compensate the rationed state-provided electricity. Furthermore, those who live in the highlands have to endure harsh weather conditions in the winter, where snowfalls and temperature below zero degrees Celsius are frequent. To cope with it, they need diesel oil or wood for maintaining a decent temperature in their housing units. These row materials are also quite expansive. All these costs, added to the basic foodstuff products, push the expenses of an average Syrian refugee household up to 200 USD per month. So, how do Syrian refugees cope with these costs?

First, according to the UN interagency Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon report (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018), 68% of Syrian refugee households have at least one active member who is able to cover partially or totally the costs of living. Second, many of the UNHCR registered refugees are entitled to various cash and in-kind monthly subsidies from the UNHCR and other UN agencies. These amounts vary each year depending on the UN budget and policies. Thirdly, some refugees are also employed on a -monthly or yearly- regular basis as concierges, cleaners, waiters or delivery men. In few cases, the employers are also sponsoring these refugees through the already-mentioned *kafala* system. But again, most of the encountered refugees are employed as daily workers in the agricultural sector. Therefore, they cannot rely on a fix and regular income. This category is particularly vulnerable to exploitation as we had seen it in the case of *El Hissa* camp where refugees are at the mercy of the *Shawish's* discretionary power. In addition, some other daily workers reported that farmers were sometimes refusing to remunerate them at the end of the day: the work being not declared, refugees could not prove it in case they were aspiring to complaint about it in front of competent authorities. Comparing these declarations with the survey's data is also telling a lot: there, one third of working refugees declared to face problems in getting paid by their employers.

Refugee Children Education

We can observe a multitude of trends concerning refugee children education. But all of them present obstacles that make it difficult for Syrian children to complete a successful education. In this regard, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) signed an agreement with the UNICEF in which Lebanese public schools would be providing afternoon classes to Syrian refugee children. Lebanese children would attend school from morning until 2.00 pm, while Syrian children would attend classes from 3.00 pm to 7.00 pm. On a national level, 71%

of Syrian refugee children were enrolled in these afternoon classes in 2018 (Yassin, 2019). Their schooling would be financed by the UN, by covering for instance the extra-time fees of Lebanese teachers. But the implementation of this agreement did not happen without some ambushes. For example, most of Lebanese public schools follow a curriculum in French language. This is especially true in Akkar for instance, where schools with English language curriculum are barely found. But Syrian children used to follow in Syria a curriculum in Arabic language. And to complicate it more, the Lebanese education system relies heavily on afterhours additional homeworking sessions, which cannot be compensated by Syrian parents who, for example, never studied math or biology in French or English. Also, results from the surveyed refugees reveal that about 30% of them are illiterate and 50% of them finished only primary school. Therefore, helping their own children represents an obstacle for the majority of Syrian refugee parents. These issues somehow undermine the efficiency of the program. It is important to note that some organizations are trying to fill this gap by providing tutoring to refugee children[106]. But of course, these initiatives are far from covering the needs of an entire governorate. Back to the case of the camp sponsored by the Saudi emir, children face difficulties in continuing their studies in the secondary school. As we saw it earlier, children of this camp are enrolled in a Koranic school run by Kuwaiti funds. But it covers only the primary schooling years. Its curriculum is so different than the Lebanese public school, that children cannot meet the required level for being enrolled in the Lebanese secondary school. Hence, they are left without secondary-level education. Finally, the UN stopped in 2019 to finance the transportation of children to schools. In fact, the provided network of school buses was a great relief for families of children registered in public schools. Hence, many children had to dropout from school since parents could not ensure their transportation: many are at work, do not have any transportation mean, or simply fear of being arrested at security checkpoints since they switched to illegality with the introduction of the residency permit requirements.

4.4.8. Fear of Return

The last interesting topic among those encountered on the field and that in worth mentioning in this thesis is related to the refugees' perception about their prospects of returning to Syria in the

[106] The field research covered the visits of one of the main NGOs that provides this kind of tutorship and scholar support to Syrian refugee children in the region. The NGO is called Relief and Reconciliation and operates mainly in *Bqerzla* and *Meshmesh*. The research team held some focus groups and interviews with teachers and parents involved in the organization's program.

future. Although many expressed their wish to ultimately go back and settle in a pacified Syria, almost all declined the eventuality of this happening soon. The survey's results underline also these qualitative observations. Concerning this particular question, 77% of Syrian respondents wished to live in Syria in the future, but more than 90% had deep concerns about returning to Syria. However, around a third of them felt pressured about returning to Syria in the near future. This last indicator tells us a lot about the complexity of the relationship that exists between Syrian refugees and host communities, especially in Lebanon's most deprived regions such as Akkar.

4.4.9. Implications

The findings confirm what was found in the literature, and give some crucial insights and additional information. These can be summarized under the following few points:

- Syrian refugees in Akkar are a diverse population with various sociocultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Each behaves differently as for their settlement patterns, conditions and organization.
- Preestablished economic and social structures are key for refugees in determining the settlement location and type. Those who already worked somewhere before, bring in their families. Those who were from urban backgrounds tend to live in better conditions, even if in tented settlements. Those who have nomadic origins resign to tents more easily.
- Host communities have various perceptions and relationships with refugees. These can go from extremely negative (economic exploitation, political contradictions) to very positive, up to family kinship ties and even mixed marriages. This depends obviously on the economic and cultural outcomes provided by the refugee situation.
- Syrian refugees are suffering from structurally unorganized crisis management characterized by the absence of the central state.
- Various stakeholders and actors, either local, regional or international (such as NGOs) either try to help or profit from the situation.
- Here again, refugees are vulnerable and resorting to clandestine illegality in regard of their legal status. This causes a limited mobility since they risk arrest or detention. The situation reduces their access to services such as education and healthcare.
- The overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Akkar expressed deep concerns regarding the eventuality of returning to Syria any time soon.

- Most come from adjacent Syrian regions, mainly Homs Hama and Idlib. These regions witnessed heavy fights and are close to Akkar.

4.5. Conclusion

The empirical observations harvested on the field seems to corroborate the findings revealed earlier through desk research. In addition, they give us an account of the magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, and substantial feedback on the perceptions of Lebanese towards it. They provide us with strong foundations for the future interpretation of Lebanon's state reactions towards the crisis. The next chapter reviews the theoretical literature of migration and refugee studies in order to better frame the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon.

Chapter 5: Redefining Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

5.1. Introduction

Based on the findings and observations made in Chapter 4, the following chapter tries to link the Syrian refugee crisis of Lebanon with existing theories, by giving a theoretical framework for refugees following a brief review of both migration and refugee studies[107]. Afterwise, it draws some key implications from the former sections developed in Chapter 4, in an attempt to conceptualize this particular refugee crisis. Beyond, these steps enable the analysis to understand the magnitude of this refugee crisis by providing an adequate picture that helps in the further interpretation of its impact on the Lebanese state and its identity.

5.2. Theoretical Framework

After the previous effort of describing the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon from both a national and regional perspectives, the following paragraphs review the existing theoretical literature that deals with refugee-related questions. This task takes its relevance in an attempt to link empirical finding to theories, through developing a conceptualized understanding of the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon.

In social sciences, the literature that deals with the topic of refugees is part of a broader literature, namely the one that deals with all kinds of migrations. This literature constitutes the so-called *migration studies*. In fact, *migration studies* is a discipline by itself, of which *refugee studies* is considered to be a special ramification (cf. Richmond, 1988). After all, the definitions sub-section of Chapter 4 shows us that a refugee is just one specific type of migrant among many others. This categorization drives us first to examine the literature of migration and its related theories, before reviewing the relevant elements found in the refugee studies discipline.

5.2.1. Migration Theories

Migration studies developed during the 20th century as an independent discipline. This discipline emerged as an eclectic mix of theoretical approaches (O'Reilly, 2015). Indeed, migration studies was approached by many different social disciplines like law, sociology, economy and even

[107]The aim of this review is to describe the scholarship environment from which one particular set of theories, namely Practice Theories, is taken further to develop a conceptual understanding of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and about their migration and settlement patterns.

demography. Migration studies is not only the object of focus of disciplinary and interdisciplinary empirical social sciences from the above mentioned, but also from different disciplines such as cultural studies and arts (O'Reilly, 2015). Each discipline brought some new elements into these studies. In line with the fluctuations of paradigms in theories of social sciences, migration studies produced a non-negligible number of different theories. Migration studies incorporated more general frameworks such as the realist or the constructivist approaches (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018).

In terms of migration types, the classification was made according to three main dimensions: space, time and the nature of migrants. For the first one, this discipline deals equally with domestic and international migration. The separation between internal and international flows is not consensual since the boundaries between the two are not always clear: actually, borders can change, be closed or open (King, 2012). For the second one, migration is very diverse in time: from seasonal to permanent, or from one, to five, or even ten years-long for instance (King, 2012). Furthermore, the combination of time and space leads to more confusion: one can think of transit migration for example, which is the fact of arriving to a country only to continue after a certain time to a third country. Or circular migration, which means going back and forth to the country of origin after a certain period of time. The third dimension is also subject to criticism. Researchers thought that they can classify migration into two clearly separated categories: voluntary migrants who can decide to move, and forced migrants who do not have another choice than leaving (Kuhnt, 2019). This simplistic dichotomy was very criticized by de Haas (2011) among others, since this issue is way more complex (Kuhnt, 2019), and these categories need to be deconstructed (King, 2012). Also, a lot of migration theories were focusing on the process of movement (predominantly the economy-based theories), and on the settlement process (O'Reilly, 2015). In their vast majority, most of the theories are related to voluntary or economic migration (Piché, 2013). More particularly, these theories concentrated on studying the labor flows towards the western world (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Hence, it left a gap in the analysis of migration happening in other parts of the world.

In general, theories of migration deal with two main aspects. The first one studies the various causes, reasons, determinants and drivers of migration, while the second one analyzes its many effects, as well as the policy response of the different involved actors. Each one of these two aspects was subject to different approaches.

The Drivers and Determinants of Migration

The drivers, determinants, reasons or causes of migration constitute the primary subject of interest for most of migration scholars. A lot of research was conducted for tackling down and understanding the mechanisms of this process. This led to the birth of many different theories. The following paragraphs show a non-extensive review of the main theoretical trends that dealt with migration, especially reflecting on those which are relevant for our analysis.

There are two ways of classifying these different theories: one way is to consider the different levels of approaches used by a theory, another way is to see its paradigmatic assumptions. For the first, during their work on the topic, researchers were trying to debunk the factors of migration on three levels of analysis: a macro-level, a micro-level, and a meso-level (cf. Boswell, 2002; Richmond, 1988; Kuhnt, 2019; Piché, 2013). The macro theories focus on the objective conditions that push migrants to move, whereas the micro theories try to understand the factors influencing individuals' psychosocial decision-making process, while the meso theories give attention to the role of systems and networks involved in the migration mechanisms (Boswell, 2002). The second way of classification differentiates between classical functionalist theories such as the neoclassical theory of migration (cf, de Haas, 2011), structure-based economic theories influenced by Marxism or World Systems and Dependency Theories, other economic theories focusing on the role of the countries of origins such as the Migration Transition Theory, and finally those bridging the economic and non-economic migration determinants, which include also forced migration (de Haas, 2011). All these diverse approaches and paradigms are not mutually exclusive (Massey, et al., 1993), but they failed to provide migration studies with a single synthetic theory for the different involved disciplines (cf. Piché, 2013). Moreover, a theory can use different approaches simultaneously.

The first notable one who have dealt with migration is Ravenstein (1889). He conceptualized the laws of migration in the late 19th century. His macro-level economic approach, in which people from low-income regions are de facto attracted by high-income regions, was the base for functionalist migration theories. But since functionalists perceive the world as an interdependent system that pushes towards equilibrium, they leaned on the gravity model as well as on the already well-known model of "*push and pull*" factors (de Haas, 2011). De Haas (2011) claims that these models, although very popular and widespread in non-academic literature (especially the push and

pull one), are obsolete. The main reason is that these models see migrants as "passive" objects (de Haas, 2011) who are just subjects of different flows and attractions, instead of considering their own roles as active individuals in the migration process. He also declares that the best-known functionalist theory is the neoclassical theory of migration. Concerning the macro-level, this theory adapted some economic concepts like those explaining the geographical gaps between labor supply and demand. On a micro-level, neoclassical theory gave an active role to the migrant: he became a rational individual actor who can decide to move or not, based on costs and benefits, or on costs and risks.

But all these functionalist theories ignored the role of structures, networks as well as non-economic migrants (de Haas, 2011). The answer came with the emergence of other economy-based theories such as the New Economic Labor Migration theories. These theories were still simplistic, since they gave primacy to the markets (O'Reilly, 2015). The main innovation in contrast with neoclassical theories, was adding the notion of *family* to the micro-level analysis (Piché, 2013). The role of households in the migratory decision-making process gained a very crucial place (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Although still based on the *push* and *pull* factors, this critical version of neoclassical theories underlined the important role of many intervening variables, such as *networks* and *family*, in the understanding of migration (O'Reilly, 2015). In other words, in order to overcome structural constrains such as market failure for instance, social groups like households tend to spread risks by sending one or many of their members abroad as migrants (de Haas, 2011). A family will promote the emigration of one of its members, in order to insure a constant revenue in case of a potential worsening of the local economic situation. This theory is thus applicable to non-economic migrants also as we will see it later. Other theories that tried to fill in the structural gaps were those applying the paradigm of the sociology-based Conflict Theory (de Haas, 2011). Conflict Theory as refined by Collins (1994) presumes that any social transformation needs collective action, and rarely comes smoothly. The transformation is enabled by growing consciousness about individual perceptions concerning oppression and the ability to overcome it either peacefully or violently (Collins, 1994). Migration theories that used the Conflict Theory are the Marxist, the Dependency, and the World System theories (de Haas, 2011). All three mentioned theories are critical to the liberal approaches that glorify capitalism. World System Theory for example focused more on systems (macro-level) than on individuals (micro-level), thus considering the world as a capitalist system that exploits the labor forces on a transnational level,

dividing it between core and peripheral regions (O'Reilly, 2015). Moreover, global capitalism is considered by these theories as causing an increased marginalization. Because of this reality, individuals have no other choice than moving to domestic or foreign cities which become magnets for a cheap and exploitable urban proletariat, serving the states and elites' interests (de Haas, 2011). But far from being deterministic as were their functionalist counterparts, these theories gave a role to individual decision-making based on György Lukács's (1971) "false consciousness" Marxist interpretation (cf. de Haas, 2011).

The discipline saw also the emergence of other macro-structural approaches that consider migration as a system of multiple flows between countries of origin and destination (Piché, 2013). For these, what influences migration, is a mix of economic, environmental, technological, social and political factors which are all interdependent. These were confronted to other theories that focused more on migration process, especially defined as a circular system rather than a linear one (Piché, 2013). People in this system tend to go back and forth, replaced in some cases locally by other people, showing by that the complexity of migration dynamics rather than sticking in a permanent/temporary migration dichotomy. This is the case of the Migration Systems and Network Theory which stressed on the relationship between *structure* and *agency* (O'Reilly, 2015). Social structures such as religion, class or gender are determining, or at least limiting to some extent, individual's actions or decisions. Individual actions and decisions are the *agency*. It is seen as closely framed by a person's social environment. Not only objective constrains, but also those internalized during the socialization process, which also influenced the person's mentality. For this reason, this theory stresses on the obligation of studying both social structures and individual actions, as well as the intermediate level of different agents involved in this complex process (Castles & Miller, 2009). Another example in this category is the Migration Flows and Mobility Theory, which is not confined to labor migration (O'Reilly, 2015). It rather focuses on understanding the temporary flows, and to include asylum seekers for instance.

These approaches filled a missing gap by bridging non-economic with economic determinants of migration (de Haas, 2011). De Haas (2011) himself proposes a new approach based on this statement. For him, the first important step is in the deconstruction of legal categories and labels such as "refugees" or "economic migrants". Other dichotomies were also tackled here, such as internal-international, temporary-permanent, regular-irregular migrations (King, 2012).

Categories are useful up to a certain point, but are broken down in practice (King, 2012). A perfect illustration here are the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who cannot really fit completely in any of these labels. We can see how it is applicable on the Syrians' case as well. Voluntary and forced migrants cannot be separated into two distinct categories because the relationship between them is way more complex than expected. This complexity is justified by three main points (Kuhnt, 2019): first, economic drivers such as poverty can also be life-threatening. Therefore, economic migrants can also be forced to leave. Second, there is a very strong interdependent relationship between different causes of migration: in fact, any economic or environmental crisis can lead to political unrests or even civil war (Kuhnt, 2019). This is particularly relevant for the Syrian refugee crisis. In this respect, many researches have demonstrated that economic and environmental factors - such as climate change and draughts – played a role in triggering the Syrian conflict[108]. Also, conflicts related to state failure have deep intertwined economic and political reasons for migration. The concept of "economic refugees" was developed for this purpose, like showed by Barjaba & King (2005). Third, in a violent environment which usually linked by scholars to forced migration, not everyone takes the initiative to leave. Decisions to do so can be linked to individual structural conditions such as age, gender, class or health (Kuhnt, 2019). Some authors tried to tackle this complexity by being more inclusive (Kuhnt, 2019). It is the case with "Complex mixed Migration" (Williams, 2015) or Betts' "Survival Migration" (2013) for instance. Also, non-economic factors can influence migration (de Haas, 2011). Indeed, in an authoritarian state, the lack of freedom can reduce the capability to migrate because of stricter emigration policies, but also can rise the aspirations to do so. The role of the states as macro-structural determinants of migration must not be undervalued (de Haas, 2011). In the meantime, research must avoid falling into "methodological nationalism" (King, 2012). Observations must go beyond the nation-states' limiting frame, by moving towards the concept of *translocal spaces*: instead of looking at migrants as citizens moving from a country to another, we must only focus on the village of origin and the city of arrival (Datta & Brickell, 2011)

[108] See for example Peter H. Gleick (Water, Drought, Climate Change, and Conflict in Syria, 2014) or Roba Gaafar (The Environmental Impact of Syria's Conflict: A Preliminary Survey of Issues, 2021) who both identified environmental conditions, especially those related to water scarcity, mismanagement and its negative impact on the agricultural sector, as a major cause of the Syrian conflict. But others like Selby et al. (Climate change and the Syrian civil war revisited, 2017) refute these allegations.

We can clearly sense here that migration studies took a transnational shift (King, 2012). Moreover, a lot of scholars tried to develop in recent years a single all-inclusive and unifying theoretical synthesis of different disciplines and approaches (cf. de Haas, 2011; O'Reilly, 2015). But this task is so challenging that some academics clearly declared its improbability to happen (Castles & Miller, 2009). Therefore, there is a tendency to abandon theorization in migration studies (de Haas, 2011). The following paragraphs take a look into one particular theorization attempt that seems to be highly important in the further analysis.

Practice Theory

Starting from de Haas's argumentation showed previously (2011), Karen O'Reilly's proposed theoretical framework of Practice Theory (2015) might be an interesting basis for theorizing Syrian refugee dynamics in Lebanon. According to de Haas, most of theories trying to bridge economic and non-economic migrants are either macro-theories which ignore *agency*, or are micro-theories that lack the behavioral link. By behavior - and in contrast with neoclassical theorists who see it as a response to an external stimulus – the author means the cognitive process which takes into account *agency*. Consequently, macro-level determinants cannot be confounded with individual micro-level migration motives. For a Syrian refugee: his decision in moving to Lebanon is not influenced by some objective and abstract concepts such as higher statistical likelihood of dying due to rising violence intensity, or war-induced drop of Syrian GDP. Rather, his decision depends on his ability to perceive Lebanon as a safer place, and his potential capacity to escape his country. So, instead of a fully deterministic conception of people and their agencies imposed on them from a macro-level, de Haas believes that choices can be made within a certain frame that is constrained by *structure*. In this respect, *push* and *pull* is not enough since it only gives a partial, mechanistic and simplistic explanation where people are passive objects. Thus, he adds that the word *determinant* itself is very deterministic and connotes a "causation from the outside", independently from the migrants' *agency* (de Haas, 2011). This argumentation integrates some new elements to the literature that de Haas proposes himself to be taken into consideration in future theorization attempts. Beyond integrating *agency* and linking micro-theories to macro-theories, the author integrates economic to non-economic migration by using *opportunity* instead of *income differences*. Thus, *aspirations* as a perception becomes function of *spatial opportunity*, and migration likelihood becomes relative of migrants' *aspirations and capabilities*. This logic gives

an important role to *agency*, and opens the door for integrating *culture* into migration studies (de Haas, 2011). From this "aspirations-capabilities" synthetic framework that gives an equal place to *agency* in understanding migration processes, let us see how Practice Theoretical framework elaborates on this by underlining the dynamic combination of *structure* and *agency*. O'Reilly (2015) points out that the real issue in understanding migration processes is caused by the inability of a proper theorization for the interactive relationship of *structure* and *agency*. "Migrants make choices but not in circumstances of their own choosing and, having migrated, they change societies in unintended ways that then create new circumstances for future migrants" (O'Reilly, 2015, p.7). A simple extrapolation of this statement to the case of Syrian refugees means that by forcibly migrating to Lebanon because of the ongoing war, refugees changed both the Lebanese and their own societies' structures, altering by that unintentionally the conditions and capabilities of other Syrian refugees who entered the country later. For example, Syrians who were seeking refuge in Lebanon after 2015 could enter under stricter conditions, because the previous influx pushed the state to impose residency permits. O'Reilly's framework leans on the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984). Giddens declared that social life is an interactive mix of individual actions and social structures. Individuals have some free will which is limited by social structures in different situations. This interdependent and interrelated dual relationship between *agency* and *structure* is closely related to Bourdieu's *structuration*, which implies that free will and decision-making are closely related to structural constraints: a person can only internalize what is possible for him given his particular social structures (cf. O'Reilly, 2015). *Habitus* is formed by certain practices, habits or believes that are in turn, nothing else than internalized structures. In this sense, a person constantly adjusts to the future rather than making rational elaborated plans, because his *habitus* is an internalized structure. Finally, O'Reilly introduces what Lave and Wenger refer to be "situated learning" (cf. O'Reilly, 2015), which is based on migrants' conjectural knowledge in planning for a better future. Communities of practice, namely any social group, share ideas about different things that might be changed by the power of someone within the group. It means that the author differentiates between the *structured* and the *structuring* processes. O'Reilly tries to prove that most migration theories studied flows, systems, networks, movements, processes but did not focus enough on acts and effects. She suggests the use of the Practice Theory framework, with the telling of practice stories for migration, which have a methodological implication on migration studies. The application of this particular framework on Syrian refugees is not only a

novelty, but also challenging. It drives us to define the social structures of refugees, but also to find their structuration processes. Also, it implies us to link this concept to practice stories. The empirical sections of the previous chapter might be useful for this analysis. Confronting empirical findings to theorization is highly relevant since until now empirical work showed that each theory is only explaining a particular aspect of migration, preventing by that the global application in time and place of a given theory (Piché, 2013). Finally, Jana Kuhnt's (2019) listing seems to be a relevant frame throughout which the *aspirations-capabilities* or *structure-agency* active relationship could take sense. Macro-level drivers are related to the political-economic context through which we can focus on: violence and conflict, human rights violation, state's institutions conditions, economic opportunities and policies among others. Meso-level drivers are: migration culture, networks, information, technology, smugglers, geography and infrastructure. While micro-level drivers are: age, education, gender, risk aversion and personality traits (Kuhnt, 2019).

The Effects of Migration

The effects of migration were addressed by the literature from several angles. The main subjects that are worth mentioning here are those dealing with the different economic, social, and political effects which focus on the different migration policies. Here again, the analysis is done on both the micro and the macro-levels. The macro-economic effects of migration studied (1) the structural economic effects of immigration in developed countries; (2) the development effects of emigration in developing countries with the effects of remittances for example; (3) The questions linked to transnationalism (Piché, 2013). On another hand, the micro-economic perspectives of migration tackled questions related to the economic impact of immigration on non-migrant and host countries' populations, by analyzing for instance the effects on opportunities and earnings of host societies (Piché, 2013). The social effects of migration analysis dealt mainly with cultural issues such as the diversity of races and the effects on identity, mainly in Western host countries. Some of them were already presented in Chapter 2. Other theories tried also to understand the outcomes of assimilation and multiculturalism[109] (O'Reilly, 2015). Lastly, the political effects of migration are the ones specialized in refugee migration, although most of the texts were interested by legal and voluntary migrations (Piché, 2013). Therefore, this part of the literature is insightful for this

[109] Like the Muslims' assimilation in Europe for instance. See for example Tariq Modood (British Muslim Perspectives on Multiculturalism, 2007).

thesis. In this respect, Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguayo (1986) tried to base their analysis on the distinction between internal and external factors of migration. Internal factors are related to the situation in the country of origin. For the Syrian case, this can be for example the regime's repressive methods or simply the civil war. Whereas the external factors are those that tend to aggravate from the outside the economic and social conditions in the country of origin. Economic embargo is one example for that. The policies tailored for migrants-related issues by the potential host countries are also considered to be external effects. The decision to grant or to deny formal refugee status is a sort of an implicit condemnation of the government of this country. The question is highly relevant for our research. As we saw it, Lebanon does not recognize Syrian refugees as such. But these are tackled in the next chapter. Other effects of migration were theorized according to potential host states' policy response towards inflows. Bjerre (2017) lists five types of immigration policy effects: admission effects are those linked to an open-doors policy, deterrence effects when doors are closed, deflection or substitution effects made by restricted policy that reorients flows to other target countries, magnet effects or "pulls" that make a country to attract migration flows, and definition effects made by constantly constructing and reconstructing the categories of migrants. But it is out of the scope of the current chapter.

5.2.2. Refugee Studies

The previous paragraphs showed us explicitly how migration studies, through its various theories, tries to explain mobility as a social process in all its forms. But again, refugees constitute a very specific type of migrants. Most of migration theories dealt mainly with labor migration. Thus, it did not take into consideration involuntary migration (Richmond, 1988). So, the real challenge for theorists was to include in their studies people fleeing violence and conflict (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Some did and some did not. Those who did not assumed that refugee flows are spontaneous and unpredictable (Richmond, 1988). Following this logic, the presumed short length of refugee migration (seen as a temporary event) was a barrier for the development of sophisticated theories. Others who wanted to deal with refugees started to distance themselves from the rest of migration theorists. Indeed, refugees are a type of migrants which requires a more specialized theory "tailoring" (King, 2012). Therefore, they form "a tangential field of migration, spawning its own small theoretical literature" (Kunz, 1981; Richmond, 1988, as cited in King, 2012). Soon, refugee

studies emerged as a separate sub-discipline, and grew dramatically starting from the second half of the last century (Black, 2001).

The study of refugees, as it is the case for migration in general, was conducted by adapting different paradigmatic approaches. Two of them are worth to be mentioned here: The constructivist approach and the realist one. Constructivist approaches examined the changes in the labelling made to the notion of refugee, while on the contrary, realist approaches tended to understand experiences of refugees independently of how they were labelled (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). The categorization of refugees in the realist approach was made according to the criteria of definition. The differentiation criteria defining if a person is a refugee or a migrant are: the legal criteria, the one separating economic causes of migration from political causes, the one separating existential stake from maximization of consumer's utility, or the one examining if fleeing was caused by political violence or not (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). The latter makes it possible to empirically investigate how economic and political changes affect the outflows. This realist approach defines refugees as those who at least partially escaped a country due to political violence, regardless of the actual label given to them by authorities (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Calqued on migration theories, refugee theories are also divided among those dealing with the issue on a macro-level, and those thinking on a micro-level (cf. Richmond, 1988). The macro-theories of migration which included refugees in their analysis were already presented earlier in this study. On another hand, refugee studies developed a lot of micro-theories. Kunz (1981) for example, through his kinetic model, found that most of refugee migration and settlement patterns conform to two schemes: an anticipatory refugee movement and a spontaneous one. The first happens when the refugee leaves prepared after an early sense of a potential upcoming danger, while the second forces the refugee to leave unprepared by focusing mainly on his survival. Rogge (1979) classified two kinds of involuntary migrants, in relation with their level of free choice: a forced one who is expelled by force and an impelled one who have the decision to stay or to leave. Other scholars worked on perceptions, psychosocial effects, or structural constraints of forced migration among others (cf. Richmond, 1988). Refugee studies tried also to expand the literature towards internally displaced people too (Mazur, 1988).

There is a little overlap between refugee studies and the sociology of international migration (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Some argue that sociology of international migration and refugee

studies can mutually enrich each other and push theorization forward (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Refugee studies can benefit from migration theories in three different ways: expanding the discipline to include the people who are fleeing violence, focus more on the political aspect driven by the role of states in shaping migratory flows, and finally, by pushing the study towards transnationalism, citizenship or integration (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018).

But refugee studies faced since its birth a variety of issues. Firstly, because of its close ties with them, refugee studies faced constantly the interests of the different international organizations' agendas (Black, 2001). It mutated into a kind of academic supportive tool that helped in coping with the world's many refugee crises. This leads to the question of knowing if the discipline is a "refugee studies", or rather more a "refugee policy studies" (Black, 2001). Secondly, the field remained under-theorized (Hein, 1993; as cited in Black, 2001). This reality pushed some scholars to declare that there will never be a "theory of Refugees", and this must be accepted as such (Bascom, 1998; as cited in Black, 2001). Thirdly migration and refugee theories must be able to expose the entire process and its explanation: from population movements to choices of destination, to social integration and effects on host communities; which is definitely not the case (Richmond, 1988). Many attempts of classification resulted in typologies that failed completely in going beyond a descriptive level, leaving the field with no predictive or explanatory values (Richmond, 1988). Fourthly, and maybe the most important issue, lays in the difficulties that literature encounters in delivering a clear definition to the refugee category itself. Several attempts and approaches were made for this purpose. But their contradicting outcomes depict clearly the systemic problem that faces the discipline. The next paragraph elaborates on the many aspects of this particular problem.

The typology of migrants made clear distinctions between groups, which in reality are not. The core groups which dominated migration studies are temporary labor migrants, settler-migrants and refugees (King, 2012). But often, the reasons behind migration cannot be clearly defined as caused exclusively by economic or by violence-linked *pushes*. Poverty can threaten life and force people to leave, while similarly, violence can cause economic devastation and also force people to leave. We already saw previously how the dichotomy between forced and voluntary migration simplifies a very complex problem (Kuhnt, 2019; de Haas, 2011). Russell King (2012) declares that the following dichotomies should be blurred and deconstructed: internal-international, temporary-

permanent, regular-irregular, and voluntary-forced. Forced migration is not only restricted to refugees, it can include slavery migration for example (Richmond, 1988). So, the main issue appears to be determined by the constructed labels that were put on migrants. But sociologists of migration barely defined explicitly that who is a migrant and consequently, that who is a refugee. Refugee studies faced many terminological difficulties (Black, 2001). Theorists tried to draw the characteristics of a refugee. They considered that a refugee is: in rupture with "normal" socio-economic relations; a person with particular experiences and needs which entitle him to receive special public policy measures that are different than those allocated to economic migrant; or simply a person defined by the UNHCR refugee definition as being such (Black, 2001). But since this definition reflects only the description of a particular convention, made at a particular time, within a particular international context, it was seen as a "chaotic conception", which lacks deeper academic meaning (Sayer, 1982, as cited by Black, 2001). This uncritical use of "refugees" in the literature helped in perceiving them as a natural category (Black, 2001). The restrictive UNHCR-linked definition of refugee gives it an essentialist connotation. This goes broader towards the unquestioned and limiting position of the state as a base for the analysis of refugees. As it was mentioned previously, King (2012) warns from the dangers of what he calls "methodological nationalism", which considers de facto nation-states as the main geographic containers of migrants. This particular point opens the door for a redefinition of the refugee. The next sub-section includes it among the many implications of the previous sub-sections.

5.2.3. Conclusions and Implications

Up until this point, many conclusions and implications can be filtered out from the above-developed section. Concerning migration studies:

- Migration can be classified according to three main axes: space, time and nature of migrants.
- For spatial classification, there are domestic and international migrants. But the separation is difficult to be made since the boundaries are often blurred.
- Migration is very diverse in time: it can be seasonal or long term, circular or transitional.
- The classification of migrant's nature separates among voluntary and involuntary. This categorization is very simplistic and need to be deconstructed.
- Migration was mainly studied through its causes and drivers, and its effects.

When it comes to causes, drivers and determinants of migration:

- Causes, drivers and determinants were approached on three levels: the micro, meso and macro-levels.
- Micro theories try to understand individual decision-making, meso theories try focus on systems and networks, whereas macro theories deal with objective conditions that make migrants to move.
- *Push* and *pull* factors are obsolete: migrants are not passive objects.
- *Structure* and *agency* must both be taken into consideration: in this regard, social structure, like religion or culture, affects individual agency. Structure is not objective. Rather, elements form the environment are interiorized by individuals during their socialization.
- Economic and non-economic determinants of migration are interdependent, hence, useful to be bridged. Therefore, legal categories, internal-international, temporary-permanent, regular-irregular migration dichotomies must be deconstructed. For example, economic migrants might be forced to leave because poverty can also be life-threatening.
- The *translocal* spaces' approach helps in avoiding methodological nationalism: instead of looking at migrants as citizens moving from a country to another, we can focus on village of origin and the city of arrival.

Concerning the Practice Theory's framework:

- *Determinants* alone are very deterministic in the sense that *agency* is not taken into consideration. Therefore, it is better to analyze migration likelihood relatively to migrants' *aspirations and capabilities.* Practice Theoretical framework elaborates on this by underlining the dynamic combination of *structure* and *agency.*
- It implies that free will and decision-making are closely related to structural constraints: a person can only internalize what is available for him given his particular social structure. In turn, *structure* can change though behaviors of *agency*. The best illustration for it is the in case of Syrians who could enter Lebanon without any visa restrictions during the early years of the crisis. Their behaviors made the Lebanese state to introduce residency permits regulations which affected the conditions of late-comer refugees.
- Situated learning is the conjectural knowledge of migrants when planning for a better future.

- Communities of practice is the concept implying that shared ideas can be changed by the power of someone within the group. It differentiates between *structured* and the *structuring* processes.
- Practice Theory framework is about telling practice stories for migration. It leads us to define refugees' social structures and to find out their structuration processes.

Concerning the effects of migration, there are many types of immigration policy effects: admission effects are those linked to an open-doors policy, deterrence effects when doors are closed, deflection or substitution effects made by restricted policy that reorients flows to other target countries, magnet effects or "pulls" that make a country to attract migration flows, and definition effects made by constantly constructing and reconstructing the categories of migrants. These are used in next chapter when addressing the state's policy response.

Finally, concerning refugee studies, the literature encounters difficulties in delivering a clear definition to *refugee* as a category. Therefore, redefining refugee should be done by:

- Deconstructing dichotomies such as internal-international, temporary-permanent, regular-irregular, and voluntary-forced migrations.
- Deconstructing the restrictive UNHCR definition of *refugee* which has an essentialist connotation.

In conclusion, Practice Theory concerning structures is interesting for the analysis of the decision-making process of Syrians fleeing towards Lebanon. The extensive analysis through this approach remains out of the scope of this thesis, but it can help as preparing the ground for future research. In summary, the main implications are the following: causes, drivers and pattern of Syrian refugee migration can be conceptualized through the Practice Theory, effects of migration theories help us as a theoretical framework for the next chapter studying the impact of Syrian refugees on state identity, and conceptualizing Syrian refugees under a new definition can be made through deconstructing the old essentialist definition. The next section attempts to apply some of these implications through presenting a new conceptual definition for Lebanon's Syrian refugees.

5.3. Conceptualizing Syrian Refugees

The following paragraphs attempt to conceptualize Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This exercise is understood as giving an abstract idea for a specific term. In our case, it implies specifying what we really mean by *Syrian refugees* in Lebanon. The conceptualization process is made through

following a series of steps. The first step is to link all empirical observations made from desk research and field work with its relevant aspects found in migration and refugee theories. The second and third steps consist of trying to analyze causes and drivers, as well as mobility patterns of Syrian refugees through these theories. The last step concludes by developing a novel concept for the studied refugee group.

5.3.1. An Important Step

A lot of conclusions can be made through confronting empirical evidence with migration and refugee theories. The last section's implications inform us that the literature of both migration and refugee studies lack some methodological coherence when trying to address the causes and effects of refugee migration. The incoherence is found on many levels. One level is related to the modalities of the discipline in defining *refugee* and *forced* migrations itself. By often limiting it to the UNHCR's definition, refugee studies got trapped in a legal-based normative essentialist categorization of migration. Moreover, the various typologies developed for the classification of migration got stuck in rigid dichotomist categories that are useless in the real world. We saw how the boundaries between *forced* and *voluntary*, or *economic* and *non-economic* migrants are quite blurred in reality. Empirical evidence on Syrian refugees confirms this observation. On another hand, the uncritical definition and categorization led to consider nation-states as the natural frame for studying refugee migration. For example, and as a consequence, IDPs were for a long time excluded from the analysis.

As a reaction to these points, proposing a novel concept for Syrian refugees in Lebanon seems to be highly relevant in giving a new push to the literature. But this relevance is not strictly limited to the already mentioned ideas. Considering that migration literature focused more on labor flows towards the West, unlike refugee movements that take place usually between neighboring countries from the global South (Chimni, 1998, as cited by FitzGerald & Arar, 2018), we can say that any topic concerning Syrian refugees can bring an added value to the discipline. Also, this analysis founds its importance in its ability to combine theories with empirical findings. Unlike this thesis, empirical studies have been conducted on an ad hoc basis, largely uninformed by developments in general sociological theory (Richmond, 1988). Black (2001) states that situating the study of a particular refugee population in the theories of cognate areas would better help the theoretical grounding of refugee studies. In other words, this analysis is a great opportunity to feed

general theories (hence, developping through it social science), by using particular circumstances of refugees situations (Black, 2001). This gives an extra relevance for approaching the Syrian refugees of Lebanon from a theoretical perspective. Even if tackling all its aspects would be out of the scope of the following thesis, setting the foundations for further analysis in the future seems to be helpful in developing the discipline overall.

For all these reasons and as a response to all these lacks, the following sub-sections try to reexamine the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon through three main steps: (1) the causes and drivers that led to their migration, (2) the chosen patterns for their migration, and finally, (3) the proposal of a new conceptual definition for Syrian refugees. It is important to note once again that migration effects are not tackled in this section, as the next chapter is devoted to this specific task.

5.3.2. Reframing the Causes and Drivers of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

The causes and drivers of the Syrian refugees' migration to Lebanon can be analyzed through the macro, meso and micro-levels, by focusing on both *structure* and *agency* on all three levels. So, it is migrants' *aspirations* and *capabilities* that are analyzed through these three levels. Kuhnt's (2019) theoretical framework seems to be the best one applicable here (cf. migration theories sub-section). Aspirations and capabilities (de Haas, 2011; 2007) must be observed through a dynamic interaction between *structures* and *agency* as elaborated in the structuration and practice theories' approaches (O'Reilly, 2015). The relevance of the practice theory approach was corroborated by Black (2001). It can take into consideration the concept *of mixed motivations* for flows (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018), since many Syrians came for economic, family-reunion or other reasons, beside from seeking safety. This is especially true since there is no clear distinction between economic and sociopolitical determinants of migration: rather, there is a complex interdependent multi-causal relationship (Richmond, 1988).

On the macro level, empirical evidence detailed earlier shows that the *structure* in which Syrian refugees can take decisions to move towards Lebanon is determined by geography, culture (religion and language), economic considerations, and the initial international political setup between the two neighboring countries. Concerning geography, Lebanon being adjacent to Syria and easily accessible through formal and informal routes, structures the *capabilities* of refugees. Furthermore, the Akkar case study showed that peripheral bordering regions are recipients for refugees coming from direct neighboring regions within Syria, which witnessed high intensity of

conflict (cf. in this respect the data provided by the World Bank (2020). When it comes to culture, religious and linguistic similarities between both Syrian and Lebanese enhance both *aspirations* and *capabilities* of refugees in seeking refuge in Lebanon. This is especially true in bordering regions such as Akkar where refugees and host communities share a higher percentage of common cultural features. Regarding economic considerations, Lebanon being a pre-established recipient for Syrian workforce, both aspirations and capabilities of incoming Syrians were determined by the existing ties with employers and also the easy access to the Lebanese labor market. Drivers of Syrian refugee inflow is thus ruled by *mixed motivations* based on economic opportunities and on family-reunion *aspirations* for workers' family-members. Moreover, the latter can be defined as having a *structuring* rather than a *structural* nature: the employment of some members of a family creates a new structure which enables other family members to join the firstcomers. The findings from Akkar illustrate these trends in a very clear way. Similar to employment opportunities, the Lebanese structure defined by a relatively developed healthcare, education and well-served by NGOs and the UNHCR can influence also on refugees' decision-making within their situated perceptions, to seek refuge in the country. Finally, the international political setup between Syria and Lebanon can also be theorized as constituting a significant *structure* influencing on *aspiration* and *capabilities* of refugees. In this respect, we have seen how visa-free mobility enabled Syrians to enter Lebanon without any significant restriction during the early years of the crisis. Although we cannot systematically demonstrate it in this thesis, but empirical evidences had proven to some extent that aspirations of Syrians moving to Lebanon were based on *situated learning* within refugee communities of practice. In other words, the entrepreneurial drive that led some "pioneer" refugees to seek refuge in Lebanon had an influence on the aspirations of others with whom the migration experiences were shared through stories. This process has a nature of *structuration*, but it rather comes under the meso level of analysis. All these elements show us the relevance of going beyond the simplistic analysis of *pull* factors by engaging the dynamic *agencies* of refugees.

More on the meso level, empirical evidence once again corroborates the important role played by tribal, kinship and family structures and networks in determining the trends that drive the influx towards Lebanon. In this respect, scholarship has demonstrated how families constitute the main social institution which determines the structure of individuals in the Middle East and the Arab world (Tobin, Momani, & Al Yakoub, 2022). We have seen how both rich and poor Syrian families were received by their Lebanese relatives for those who had any. This was particularly true for

wealthy Christian and Armenians from Aleppo, as well as many refugee families who have relatives in Akkar. It also facilitates the insertion and inclusion of their members in the Lebanese job market for instance.

On the other hand, traditional deterministic *push* factors can also be scanned through this critical approach. First, we have seen how the visa-free policy induced Syrians to easily enter during the first years of the conflict. But their behavior, shaped the *structure*, through the constant influx over the years, of other latecomer compatriots. Viewed solely from a refugee's perspective, the restrictions on entrance introduced by Lebanese authorities in 2015 can be thus considered as the result of a *structuration* process. Second, the regime and rebels' exactions or repression did not systematically have a direct, real and objective influence on the livelihood of the entire Syrian population. In fact, in many cases, the simple perception of fear and the aspiration for emancipation were the main causes for escaping. The assumption here is that some Syrians listened to others relatives and friends' stories and experiences, and, through situated learning, decided to leave their homes towards Lebanon. The fear of return developed under the Akkar case study constitute a valuable illustration for this statement. But such assumptions need further research that goes beyond the limits of the current analysis. A last interesting point to mention here concerns the recent change in the nature of Syrian refugee migration to Lebanon. In fact, several factors mutated with time from initially *pull* factors to *push* factors. These factors became triggers for Syrians to consider moving out from Lebanon towards third countries. They can all be linked to their aspirations and capabilities in relation to their daily experiences and perceptions in Lebanon. We can list among these factors: the loss of hope - with the eternalization of the conflict-, the rising cost of living in Lebanon, the limited opportunities on the job market, UNHCR and NGOs aids programs' shortfalls (Edwards, 2015), and more recently, the economic crisis and rising hostility against refugees from some groups within the host communities (Cornish, 2019), as it was also presented in the Akkar field research.

5.3.3. Reframing Migration Patterns of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Applying the same theoretical framework for migration patterns of Syrian refugees incoming to Lebanon can also provide some interesting conclusions when confronted to empirical findings. In this respect, empirical observations validate that socioeconomic and ethnic structures have a considerable impact on migration and settlement patterns. The choice for informal tented

settlements, flats, garages, or any other forms are determined by the origin of the refugee group. Findings from the field inform us that the poorest and socially most marginalized fringes of the Syrian society enjoy less, or at least diverse *capabilities* - and thus, in some way less *aspirations* – in the choice of their settlement. This can be illustrated by the encountered Dom refugees of Akkar who were living in the worst conditions in the *El Hissa* camp. In contrast, those who were originally from urban backgrounds tend to live in better conditions, even if in tented settlements. Moreover, and far from being redundant with the previous sub-section, the type and place of settlement is also largely determined by economic and social connections of one or more member of a family within Lebanon. Here again, we can mention the case of those who were already working in Lebanon and brought in their families later on to join them. Both the Akkar case and empirical review confirmed these trends. Maybe the best illustration for the strong role of social structures would be the Palestinian Refugees from Syria, who are mainly settling in Lebanese Palestinian camps. This is a great indicator for the important role of family networks and social structures in understanding the migration pattern choices of refugees through their *aspirations* and *capabilities*.

In conclusion, *agency* can evolve within a certain *structure*, which can be altered to some extent by the *structuration* efforts of some actors. On the macro level, the absence of the central state is a conditioning *structure* for the dissemination of informal settlement in an unorganized way. this is also reflected on their social organization. Therefore, we can talk about the structuration processes within settlement organization that determine the role and power of the Shawish for instance. By providing job opportunities, the Shawish and employers structured the mobility capabilities of refugees who are living in these camps. Structuration processes are also at work when refugee communities, based on the welcoming structure provided by some host communities, structure their conditions on the meso level by initiating or engaging in mixed marriages with host communities like it was the case in *Meshmesh*, Akkar.

In fine, and beyond the analyzed theoretical framework, Stein (1981; as cited in Mazur, 1988) listed some very useful stages of refugee experience: perception of threat, decision to flee, periods of extreme danger and flight, reaching safety, camp behavior, settlement, resettlement or repatriation, adjustment/acculturation. In addition, the economic perspective of refugee migration can be useful by distinguishing among ideal and typical stages of mobility. These stages are three:

finding a safe space within the country, then moving to a neighboring poor country, then considering long-term solutions such as economic or family reunion (cf. FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). But here again, the gathered data cannot fill in the gap for concluding if there is a transition migration pattern or not. Furthermore, other extensive studies such as the World Bank report (The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis, 2020) cannot help entirely in answering these questions. Therefore, these issues might need to be addressed by future researches, and remain out of the scope of the current analysis.

5.3.4. Syrian Refugees of Lebanon: A New Definition

The gathered data, findings and analysis that were developed throughout this chapter lead us undoubtably to reshape the definition of the Syrian refugees of Lebanon. The following few paragraphs elaborate on this particular question through a set of logical steps.

We saw that the definition of *refugee* is based on the uncritical acceptance by some academics of the UN refugee convention's understanding. But by digging more into it, we found that this definition is nonetheless a construction which cannot be taken for granted by essence. So, the idea stating that the UNHCR definition might be inaccurate or not adapted for refugee studies is our first starting point upon which this redefinition can be built. From this statement, we go further by questioning the mentioned *methodological nationalism* which considers the nation-states as the main territorial recipients for migrants (cf. King, 2012). Also, we can acknowledge that the distinction between a "refugee" and an "economic migrant" is very thin and blurred. This is due to migrants' mixed motivations. Finally, typological dichotomies such as regular/irregular or internal/international must be deconstructed, since they are only useful up to a certain point and are broken down in practice (cf. King, 2012).

Taking all these points into account, as well as the definitions from the literature review up until the last paragraphs of this chapter, the proposed revised definition for the Syrian refugees of Lebanon is the concept of "***internationally displaced persons***". According to this new concept, Syrians might be better described as being internally displaced persons who happened to cross an international border, namely towards Lebanon, rather than being simple refugees. This novel concept can be justified by four major assumptions that are developed below.

First, a refugee is a person that has crossed an international border. But beyond the constructed methodological nationalism, Syrians have crossed a very blurry, not well controlled and not precisely drawn international border that characterizes the border line between Lebanon and Syria. Furthermore, the two states have a low level of control on their borders, which is one of the main attributes of a centralized strong territorial sovereignty. In turn, the state's territorial sovereignty is the cornerstone of the nation-state from a Westphalian perspective. This is due to the erosion of the state's institutions in a war-torn Syria, and the fragility of the Lebanese state. Moreover, the fluidity in which both irregular and regular cross-border refugee migration was done, especially in the first few years, was maybe higher than mobility within Syria itself, where people face restrictions since they must cross a considerable amount of state and non-state actors' checkpoints for domestic commuting, if any. These assumptions might need further research in the future. But it seems pertinent to think that a refugee who is escaping from a rebellious region would rather choose Lebanon than another Syrian region ruled by the regime's forces, or even other rebels.

Second, according to their respective official definitions, both refugees and IDPs can be escaping violence, persecution or conflict. But IDPs might have some extra reasons to do so as well. Syrians have mixed motivations to flee away from war-torn regions in Syria. As we saw it earlier throughout this chapter, this can be a combination of various environmental, economic, security, political or even social drivers. Thus, they can't be confined under the essentialist UNHCR definition of a refugee. In other words, some Syrian refugees are only staying in Lebanon because they were already working in the country before the conflict, or found alternative sources of income, despite having the opportunity for a safe return. Therefore, in many cases, the choice of Lebanon is only linked to their aspirations and capabilities and might be far from the strict UNHCR definition of refugees.

Third, refugees are internationally entitled to seek legal protection from host countries, while IDPs actually fall under the same jurisdiction as their local compatriots and may not claim for additional rights. Despite the fact that Syrians are recognized internationally as being refugees, there are three main reasons that falsify this label in practice. First, not all of the Syrian refugees of Lebanon are registered as such by the UNHCR. As a result, a lot of them are simply unrecognized of being refugees, even on an international level. Second, as it will be shown in the next chapter, the Lebanese state does not recognize Syrian refugees as such: it refers to them as "*nazihun*",

displaced, rather than "*laji'un*", refugees (Janmyr, 2017; Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). This unrecognition is not only explained by the unwillingness of the Lebanese state of potentially risking its demographic sectarian status quo. In fact, as it was analyzed by Kikano & Lizarralde (2022), it can also be explained by the nature of the relations between the two states. In this regard, the Lebanese foreign policy does not stictly recognize that Syria is in a state of war, hence, the displaced population cannot be considered as refugees[110]. Third, a significant proportion of the refugee population is still falling under the same jurisdiction of their Syrian compatriots who stayed in Syria without discrimination. In other words, they are equally "protected" by the Syrian state's authorities, of course to some extends, maybe even better than some of the IDPs who actually do fear their own regime. Many continue to have a good relationship with the Syrian regime, and have a perception of safety compared to other rebel or terrorist groups. We have seen how some Syrian Christians refuse to register as refugees because of their ties or interests that they have with the Syrian regime, despite being living in Lebanon. Some Syrians are still sticking to their governmental jobs and they even get paid for it. This comes of course as a clear contradiction to the mainstream definitions of both refugee and IDP. In addition, a lot of Syrians do cross the Syrian-Lebanese borders periodically, or go back and forth between the two countries quite often. These segments cannot be strictly considered as refugees as the word is internationally defined. The ultimate evidence for this would be the Syrian presidential elections during which a substantial number of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon voted for Assad. Although being a very controversial election, a lot of Syrian "refugees" voted in their Beirut-based embassy during the last two Syrian presidential elections of 2014 and 2021 (Atassi, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Chehayeb, 2021; Sewell, 2021). Many of them demonstrated their sympathy to the regime by holding pictures of the president and flags, and by flooding the streets leading to their embassy.

Fourth and finally, patterns of behavior between Syrian refugees in Lebanon are very similar to those of Syrian IDPs who moved within Syria. Lebanon and Syria share together a common history, but also common cultural, linguistic and religious traits. Sometimes they even share extended trans-border family ties. Intermarriage and family unions are also very common in some groups. In this regard, a row anthropological reasoning leads us to state that in some cases, a lot of

[110] See in this respect Kikano & Lizarralde (2022) who link this policy to the agendas of some of the lebanese state's actors who are allied with the Syrian regime. These actors influence the foreign policy and design the relationship that official Lebanon must have with Syria.

Syrian refugees do not even gasp the notion of border anyway: they flew to a village or a region (which are *translocal* spaces), that happened to be on the other side of an international border. The most flagrant illustration for this would be the case of Syrian Dom communities who are also marginalized irrespectively of being physically in Lebanon or in Syria. Many of them are stateless as well (Siren Associates and UNHCR, 2021). Some of them are almost unaware of the concept of international borders or citizenship. They just moved from one region to another, despite being part of another country in the constructed imagination of the majority.

All these elements give a flagrant legitimacy for the proposed "internationally displaced person" novel notion. Of course, we must be fully aware of the limitations of such a demarche. The used conceptual frame inspired by the works of Giddens and O'Reilly is far of being perfect and uncritical. One can mention here among others the critics of Bakewell (2010; as cited in King, 2012) towards the dangers of a potential "structure-agency impasse" (King, 2012, p.28). But this analysis can be considered as a contribution in the deconstruction of academically outdated essentialist connotations given to the understanding of *refugee*, as well as to the causes, drivers and patterns of migration and settlement as previously developed.

Last but not least, it is important to explicitly say that none of these statements undermine or underestimate the suffering and the persecutions encountered by both the Syrian people and the Lebanon-based Syrian refugees. Beyond the tragic humanitarian situation, this study is only the reflection of an abstract new definition that conceptualizes the realistic concrete scientific observations of this population's status, and questions the pre-established official definitions of refugees and IDPs. This reflection might be helpful in future implementations of better policy response towards refugee groups in the region and around the world.

5.4. Conclusions

The chapter 4 was very useful in tackling some of the key questions concerning the research question's independent variable, namely the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. It did so by (1) presenting the crisis in general, (2) listing the most important definitions and concepts as internationally used, (3) putting the Syrian refugee influx in its historical context, and (4) approaching the issue by describing the real situation and by providing numbers and facts. In turn, the current chapter took the analysis further by (5) linking desk review to empirical findings from the field, and (6) confronting them with the relevant theoretical academic literature. Furthermore,

the chapter tried to synthetize the analytical argumentation through (7) providing the novel concept of “internationally displaced person” for Syrian refugees of Lebanon. Most importantly, the multileveled analysis of the Syrian refugee crisis enables us to measure and assess its magnitude regarding its potential implications on the Lebanese state and society. It is starting from this particular context that any interpretation regarding the impact of the crisis can be engaged. But for this, some crucial questions remain unaddressed by the analysis. These questions concern the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanon. More specifically, its effects on the Lebanese state itself. In other words: *why* and *how* refugees are an issue for the Lebanese state’s identity? What are the concrete reactions of the Lebanese state regarding this influx? How are these reactions and responses linked to its identity? The answers to these questions are the subject of the next chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 6: The Lebanese State Discourse and Actions

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapters have shown us how state identity is formed and constructed. They also gave us a clear picture of the Lebanese state identity and the different elements and phases of its construction. In addition, we understood the Lebanese political system from all its aspects, and underlined the importance of the demographic balance for the stability of its fragile sectarian status quo. Later, through the detailed account of the Syrian refugee crisis, we were able to grasp its magnitude. Hence, we might now envisage how their presence would be potentially perceived as an existential threat by the population and its elites. But one question remains unanswered. It concerns the effect of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanon in general, and on its state's identity in particular. In this respect, *why* and *how* refugees might be an issue for the Lebanese state's identity? How has the state responded to this crisis? What were the drivers behind its agency? The answers to this represent the main results and findings of this thesis.

To answer these questions, the following chapter starts by redefining briefly the analytical and contextual frameworks. After these steps, the analysis tries to map the most influential political parties and their stances on Syrian refugee-related questions. Next, it examines the discourse of the state through its ministerial declarations and Presidential speeches. Finally, the last section tries to trace the actions, behaviors and policies of the Lebanese state regarding the Syrian refugees, in order to grasp its hidden motives, and thus, its identity.

6.2. Analytical Framework

The methodology of this thesis provided us with tangible elements about the ways to measure identity and identity change. Far from being redundant, it seems important for us to revisit these measurement means in light with what was developed in the previous chapters. In this respect, identity does change through either *content*, its content's *contestation*, or through *actions* (cf. Chapter 1.4.1. Measuring Identity). Since identities are fluid and contextual, *content* is not rigid and might vary. *Contestation* is the degree of agreement about the content within a shared social identity. This said, the Lebanese state identity might change through either altering its content, or through actors who might contest it. The historic review about the Lebanese nation-building process corroborates these concepts empirically. Furthermore, there are four types of content: constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons and cognitive models (Abdelal,

Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). In the Lebanese case as understood from the previous chapters, the Lebanese state identity's content is made of: its Constitution (with its identity that shifted from "Arab face" to simply "Arab in identity and belonging" after the Taef's amendments, the recognition of 18 different historical sects, the refutation of "*tawtin*", as well as its notion of "coexistence" among others); its Citizenship Law (based on *jus sanguinis*); its Labour Law (with the *kafala* system); its non-adhesion to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol; its use of "*nazih*" rather than "*laji'*" while talking about refugees in general; its notions of "Liban-message" and parity, "*munasafa*" among others; and most importantly, the perception of threat induced by the change in sectarian demographics, which in turn might be induced by the arrival and settlement of the Syrian refugee population. This last one, which is central to the following analysis, is a cognitive model of content. As presented in the methodology, Lebanese perspectives and perceptions about what is a refugee, or how Syrian refugees constitute a threat to their future is strongly affected by their past experiences as a group. And this might be reflected on the discourse and actions of the state through the influential decision-makers.

6.3. A Heavy Contextual Frame

Before starting the analysis per se, it is important to draw a brief picture about the general Lebanese historical and political contexts in which the Syrian refugee crisis is taking place. This step allows us in inducing important implications in relation with the general attitudes of Lebanese citizens and elites regarding Syrian refugees, based on both recent developments and the weight of history. In other words, this section will lead to identify the key elements of the potential fear that Syrian refugees represent in the Lebanese conscience, by giving a better understanding about how this fear is transferred from the population to the political elites.

6.3.1. The Palestinian Precedent

"We have no desire to throw these people into the sea, or to annihilate them, all we ask of them is to start to look for another land to settle on, outside the Lebanese territory"

Bachir Gemayel (as cited in Haddad, 2004, p. 475)

We have seen all across Chapter 4 that prior to the Syrian refugee crisis, Lebanon had to face the Palestinian refugee influx of 1948. But Palestinians were more than simple refugees. They had a militia and were organized around a central armed formation which took part actively in the

domestic civil conflict. By extrapolating the Palestinian experience, we can maybe better understand why some of the Lebanese society's segments might have resentment over the Syrian presence. Indeed, prior to the Syrian refugee crisis, the fate of Lebanon's Palestinians was one of the "most persistent and explosive issues that threatens the sociopolitical fabric of the Lebanese system with dissolution" (Haddad, 2004, p. 470). Palestinians in this respect were accused of working for the transformation of Lebanon to a "nation of substitution" (Reinkowski, 1997). During the civil war, they were asked to submit a memorandum in which they reiterated their commitment to "respect Lebanese sovereignty and reject any substitute homeland for the Palestinians" in Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 190). Indeed, Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) used the Lebanese conflict to impose itself on the international scene as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The equation was straightforward: acquire an independent Palestinian state "in return for the dismantling of the temporary mini-state on Lebanese territory" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 213). Also, we cannot but mention the 1969 Cairo Agreement, compelled on the Lebanese state domestically and internationally, which legally enabled the PLO to make a free usage of its weapons on Lebanese territory (Haddad, 2003). The end result was the constitution of a "*Fatah Land*" by the PLO during the civil war in South Lebanon, which came against the will of the official Lebanese state (el Khazen, 2003). This was described by the Christian right-wing as "a state within a state" and "forced" them to defend themselves (Haddad, 2004, p. 474). This equation formed one of the main axes of militantism during the war. In addition, we have to mention the sectarian exactions that Palestinian militias undertook at that time, like the Damour massacre against its Christian population[111].

Therefore, it seems legitimate to assume that – at least some of – the Lebanese population might have a resentment against the massive influx of a refugee population, based on their past experiences regarding the Palestinian refugee case. The empirical evidences corroborate this statement. In fact, during the last decades, political debates – in the parliament and newspapers – were echoing the perception of the impossibility to build a future if Palestinians were to remain on the Lebanese soil (Haddad, 2004). Some Lebanese called for their ejection in bulk, others argued for the relocation of the majority of them in other Arab states, while others more moderate would grant them rights through a special form of residency; but all agreed on rejecting "*tawtin*",

[111] See for instance the Jerusalem Post (On This Day: 1,500 Palestinians slain in Karantina massacre 46 years ago, 2022).

naturalization (Haddad, 2004). As presented by Haddad (2004), the rejection of "*tawtin*" by the political elite had three discursive forms: (1) a constant reconfirmation of the right to return (even among Sunnis who from a sectarian perspective would have the most to gain from naturalization), (2) a rhetoric that stressed on the unbearable economic burden that they constitute, (3) an objection based on historical and political arguments drawn from the past experiences of Lebanon with the Palestinian issue[112]. Finally, Serhan (2018) argues that the post-Taef Lebanese *consociational* system built its cohesion on the systematic exclusion of the Palestinian *other* for the sake of preserving Lebanese distinctiveness. Consequently, we can consider here once again that the rigid *structure* of the Lebanese political system is key to understand the institutionalized exclusion of Palestinians at the state level. Was this exclusion transposed later on Syrians?

The anti-Palestinian resentment seems to be deeply grounded in the Lebanese collective memory. Consequently, resentment against Syrian refugees would not be surprising. The resentment takes even more relevance if we realize the many similarities that the Palestinian and Syrian refugee crises have in common. In this regard, both are massive in numbers and proportions, both are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims, both are socioeconomically vulnerable in majority, and both are Arab populations from Lebanon's neighboring countries (cf. Chapter 4).

6.3.2. Syria-Lebanon Relations

When it comes to the history of the relationship between Lebanon and Syria, the previous chapters provided us already with some key indicators. In fact, the history, economy and society of the two countries are highly interconnected (cf. Salibi, 1988; Traboulsi, 2007; Abi Khalil, 2021). This history can be divided into three major thematic phases. The first is characterized by economic and financial union under the French Mandate which both countries shared. The second refers to the soft divorce undertaken during the post-independence period. While the third and most important one stretches from the Lebanese civil war of 1975 until the Syrian conflict of 2010. Concerning the first phase, the French Mandate era is marked by a quasi-total economic integration and union between the two countries. In this respect, as noted by Traboulsi (2007), the two countries had one currency, a unified public infrastructure – like the electricity and water

[112] Haddad's (2004) detailed study reflects perfectly on all aspects of the Lebanese societal and elites' resentment against Palestinians. He thoroughly traces back all the possible evidences of this resentment that can be found in the media literature. His survey-based findings show that the Lebanese population in general tend to stick to the right to return, but some communities are more moderate than others in their perceptions vis-à-vis Palestinian refugees.

companies –, and enjoyed a regime of no-customs and free circulation of goods and persons (Traboulsi, 2007). The second phase is in turn marked by a soft divorce concerning most of these points. Finally, the third phase is where politics enter massively on the scene. Indeed, soon after the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, and framed under a "peace-keeping" mission mandated by the Arab League, the Syrian troops invaded Lebanon and became a major actor of the Lebanese conflict (cf. Traboulsi, 2007). Its long-term consequence was the direct involvement and intervention of Syria in Lebanese politics (Balanche, 2005). The next paragraph gives an account for the most relevant elements of this phase for our topic.

In the frame of an internationally-approved Syrian-Saudi regional joint patronage, the civil war came to an end following the Taef Agreements – inlaying the Syrian-Lebanese "privileged relations" (Reinkowski, 1997) – which enabled the Syrian occupation's direct control over Lebanese politics (cf. Hanf, 1993; Abi Khalil, 2021). As presented in Chapter 3, the two countries signed a "Treaty of Brotherhood" (Hanf, 1993), and Syria promoted the notion of "two states, one people" (Chalcraft, 2006; Balanche, 2005). This came to an end in 2005 when the assassination of Hariri triggered mass protests and the withdrawal of Syrian troops (Maalouf Monneau, 2015; Fakhoury Muehlbacher, 2008). But the thirty years of Syrian occupation made the Lebanese still being deeply divided between partisans and adversaries of the Syrian Assad regime (Naufal, 2012). In fact, the vertical fault that splits Lebanese parties into two major coalitions are partly based on their stances about the Syrian regime. The Hezbollah-led 8th of March coalition is pro-Syrian, while the Hariri (and other Christian and Druze forces)-led 14th of March coalition is profoundly anti-Syrian. In parallel, on the societal level, we have seen also along Chapters 3 and 4 how the Syrian migrant workforce in pre-Syrian war Lebanon was quite substantial. In the 2000s, around half a million of Syrian seasonal low-skilled manpower were already working in Lebanon (Bou Khater, 2017). Their presence, coupled to the political stances of Lebanese around the Syrian regime, have great implications on this analysis. These are presented in the following sub-sections.

6.3.3. Political Deadlock, Self-Distancing, War in Syria, and Protests

Since the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, the Lebanese political scene entered a series of vertical confrontation along the lines of the pro-Syrian Hezbollah led 8th of March coalition and the pro-Western 14th of March coalition. While the Doha Agreement appeased it by avoiding armed clashes, the confrontation continued through recurrent political deadlock in terms of government

formation and Presidential election (Verdeil, 2019; Batruni & Hallinan, 2018). For example, the period of 2005 to 2020 is marked by two long Presidential vacancies (cf. Verdeil, 2019). In the meantime, government formation took 5 months in 2009 and 10 months in 2014 to be achieved (Batruni & Hallinan, 2018). The start of the Syrian conflict stirred up the cleavages and soon, each coalition took opposing sides with the fighting belligerents. To mitigate any risk of spillover, the President Michel Sleiman initiated national dialogue through which he successfully snatched the commitment from all parties to "self-distancing" themselves from the Syrian conflict[113]. But this was soon to be breached by Hezbollah who got deeply involved militarily in the Syrian conflict starting from 2013 along the Syrian regime of Assad[114].

In parallel, the war in Syria resulted in some major impacts on neighboring Lebanon. One of these is the suspension of democratic procedures, which was caused by the repetitive postponement of parliamentary elections. The declared reason was the inappropriate security environment which was defined by recurrent terrorist attacks[115] perpetrated by rising Islamist radical groups such as Al-Nusra and later Daesh, as well as their affiliates. This point is crucial for our analysis since (1) many Lebanese started to associate terrorism to Syrian refugees, and (2) Hezbollah's declared motives of its military involvement in Syria was based on the protection of Lebanon from Sunni Takfirist terrorism, and to secure the back of the "Resistance" (Hage Ali, 2019).

Regarding Hezbollah, the party managed to impose himself gradually as the major and most influential political player on the Lebanese scene during the last 15 years (Blanford, 2018; Robinson, 2022). His alliance with the biggest Christian party, namely the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun, granted him the requested institutional cover. His internal opponents have realized and accepted that they have little leverage against a party that – through its massive arsenal of weapons – protects its interests through indirect coercion (Blanford, 2018).

Finally, the continuous deadlock, endemic corruption, economic – and soon financial – crisis, and the state's failure in addressing major societal demands resulted in a series of social protests and mobilizations. Protests erupted in 2015 with the "You Stink" movement that was fueled by the

[113] For this part, see the author's MA Thesis (The Impact of the Syrian Civil War on Lebanon, 2014) that tackles the impact of the Syrian civil war on Lebanon, and in which he details its repercussions on the Lebanese political scene.
[114] Ibid.
[115] See for instance Human Rights Watch (Lebanon: Deadly Attack Kills Dozens, 2015), BBC (Beirut attacks: Suicide bombers kill dozens in Shia suburb, 2015) and for a detailed chronology of events, see the Security Council Report (Chronology of Events: Lebanon, 2020) and Reuters (Timeline of blasts in Lebanon, 2020).

unresolved garbage management crisis (Apprioual, 2016). Later, the generalized frustrations led in October 2019 to the explosion of the street in a succession of massive protests labelled as "*Thawra*", revolution in Arabic (Dahrouge, Nammour, Lotf, & al, 2020).

6.3.4. The Resentment and Fear of the Lebanese Society

Based on these various sociopolitical contexts, the Lebanese population's resentment against the Syrian refugee influx might not be a surprise. As said above, the past Palestinian experience is also a key responsible for this. In addition, the traditional relationship that Syria had with Lebanon, as well as the past experience of the Syrian migrant workers, add a layer to this resentment. In this respect, we have to reiterate that Lebanese, and especially Christians, viewed the flood of Syrian workers of the 1990s as a direct threat to its sectarian balance, culture and identity (Chalcraft, 2006). The Syrian regime's tactics are also to be blamed since during the occupation of Lebanon, it relied on civilian informers, which resulted in associating Syrians to their regime (cf. Chalcraft, 2016; Maalouf Monneau, 2015; Bou Khater, 2017). As a result, the Lebanese social identity was distancing itself from the Syrian. All these cumulative facts reinforced the resentment of Lebanese. But what are the evidences for such sentiments? And what are they based on? The literature provides us with many evidences about that. Its main outcome leans on the resentment and fear of Lebanese concerning Syrian refugees as related to (1) economy, (2) security – through associating Syrians to terrorists – and (3) existential threat. For example, a survey study on Lebanese perception showed that most of Lebanese expressed empathy towards the refugee situation, but also that the vast majority of respondents perceived them as a security (crime) and economic (poverty) threat. Most importantly, 51% of them declared their fear of potential sectarian imbalance, against only 38% who declared the contrary (Lebanese Center for Studies and Research, 2015). Of course, and as expected, the results vary according to the socioreligious backgrounds of respondents[116]. Soon, this resentment and fear was translated in some places into anger and violence. As an illustration, Human Rights Watch (2014) documented up to 11 violent attacks – including the use of knives and guns – within two months in 2014 perpetrated by

[116] For example, the perception of Syrian refugees as a potential threat to the sectarian balance was higher in Christian areas (Lebanese Center for Studies and Research, 2015).

Lebanese citizens against Syrians. In addition, some places saw public lynchings and informal camps' burnings by local residents for various reasons[117].

6.3.5. Conclusion

"Lebanon cannot absorb a single additional Sunni if I can put it in a blunt way. Already we have 300,000 Sunni Palestinian refugees. We have to maintain an equilibrium between the different sectarian groups, and absorbing the Sunni Syrians would call for a reconsideration of the Lebanese formula and at the cost of the form of the state as it is now."

Sami Nader, 2019 (as cited in Vohra, 2019)

The above-cited quote of Sami Nader summarizes some of general perception of fear that the Syrian refugee crisis generates among Lebanese in regards of the potential threat that their presence might have on the sectarian status quo and the state's identity itself. Having this said, and based on all the various structural, contextual, historical and sociopolitical implications that were presented across the various chapters of this thesis, the societal resentment and fear must have been translated into the stances of the Lebanese political elite. In other words, the presentation of the context makes it easy to link the societal perceptions with the political elite's positions about this topic. In this respect, the resentment and fear of Lebanese have been putting some kind of pressure on the political parties (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). The next section attempts at mapping the most important political parties in relation to their positions of the Syrian refugee crisis.

6.4. Cognitive Mapping of the Main Political Parties

Based on the evidences listed in the previous section, we can better interpretate the reflection of these genuine fears on members of the political elite who might be considered as key *actors* of state identity change. While we acknowledge that many other players – such as religious elites, clergymen, media, and the civil society among others – might be eligible for the status of actors of identity, the constraints of this thesis limit the scope of analysis to the examination and mapping of the most influential political parties. At the end, we have seen that state identity is expressed through the influential decision-makers within the state (Hopf, 1998). Furthermore, the Syrian refugee crisis came as an intersection with the polarized positions of Lebanese political parties

[117] See for example (Sewell, 2021).

towards the Syrian civil war, causing an issue for the state in "balancing divergent interests" (Fakhoury, 2021, p. 167).

The choice for these specific players is based on the parliamentary elections' results of 2009 and 2018. They lead us to identify the most popular – therefore most representative – factions within each of the four major sects, namely the Christians, Druze, Sunni and Shia, in order to better reflect on the Lebanese *consociational* political system and its sectarian power-sharing model.

6.4.1. The Club of Six

Only two parliamentary elections took place within the timeframe of the current analysis. One in 2009, and another, after being postponed several times, nine years later in 2018. The results (Atallah & Zoughaib, 2019) show us that the strongest political parties within their respective communities are: the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) of Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Forces (LF) of Samir Geagea for the Christians; the Hezbollah and Amal tandem for the Shia; the Future Movement (FM) of Hariri for the Sunnis; and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) of Jumblatt for the Druzes. Despite some slight changes in their seats' numbers, these forces remain the strongest among their respective communities. They can be considered as the main influential actors within the structure of the Lebanese political system[118]. Therefore, they are chosen for the analysis.

Main Parties	Religious Affiliation	2009	2018
Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)	Christian	11	18
Lebanese Forces (LF)	Christian	8	13
Hezbollah	Shiite	13	12
Amal	Shiite	13	11
Future Movement	Sunni	28	13
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)	Druze	4	6

Figure 10. Parliamentary Seats of the Main Political Parties[119]

[118] This assessment is also based on what was presented in the historical background of Chapter 3 under the Lebanese identity building, as well as in the contextual framework (section 3) of the current Chapter (for example with the importance of Hezbollah as the most influential actor on the Lebanese scene).

[119] The numbers in this table reflect on the number of seats won by members of these parties, not their independent affiliates or political allies. The parliamentary blocs of these parties can be more numerous if added to their allies. For more on this, see Atallah & Zgheib (A Snapshot of Parliamentary Election Results, 2019). Also, not all seats are strictly filled by their own religious communities since some parties, like the Future Movement for instance, have party members from other sects. Finally, the relatively small number of the PSP might be understood within the quota

6.4.2. Cognitive Mapping of the Six

After this initial identification, we can draw the map of the major six political parties' respective stances vis-à-vis the Syrian refugee crisis. Nevertheless, the literature still lacks of any comprehensive study that analyzes holistically and through times the political parties' positions about Syrian refugees[120]. Thus, the following map is based on compiled journalistic reports and articles which give us a – yet lacking – overview of the different positions. While totally acknowledging this limitation, the constraints of this thesis make us to restrict the analysis and opt for a simplified version. It encourages future research initiatives for deeper findings in this respect. This said, the following paragraph gives an account of the different parties' positions through a non-exhaustive short summary.

At first, it is notable that the cleavages among political parties turn around the appropriate wording to use when talking about Syrian refugees. Some stress on calling them "*Laji'un*", refugees, while most of them are keen on calling them "*Nazihun*", displaced (Choufi, 2016). Interestingly, when monitoring the daily speeches of the party representatives in the media, some allow themselves of using the two words interchangeably. Through the years, the political parties maintained more or less the essence of their positions with slight changes towards more tolerance or radicalization depending on the context. A key element in determining the main parties' positions is to be found in their political affiliations (Geha, 2019) between those who are allied to the Syrian regime – like Hezbollah or the FPM – and those against it – like the FM the LF or the PSP –. For example, since the de-escalation of the Syrian conflict, pro-Syrian regime parties such as Hezbollah, Amal and FPM considered that the conflict has ended, and therefore, Syrians could safely return home, at least to safe zones (Geha, 2019). They even asked the government for the normalization of the relations with Syria in order to facilitate their return (Fakhoury, 2021). On the contrary, the FM adopted the positions of the international community which considers Syria as still unsafe for envisaging return (Geha, 2019). Another element of understanding the political parties' stances about the Syrian refugees is hidden in their respective religious affiliations. As early as 2013, the FPM was seen as playing on the fears of Christians who had not overcome yet the Palestinian precedent (Majed, 2013). Surprisingly, even the Hezbollah mentions the Palestinian precedent

number that the Druze community has in the parliament. This quota is 8. Therefore, in 2018 for example, the PSP won 6 out of the 8 Druze seats, making it the strongest in its community. Same is applicable to other parties in the table.

[120] Fakhoury (2021) delivered one, but it mainly focused on the stances of the parties about the question of return.

(Choufi, 2016). This might be a way to please their Christian allies. Other explanations are tackled later. But in any case, the Hezbollah seems to be split between his own humanitarian considerations concerning welcoming and helping the Syrians on one hand, and his political alliance with the Syrian regime on the other (Majed, 2013). The Christian LF rejoins Hezbollah on the humanitarian consideration. Some of its representatives goes even further and advocate for the right of Syrian refugees for education as well as for their protection "against racism" (Choufi, 2016). This brief analysis pushes us to draw a non-exhaustive map of the main six parties' stances on the Syrian refugee issue (see table below[121]).

COGNITIVE MAP		Stances on Syrian Refugees			
Relationship with the Syrian Regime	**Political Parties**	**Humanitarian issues**	**Camp Policy**	**Return**	**Negotiation with Syrian Regime**
Pro-Syrian Regime	FPM	Against accepting more refugees and against recognition of refugee status	Against any form of camp or infrastructure	With safe return, against optional return, cooperation with international community	Ambiguity
	Hezbollah	Somehow Humanitarian	Against any camp	With return to safe zones in Syria	Necessary cooperation
	Amal	N/A	Against any camp	With return to safe zones in Syria	Necessary cooperation
Anti-Syrian Regime	PSP	Abides to Human rights	With regulated camps in border regions	Concerns about safe return	Against
	FM	Need for national strategy for a human rights compliant response	With instauration of camps	With return to UN determined safe zones outside of Syrian regime's control	Against
	LF	Abides by Human rights and refutes racism	With centralized camps for better control and access to services	Against return in current conditions especially for regime opponents	Against

Figure 11. Cognitive Map of Stances of Main Political Parties regarding the Syrian Refugee Crisis

One of the most striking observations from this mapping resides undoubtably in the signs shown by each party for the interpretation of their popular basis's fears. This phenomenon is not novel.

[121] Sources based on Choufi (2016), Albawaba (2019), Geha (2019), Houssari (2019), and Fakhoury (2021). Translation from Arabic was made by the author. Fakhoury (2021) does a similar mapping which tackles only the question of return.

In fact, Lebanon has a long tradition regarding the incapacity of the *consociational* system in agreeing on common threats (Abi Khalil, 2021). Even the securitizing process is characterized by *consensus* through the "*'amn bi al-taradi*" concept (security by consensus), which appears frequently in the political actors' discourses (Bahout, 2012). The Christian parties seem to be more vehement against any tempered bargaining step towards Syrian refugees. The FPM being more radical since, in opposition to the LF, the party is an ally to Hezbollah and the Syrian regime. The FPM positions can be interpreted then as addressing the higher fear of demographic imbalance that is present among Christians. On the opposite side, the Sunni FM is more conciliant since relatively less concerned by the fear of sectarian imbalance. These conclusions can be linked to the empirical observations of Akkar field study. We saw there that Syrians tend to blend in more in Sunni communities – with intermarriages for example – than in Christian villages where the presence of Syrians was somehow restricted. Since these six political parties are the most influential players within the political system, their stances on refugees – as key influential *actors* of state identity – take us to better understand the Lebanese state's identity through its discourses and actions.

6.5. The Lebanese State Discourse

After the brief presentation of the context, and after the attempt to link societal perception to the positions of the most influential political parties within the Lebanese consensual system, time has come to analyze the discourse of the state regarding the Syrian refugee influx. This step would allow us to understand – through the possible discursive changes – the potential alteration in the Lebanese state's identity and its connection to the Syrian crisis. Therefore, we must compare the discourse delivered before the beginning of the crisis with the one delivered after[122]. In the internal mechanisms of Lebanese *consociationalism*, competing positions and narratives of influential actors are integrated within the official state in a *consensual* way. This narrows down the choice to two main discursive sets. The two analyzed corpuses are the ministerial statements of the various governments and the yearly Presidential speeches at the UN General Assembly. The first sub-section explains *why* and *how* these corpuses are relevant for this task. Afterwise, the remaining sub-sections focus on each one of them separately by applying discourse analysis methods coupled with some content analysis as well.

[122] For the details of the adopted methodology, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

6.5.1. The Structural Mechanisms of Cabinet Formation and Ministerial Statements

Lebanon's peculiar political system – categorized as *sectarian consociationalism* – has some specific political mechanisms which are important to present at this point. The paragraphs below present the significance of the choice of both corpuses based on the *consociational* mechanisms that make them relevant.

Government Formation and Ministerial Statements

Taef, transmitted the executive prerogatives from the President to the Council of the Ministers[123]. This shifted decision-making to a collegial organ in which all religious communities are represented through consensus and veto (Abi Khalil, 2021). In practice, all of the major sectarian political forces of both the parliamentarian majority and minority must be represented in governments of national unity (cf. Abi Khalil, 2021). This is done on the basis of quotas: if a cabinet is composed of 30 ministers, 15 should be Christians and 15 Muslims[124]. Moreover, the 15 Christian portfolios should be distributed among Christian parties according to their respective weights in the parliament. Even if a party is in numeric minority in the parliament, but represents the majority in its respective community, the party should be given the majority of portfolios allocated to his sect (Toubia, Djulancic, & Gaier, 2019)[125]. Nevertheless, the coalition that is in majority in the parliament would be granted a majority of portfolios in the cabinet. The minority coalition – the political "opposition" – would still be represented in the cabinet of national unity. Also, the opposition is granted with a blocking third – 10+1 portfolios in the case of a 30 ministers' cabinet – which has a veto power over governmental decisions (Haddad S. , 2009; Young, 2022). Furthermore, the Shia Hezbollah-Amal tandem have managed to impose a new jurisprudence in 2006-2008 which consists of considering a government resigned de facto in the case of resignation of all ministers of a specific community (Toubia, Djulancic, & Gaier, 2019). This tool was used by the Tandem – since all the 27 Shia parliamentary seats and thus cabinet portfolios are owned by them – as a "joker card" of dissuasion against any velleity of imposing decisions that they

[123] See in this respect the Constitution of Lebanon (Lebanon Const.)

[124] For practical examples, see Batruni & Hallinan (Government (non-) formation in contemporary Lebanon: sectarianism, power-sharing, and economic immobilism, 2018).

[125] Let us take the example of the Armenians. Armenians have a quota of 6 seats in the parliament. If one of the Armenian political parties, let us say the Tachnag, has 4 out the 6 parliamentary seats, then the majority of the Armenian ministerial portfolios in a given cabinet should be allocated to the Tachnag. In a cabinet of 30 ministers, Armenians have 2 portfolios. In this case, the Tachnag would be granted with one or two portfolios depending on the various negotiations, even though in fact, his numeric weight in the parliament (4 out of 128 seats) is negligible.

would disapprove (Toubia, Djulancic, & Gaier, 2019). Of course, this leads to the endemic paralysis of the executive (Abi Khalil, 2021; Young, 2022).

Consequently, the vote of confidence is just a façade since everything is determined in the coulisses of cabinets' formation. Concerning the ministerial statements, they usually take into consideration the parties' diverging stances. Moreover, the Doha Agreement resulted in the reflection of the country's main debates on these declarations (Noun, 2008). The best example is given by Hezbollah, who managed to impose as a "chantage" its sacred equation of "Army, People, Resistance" as a way to legalize the legitimacy of its weapons – as serving the resistance – on all ministerial statements of the last period[126] (cf. Aziz, 2014). This is a striking example of how – the most – influential actors impose their narratives on the state's official discourse.

Presidential Elections and the Presidential Speeches

In Lebanon, Presidents are elected by the parliament upon consensus[127]. Therefore, their status reflects in theory on all the influential political parties who are represented in the parliament. While his prerogatives were limited following the Taef Agreement, the President remains the symbol of the Republic. As stipulated in Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution, the President is the Head of the State and the symbol of national unity (Lebanon Const. Art. 49). Throughout this thesis, we have seen that he was historically a key actor of identity. As the national symbol, he represents Lebanon locally and internationally. Therefore, the analysis of his speeches seems relevant. The choice for the UN General Assembly's speeches is hence justified by two major arguments: (1) it allows comparison in time because of its regularity, and (2), it gives us an international dimension for the analysis. In other words, if the ministerial statements reflect on the domestic discourse of the state, the Presidential speeches reflect on its international level. Finally, it reflects on the consensual sectarian "*munasafa*" since the Prime Minister is always Muslim Sunni, while the President is Christian Maronite.

[126] For more concrete cases, see the examples of Choucair ("Hezbollah wa al-dawla fi lubnan: al-ru'ya wal mismar", 2015) or Nassif ("al-bayan al-wizari yastawhi moujaddadan al-tanaqod li-taw2amat silah hezbollah bi al-qarar 1701", 2009)

[127] According to the Article 45 of Constitution, Presidents are elected by the parliament upon a result of the 2/3 in the first turn, and absolute majority of half+1 (Braidy, 2014). But in practice, major parties agree upon consensus on a unique candidate. Recent elections have shown the limits of such a practice. If there is no agreement, the presidential seat remains empty for months and years, like it happened 3 consecutive times in during the 2005-2020 period (cf. Abi Khalil, 2021; Traboulsi, 2007; Dahrouge, 2014; Braidy, 2014).

6.5.2. Ministerial Statements and Refugees

The examined corpus is composed of 8 ministerial statements for the cabinets that were formed between 2005 and 2020. Two were formed by Fouad Siniora (July 2005 and July 2008)[128] right after the first free elections following the Syrian troops' withdrawal, one by Najib Mikati (2011), three by Saad Hariri (November 2009, December 2016, and January 2019), one by Tammam Salam (appointed in April 2013, formed in February 2014), and the last one by Hassan Diab (January, 2020) in the wake of the so-called "*Thawra*".

Three among these cabinets were formed before the beginning of Syrian crisis. The remaining four are from after. It is Najib Mikati's cabinet (2011) that was to face first the Syrian unrests, but the refugees were at that time still relatively low in numbers. Their numbers jumped drastically in 2014 to above 700,000 UNHCR registered refugees, and peaked at 1,200,000 in 2015-2016 (cf. Chapter 4). Therefore, the evidences of the impact on the ministerial statements should be detected in Salam's (2014) and Hariri's (2016) speeches. Indeed, by looking at them, the first mention of Syrian refugees appears in Salam's statement.

General Remarks and Trends

A first look at the ministerial statements makes us realize some interesting trends. First, the length of the statements are more or less heterogenous. The longest one is Siniora's (2008) with a transcript of around 9,400 words, while the shortest is Salam's (2014) with around 1,000. Their average is of 4,500 words. They have very similar topics to cover as well. This is quite understandable since the statement's primary aim is to present the appointed government's program to the parliament for the sake of getting the vote of confidence. Almost all of them start with an introductory part which defines the general ideological and identity stances and principles to which the government commits to. Usually, most of them start the introductory part by giving some references and making allusions to the context in which they are. For instance, Siniora's (2005) statement salutes the regained freedom and the revival of democracy after the Syrian withdrawal. Salam (2014) declares his first priority as being the security and stability of the county since his government was born amidst a trend of terrorist attacks. Hariri (2019) and Diab (2020) try to address the worsening economic and financial situations which as we know were at the verge

[128] All the ministerial statements' transcripts were accessed through the Presidency of The Council of the Ministers (PCM) in Beirut, Lebanon.

of collapsing. All of them reiterate at some point in the text to abide by the Taef Agreement's values of power-sharing and coexistence, and promise to apply its clauses. Some of the most recurrent concepts in this respect are: *consensus, dialogue, independence, sovereignty, cohesion, unity, state unicity*. Also, as mentioned earlier, all give legitimacy to Hezbollah's weaponry. The older ones stick to the sentence of "*haq lubnan shaaban wa jayshan wa muqawama fi istirjaa* [the Chebaa farms] (…)", the famous "People, Army, Resistance" golden equation; while the newer ones include a reference to the right of Lebanese citizens in resisting against the Israeli occupation until the freedom of the remaining few hamlets (Chebaa farms and Kfarchouba hills). Diab (2020) adds "female and male" to "Lebanese citizens" in a way maybe to address and sympathize with the "*Thawra*" and its important feminist component. Furthermore, all of them – except for Salam's short version – detail in a long and rigid-bureaucratic way their programs through all possible domains (economy, energy, finance, healthcare, youth, environment, foreign policy, social services and information technology among others). Again, this trend is broken by Diab (2020) who's text seems to be more technical and structured in an almost-academic way, with a sort of an executive summary at the beginning. This is no surprise since he comes from an academic background which contrasts with the others. Finally, the overwhelming majority of speeches mention their will of working for revealing the truth around Rafik Hariri's assassination – through supporting the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for some – followed immediately by expressing their effort towards bringing back Imam Moussa Sadr who "disappeared" in Libya in the 1970s. This reflects on a win-win game between Hariri's Future Movement and Berri's Amal party. It is again showing the level of consensus that must be acquired through the text around minor details.

Addressing the Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian issue is also one of the main recurrent topics that is addressed by all statements except Salam's (2014). Usually, there is an entire paragraph allocated to this question. Its place in the text varies but mainly comes in the beginning of the speech, right after the part that claim the identity and ideology-related belonging. In some, like Diab's (2020), it comes at the very end. In quantitative terms, the proportion of the Palestinian-related text varies: from 1% in Siniora's (2005) statement, it goes up to 3% (Siniora, 2008), to 3.5% in Hariri (2009), 3% for Mikati (2011), none in Salam's (2014), 5% for Hariri (2016), then drops again to 1% in Diab's (2020) more technical statement that endorses a role of crisis response.

When it comes to the content, the main topics addressing the Palestinian issue are about the general declaration of support for the Palestinian cause, their right for return to their homeland, their right for self-determination, and most importantly, the clear opposition to any form of "*tawtin*", implantation or settlement. Rejecting "*tawtin*" is used in every single declaration except Salam's (2014) which did not mention Palestinians at all. Mikati's (2011) statement goes further by advocating to the safe return of Palestinians to their homeland "with Jerusalem as its capital". An interesting observation resides in the similarities between the sentences referring to Palestinians in a way that makes us to almost suspect that they are simply "copy-pasted" from one statement to another. One interpretation for it is that this question, among others, are treated by the government as binding bureaucratic procedures that need to be incorporated in the text. Anyhow, their presence reflects on the state's self-discourse, therefore, their presence cannot but considered as embedded in the Lebanese state's identity itself.

Many of the statements express their commitment in guaranteeing Palestinians with adequate social and human treatments during their "temporary" presence in Lebanon, showing through that a quasi-compassionate stance towards Palestinians. They also promise to follow-up with donors and UNRWA to secure their basic needs. In contrast, usually in a separate paragraph, Prime Ministers declare their will to solve the Palestinian-related security issues that are marked by the presence of Palestinian armed factions. Some statements stress on applying the state's monopoly of violence by showing interest in regulating their weapons. These are particularly true in the period following the Nahr El Bared fights that opposed extremists to the Lebanese army[129]. Finally, and contrary to Syrians, the statements have no problem in defining the Palestinians as "*laji'in*", refugees. Although, on many occasions, they combine *Palestinian(s)* as an adjective to the words "brothers" (Siniora, 2008; Hariri, 2009), "cause" (Siniora, 2008; Hariri, 2009; Mikati, 2011), "people" (Siniora, 2005; 2008; Hariri, 2009; Mikati, 2011), "weapons" (Siniora, 2008; Hariri, 2009; Mikati, 2011), "security" (Hariri, 2009; Mikati, 2011), or "dialogue" – like the copy-pasted sentence about strengthening the "Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue to avoid tensions in camps" (Hariri, 2016; 2019; Diab, 2020) –. The Palestinian-related topics constitute a solid baseline for the analysis. In this sense, they are markers of continuity and structural rigidity concerning the consensual constraints imposed on the actors by the system and its rules. In other words, the semi-

[129] For more details see International Crisis Group (Lebanon's Palestinian Dilemma: The Struggle Over Nahr al-Bared, 2012).

bureaucratic way in which they are formulated and maintained throughout all the ministerial statements proves that the conveyed message's content was vigorously negotiated by the main influential actors and, through its discourse, became part of the state's revendicated identity.

Addressing the Syrian Refugees

We have mentioned before that Palestinians are addressed in each and every one the 8 ministerial statements, except Salam's (2014) declaration. The main palpable interpretation for that – in the wake of the contextual turning point marked by the intensification of the Syrian conflict and the consequent exponential rise of the Syrian influx towards Lebanon – cannot be anything else than the focus given to the Syrian crisis for the first time in the ministerial declarations. The alternative explanation could reside in the shortness of the text, which does not exceed the 1000 words. But this is not valid at all since Syrian-related paragraphs make up to 13% of these 1000 words. Knowing that the declaration's first and foremost function is to convince the parliament about the government's program, this evolution is very meaningful. It also opens the door for – what we argue – a consequential change in the state's official discourse and thus, its identity's content. This can only be the result of the influential actors' – the six main parties – negotiation and consensual agreement on this content, which emanate from their different stances around the Syrian refugee crisis. Yet, the content is aligned with the traditional identity and interests of the state. It comes in continuity with the long tradition based on the concepts of coexistence, consensus, and most importantly the opposition to any type of "*tawtin"* which would threaten the sectarian status quo. This argument is corroborated by the observations that emanate for the discourse analysis below.

From a quantitative point of view, and after Salam's (2014) statement which allocates them with 13% of the content, the Syrian refugee-related parts represent 8% of the Hariri (2016) speech, then goes down to 3.5% in the two remaining statements (Hariri, 2019; Diab, 2020). The place of these paragraphs in the text is also noteworthy to mention. In Salam's speech, it comes in the second half, while it comes at almost the very end in the remaining three declarations. But whenever Palestinians are addressed, Syrians come always before them in the order.

When it comes to the content, the first striking element resides in the wording used for describing Syrians. As expected, all statements refer to them systematically as "*nazihun*", "displaced", rather than "refugees". And they constitute "*a'aba*"', burdens (Hariri, 2016; 2019; Diab, 2020). *Syrian(s)* as an adjective is used for "displaced" (Salam, 2014; Hariri, 2019; Diab, 2020), "displacement"

(Hariri, 2016; 2019; Diab, 2020), and "crisis" (Salam, 2014; Hariri, 2016). In comparison with Palestinians, they are not only never called as *refugees*, but there is no positive connotation in describing them as "brothers" or engaging with them in a "dialogue". When addressing their return, there is no mention of a "right" to return as for the Palestinian case. Rather, "return" is only described as "safe" (Hariri, 2016; 2019; Diab, 2020), or defined as "the only possible solution" (Hariri, 2019; Diab, 2020) in the same statements where Palestinians are granted with a "right" for that.

These observations imply that the official state – through the ministerial discourses – refuse to recognize the refugee status for Syrians under any discursive form. As a result, they are denied from any "right" of return. In addition, Syrians are somehow objectified (*crisis*, *displacement*). The statements' stances refer to them with either a neutral (*displaced* rather than *brothers*), or a negative connotation (*burden*).

Concerning the evolution in time of these statements, despite not being placed in the beginning of the text, we can clearly notice some sort of an escalation in the threat-assessment. In Salam's (2014) speech, the government commits to "put in place clear mechanisms for dealing with Syrian displaced which outnumbered the capacity of Lebanon in handling their repercussions on the security, political, social, and economic situations"[130]. It also urges the Arab and international communities in taking their part of responsibility for empowering Lebanon regarding its "moral and human obligations" for facilitating their return (2014). The next paragraph talks about the international financial aid to Lebanon. So clearly, the government was stressing here on the security and economy-related impact before anything else.

The discourse tends to escalate in 2016. In the Hariri (2016) statement, the government reiterates its commitment of cooperating with the international community, and asks it to fulfill its promise for aid. On another hand, it underlines that the Lebanese state "is no longer able to bear alone this burden" that is affecting its society, economy and infrastructure (2016). Furthermore, the statement mentions that the "number of displaced exceeds the third of Lebanon's total population" (2016). Finally, regarding *return*, the statement goes beyond what was said in 2014. First, it adds "safe"

[130] All translations of quotes from Arabic to English in the ministerial declarations' corpus (Presidency Of the Council of Ministers, 2021) were made by the author.

to “return”, and second, it rejects “any form of integration or assimilation in host societies” and urges to prioritize this question when addressing the resolution of the crisis (Hariri, 2016).

Later, in Hariri’s 2019 statement, while some parts of the paragraph are copy-pasted from the former, the government urges that “Lebanon’s interest must be higher than any other consideration”, and this time “insists” that “the only solution” resides in “the safe return of displaced to their homeland”. The text escalates the previous rejection of “any form of integration or assimilation in host societies” by adding to it “*tawtin*”. The sentence becomes: rejection of “any form of integration, or assimilation, or *naturalization/settlement* in host societies” (Hariri, 2019).

Lastly, the ministerial statement of Diab (2020) seems to be a bureaucratic formality in the sense that the paragraphs addressing the Syrian crisis are (1) mostly copy-pasted from the two previous ones, and (2) are clearly written in a different stylistic manner than the rest of Diab’s technocratic program. In addition, the second paragraph goes more operational: it declares that the previously-created ministerial portfolio for the displaced will be accorded to the Minister of Social Affairs (MOSA).

The analysis of the ministerial declarations shows then a *crescendo*: in 2014, the text was still focusing mainly on the security and economy-related repercussions of the Syrian refugee crisis. By 2016, the stress is on the rejection of any form or tentative of assimilation and integration. Later in 2019, the statement declares clearly that the safe return is the only possible solution to the crisis, and underlines its rejection to “*tawtin*”, which reconfigures in a way the state’s threat-assessment. Finally, by 2020, the question seems to be sustainably embedded in the state’s identity by becoming a measure of bureaucratic *routine* as was the case previously with the Palestinian cause.

Finally, the contextual developments seem to make more sense after this examination. The ascending eminence of the problem as described by the ministerial statements correlates with the number of UNHCR registered Refugees (cf. Chapter 4). In addition, the authorities’ new restricting visa and residency regulations for Syrians (Ghanem, 2015), and their demands to freeze new registrations at the UNHCR, happened both in 2015 (Balanche & Verdeil, 2019). Or in the statements, the discourse shifts from confirming Lebanon’s “moral and human obligations” in 2014 to “no longer able to bear alone this burden” in 2016. This might be interpreted as a justification for the state’s restrictive policies.

6.5.3. Presidential Speeches and Refugees

The second corpus includes 15 speeches of the President of the Republic at the yearly United Nations (UN) General Assembly's Plenary Sessions of September, for the same period of 2005 to 2020[131]. It includes the speeches of Presidents Emile Lahoud (2005-2007), Michel Sleiman (2008-2011; 2012-2013), and Michel Aoun (2017-2020). But these were sometimes represented by Prime Ministers such as Mikati (2012), or Salam (2014; 2015; 2016) because of other commitments or Presidential void between 2014 and 2016. Knowing that the Syrian conflict and its refugee crisis started after 2011, the timelapse is then able to provide a comparative dimension between texts that are older than 2011, and those which came after.

Clearly, the first striking observation is the high similarities of the content of these speeches with the ministerial statements regarding the parts that tackle the topics of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Here also, there are many elements of the Lebanese identity which are constantly recurring from one year to another. Some of these are: the Palestinian right to return, the peculiarity of the Lebanese formula through coexistence and diversity, the opposition to Israel, the rejection of "*tawtin*", sometimes through evoking the Constitution's Preamble, or the Taef Agreements.

The Palestinians as a Reference

If we have to start by the baseline – namely the Palestinian refugees – it is important to note first that they figure in each and every speech as a constant, with the disruptive exception of Salam's 2014 allocution as it happened in his ministerial statement of that year. On a yearly basis, from President Emile Lahoud and onwards, the Lebanese official discourse stressed on their "right of return" (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2011; 2012; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020) to their lands confiscated by Israel. They also reject "the resettlement of the uprooted Palestinians in their host countries" (The United Nation Digital Library, 2021). After that, the discourse urges on "the international community to bolster its capabilities in order to alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian refugees in their places of *temporary* residence" (The United Nation Digital Library, 2021). It also constantly reaffirms its stances against the Israeli actions and aggressions as being the main root for instability in the region (cf. Lahoud, 2006). Furthermore, the speeches make recurrent allusions to "*tawtin*" and its dangers on the Lebanese peculiar identity, like for example

[131] All the speeches' transcripts were accessed through the United Nations Digital Library Portal (The United Nation Digital Library, 2021).

in: “the resettlement of the Palestinians (…) would dangerously alter the delicate balance of Lebanon’s existence as a nation based on diversity and the coexistence of a large number of its sects, which have lived side by side in harmony and enjoyed mutual respect” (Lahoud, 2007). Some also mention the violation of “national interests” if the “final solution” for Palestinians does not take the host states into consideration (Sleiman, 2009). In parallel, there is a stress on the rejection of Palestinian resettlement by clearly stating that “such a position will not be reversed (…) nor will it be subject to compromise or negotiation” for example (Sleiman, 2009). As said earlier, the similarities between ministerial statements and Presidential speeches are obvious. One example here is describing Palestinians as “brothers” and asking for their right in “self-determination” like for example in Sleiman’s speech (2011).

Syrians as a Novel Threat

Syrians are first mentioned in Mikati’s 2012 statement. Immediately, they surpass the Palestinians on the podium of priorities. Indeed, Syrians’ place in the text comes always before the Palestinians. The following few paragraphs trace back in details the yearly evolution of the discourse about the Syrian refugees.

In the discourse of 2012, the argumentation goes towards asking for support and sharing the task of assistance. In parallel, it urges for the resolution of the Syrian conflict (Mikati, 2012). Here again, the differentiation between the two refugee populations is very disturbing. While Mikati (2012) asks for the above-mentioned support, he reaffirms “the right of the fraternal Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital”. In addition, he stresses on “their right for self-determination on their land”. Once more, the Syrians are objectified compared to the Palestinians who are considered as “brothers”.

In 2013, Michel Sleiman reiterates on the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon’s “security and economy”. Then, he refers to the crisis as an “existential challenge” that makes Syrian refugees “far beyond Lebanon’s capacity to assimilate”. Building on that, he asks for “human and financial resources” in order to mitigate the crisis (Sleiman, 2013).

The following year, Tammam Salam (2014) addresses almost the same speech as he did earlier that year in the Lebanese parliament. He also provides the estimation of 1.5 million Syrian displaced to Lebanon. He gives a theoretical analogy by comparing the crisis to “100 million

people flooding into the USA" sporadically (Salam, 2014). Nevertheless, he does not forget to mention the economic impact for which he provides an estimation based on a World Bank statement that evaluates its cost at 7.5 billion of USD. Interestingly, as he did it in the ministerial statement, he omits to mention Palestinians in his speech, which seems to be a precedent in the trends. When he comes back the next year, Salam (2015) describes the Syrian displacement as a "national disaster" which represents a "heavy burden". Right after, he reminds the donors to abide by their commitments in burden-sharing. In addition, he underlines the importance of creating "safe areas or buffer zones" and setting up "collection centers at the border" for refugees (Salam, 2015).

The most interesting turn comes in Salam's 2016 speech[132]. That year, he expressed a clear disappointment in the international community for its failure in addressing the needs of Lebanon as a host country. This speech clearly looks like a form of an emotional chantage. He also escalates by affirming that the country "cannot and will not assimilate additional displaced persons", highlighting "the temporary character of the Syrian presence", and that "Lebanon is not a country of permanent asylum. Lebanon is the homeland of the Lebanese and only the Lebanese" (Salam, 2016). This escalation echoes again with Hariri's ministerial statement of December 2016.

The speeches of Michel Aoun who was elected end of 2016 take a more radical turn. As the leader of the Christian FPM[133], his positions seem to be in line with his party's. One of his most relevant sentences is: "There are those who talk of voluntary return, while we speak of safe return" (Aoun, 2016). He explains that return is either voluntary or safe. This depends on the initial reason for fleeing. According to him, if it is political, then return should be voluntary. But in the case of violence such as war, the cause of displacement falls with the end of violence. Thus, displaced Syrians should be returned home safely since they look more like a "popular invasion" than asylum-seekers (Aoun, 2017). As a comparison, Palestinians are tackled differently: they are clearly "humanized", while their situation is narrated as they "are still waiting to return to Palestine". This shows clearly that – at least some representatives of – official Lebanon sees Syrian

[132] During the year of 2016, the UN General Assembly had two meetings: one ordinary plenary session and one high-level meeting on refugees and migrants. Salam held speeches in both. The one analyzed here is from the high-level meeting.
[133] See the cognitive map of political parties' positions on Syrian refugees in the previous section of this chapter.

as voluntary migrants. Thus, it reinforces the recategorization of Syrians into "Internationally Displaced People" as argued in Chapter 5.

Moreover, positions are strengthened and reaffirmed in 2018 again. Aoun (2018) adds the words "dignified" and "sustainable" as adjectives to "return" (Aoun, 2018). The following year, he praises the return of 250.000 Syrians by underlining that there were "no reports that they have been persecuted or mistreated" (Aoun, 2019). He then questions the stances of some states and international organizations which he qualifies as instrumentalizing the Syrian presence and blocking their return. Finally, he qualifies the Syrian refugee crisis as "threatening our very existence" (Aoun, 2019). This again, corroborates what has been implied in the former parts of this thesis. The 2020 speech of Michel Aoun repeats the earlier statements and ask for a general plan for safe return (Aoun, 2020).

In summary, the discourse addressed to the international community at the UN seems to be in line with the ministerial statements. Same as for the statements, the trend goes towards gradual escalation. The only substantial difference resides maybe in the higher focus of the UN Presidential speeches on asking for international financial assistance, sometimes through chantage, as it was exposed above.

6.5.4. Conclusions

All in all, identity elements remain same and unchanged through both corpuses. Notions and principles such as abiding by the Constitution and/or Taef, the importance of coexistence and national unity, the constant reminding for the will of integration within the Arab states' concert, the definition of Israel as the ultimate enemy, the trenchant opposition to "*tawtin*", and the right to return for the Palestinians, constitute all together the constant content of the Lebanese state identity. It is to these elements of identity content that some aspects of the Syrian refugee-related issues came to be included. These are revealed by the discourse. In fact, the state's official discourse reflects and shapes the state identity. We saw in the discourse how the Syrian crisis managed somehow to "dethrone" the Palestinian question. The valid explanation for this can be that the Syrian influx became a more imminent threat within the influential actors' threat-assessment prioritization. This constant assessment of threats made the Syrian issue to evolve in crescendo, according to the context: from a mere security and socioeconomic threat, it went up to an opposition against integration and assimilation, then to refusing any possible form of "*tawtin*",

and finally, to declare the will of starting to organize proactively their return. This gradual increase is clearly appearing through the evolution of the discourse in both of the analyzed corpuses. And they are in close interaction with the given context: it is when the Syrians outnumbered the Palestinians that it became prioritized in the discourse; it is only when their presence started to be prolonged that its threat was upgraded from security/economic to existential; it is only when the international response was not perceived as enough, that the state expressed its proactivity regarding return.

By linking the observations with previous parts of this thesis, we can realize that the Syrian refugee-related novel identity elements were gradually imposed by the influential actors of identity. These elements entered and became embedded in the state's structure itself. The difficulties around changing or altering any of these concepts account for their deep embeddedness within the shared status quo identity. But new crises weaken the structure and make it easily alterable. With the influx of Syrian refugees, the discourse analysis shows us that many – if not all – of the actors had interests in defining Syrians as constituting an existential threat to the fragile sectarian demographic status quo. In other words, while most of the actors agree on common grounds such as the economic threats of the Syrian presence, some managed to impose it as an existential threat. The accession of Michel Aoun as a President – backed by Hezbollah, one of the strongest actors in Lebanon –, as well as the strong role of his party (FPM) in the last decade, made it easier for incorporating some parts of their positions about refugees. If we cross-check it with the cognitive map, we can easily conclude that the state, through its discourses, tended to adopt their particular version. In more concrete terms, the non-recognition of the Syrians as "real" refugees who seek asylum, and their definition as *displaced*, are part of this new identity content. The pro-Syrian regime alignment of these actors might also feed into this logic. As Maja Janmyr (2017) concludes:

> Indeed, one strand of the Lebanese government's disassociation policy was the enforcement of the term "displaced persons" ["*nazihun*"] rather than "refugees" ["*laji'un*"]. In this way, as a senior government adviser explained, "the Lebanese government not only avoided labelling those who have fled to Lebanon as people escaping from persecution, it avoided acknowledging that there is a war in Syria" (Janmyr, 2017, p. 130).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this novel identity content does not really challenge the older. Actually, they complete each other: both reject categorically "*tawtin*". Therefore, the new elements reaffirm and harden the old baseline elements. This point is also corroborated by the Lebanese state's attitudes towards immigrant groups throughout its modern history (cf. Chapter 4). These attitudes attested for the state's interests which were translated into creating various legal categories.

Concerning our first research sub-question of *how has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state's official discourse on the national and international levels?* The answer seems to be quite straightforward. On both levels, the state's discourse saw an escalating trend through time by (1) reprioritizing Syrian refugees as a much more important existential threat[134] than the Palestinians; (2) by reaffirming and reinvigorating the negation of "*tawtin*" in all its forms; (3) by "normalizing" the idea of non-voluntary safe return; (4) on the domestic level, by justifying the state's restrictive policies; (5) and on the international level, by (a) exercising chantage for international aid[135], and by (b) gradually forcing a redefinition of Syrian refugees as simple voluntary *displaced* rather than asylum-seeker *refugees*. The last point provides an additional justification for our proposed new definition of Syrian refugees as being "internationally displaced persons".

[134] Or by making them the perfect scapegoat for all of Lebanon's problems. See for example Rollins (Syrians make easy scapegoats in Lebanon, 2016).
[135] The discourse of the Lebanese state focused on the cost of hosting refugees (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). These methods were qualified by Tsourapas as feeding the tactics of a "refugee rentier state" (Tsourapas, 2019).

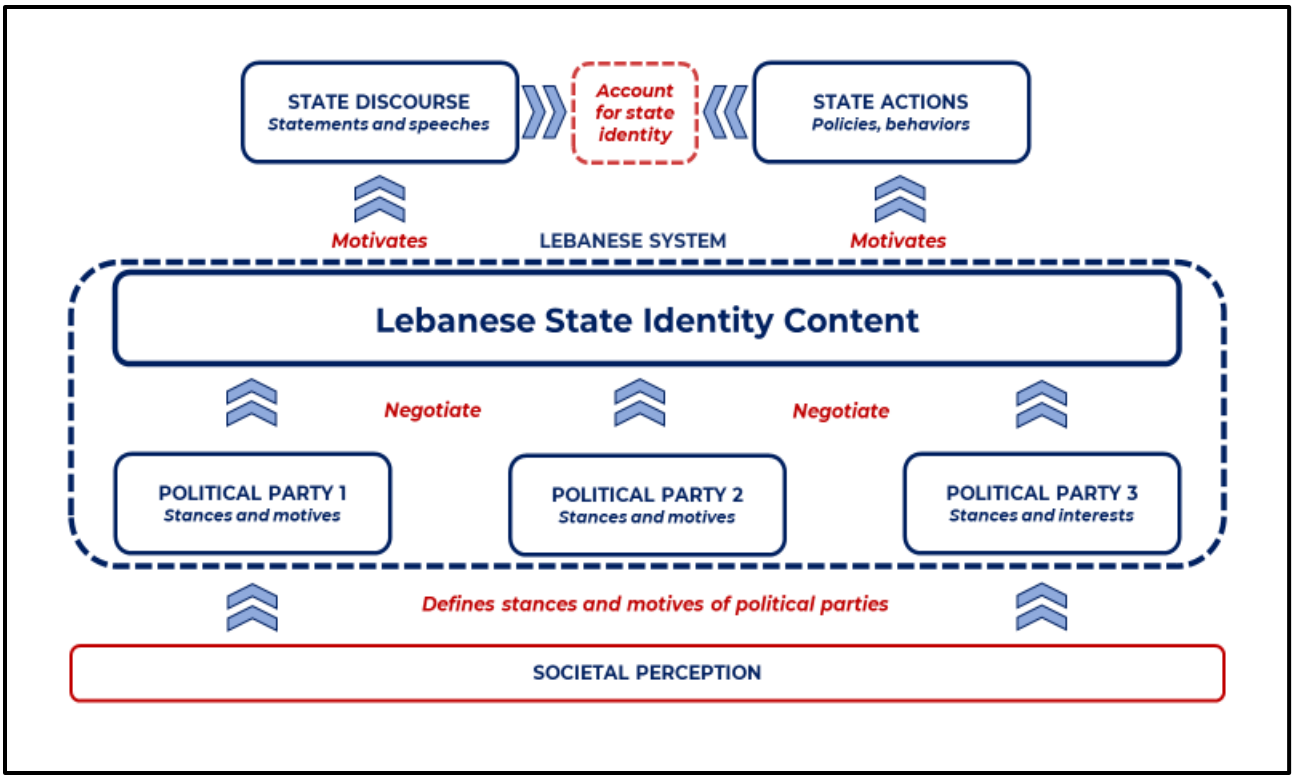

Figure 12. Mechanisms of Identity in the Lebanese Political System

6.6. The Lebanese State Actions

"We will deal with them [the Syrian refugees] as we dealt with the Palestinians: by pushing most of them out of the country."

Anonymous Lebanese Minister (as cited in Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021)

6.6.1. Alternative Explanations for State Behavioral Patterns

After the discourse, the analysis focuses below on the actions. More precisely, it tries to understand how the Lebanese state's behaviors and policies towards Syrian refugees might explain its underlying motives. Afterall, motives can be interpreted in terms of identity change. For that, we try to explain the outcomes by providing minimal yet sufficient explanations. Ergo, the question here is the following: what are the possible explanations that explain the motivations behind the Lebanese state's policies and behaviors towards Syrian refugees? The previous sections and chapters of this thesis have already provided us with some scenarios.

One explanation can be bureaucratic nonchalance: it implies that Lebanon dealt practically the same way with any migration inflow according to strong structural standard operating procedures

(SOPs) which are implemented without any deeper questioning. This would explain also the potential cases of state inaction. Another alternative explanation might be as simple as motives related to security and economy, without any further consideration. In this case, the discourse around the existential threat would only be expressed in order to stimulate the empathy of donors and attract more financial aid. A third explanation would be related to the complaisance policy that Lebanon has regarding the Syrian regime, as it was demonstrated above. A fourth one is defined by populism: the state's actions would only be motivated by the will of satisfying the influential parties' electoral bases. Finally, the last scenario would be the influential actors' real perception of fear from the existential threat that refugees constitute for the fragile Lebanese sectarian status quo. Assessing these scenarios would be only possible after a brief comprehensive revision of the Lebanese state's behaviors and policies regarding the Syrian refugees.

6.6.2. The State's (in)Action: From No Policy to Policy of Return

Many studies have already tackled extensively some or all aspects of the Lebanese state policies and behaviors towards Syrian refugees (Achilli, Yassin, & Erdogan, 2017; Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021; Al-Ahmad, 2022; Fakhoury, 2021; Geha, 2019; Geha & Talhouk, 2018; Hochberg, 2018; Janmyr, 2017) and (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021; Şahin Mencutek, 2017; Nassar & Stel, 2019; Sanyal, 2017; Tsourapas, 2019). From specifically Legal (Janmyr, 2017), to the question of return (Fakhoury, 2021), up to the behaviors of Lebanon on the international scene (Tsourapas, 2019), the literature in saturated. For the sake or our analysis, the following review starts by tracing back the major policy-related events through times, before analyzing the state response from diverse angles.

First, as we said it repeatedly across this thesis, Lebanon did not sign the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Janmyr, 2017; Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021), but abides by the principle of non-refoulement (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). This is to be the frame of any policy analysis (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). Second, the Lebanese state's policy response is characterized by a high level of institutional ambiguity (Nassar & Stel, 2019). Third, ambiguity and lack of action must be both put in the context of Lebanese policy-making and implementation. In this regard, the structural dysfunctionalities of the Lebanese political system are not only affecting the refugee-related policies. Rather, they reflect on a generalized systemic weakness.

Therefore, the intentionality of the state's action, inaction, or bad action, must be understood within this particular context.

When it comes to the overall timeline, Lebanon was initially welcoming towards refugees, but shifted gradually towards implementing what was qualified by some as "policies of exclusion" (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). In the beginning, Lebanon was unable to formulate proper policies to tackle the crisis: some plans were prepared, then failed to be adopted by the government (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). But in the meantime, the state was keen on prohibiting the establishment of any sort of camp (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). The flood of refugees became soon uncontrollable (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021), and municipalities were left on the frontline without any concrete form of guidance from the central state (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). In addition, assistance was "outsourced" to various international governmental and non-governmental organizations (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021; Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). This first phase in the timeline can be described as a period of "policy of no policy" or of "ostrich policy" (El Mufti, 2014; Saghieh & Frangieh, 2014, as cited in Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021, p. 429). This period was characterized by an open-border policy, but denied refugees of any legal or formal status (Şahin Mencutek, 2017, p. 17).

The policy response shifts between 2014-2016 towards a tentative of regulating the entrance and exist of Syrians (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). In late 2014, the cabinet issued its first official document in relation to Syrian refugees, 3 years after the beginning of the crisis (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). The document declared to freeze the influx of refugees and to record all entrants at the borders (Ghanem, 2015). Following that, the new restrictive visa and residency policies based on *kafala* were soon implemented by the General Security (cf. Chapter 4). But because of *non-refoulement*, those who were to be arrested for lacking regular documentation were usually released in the majority of the cases (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). Nevertheless, the paperwork procedures became expensive and often obstructed by the numerous bureaucratic processes (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Following the same logic, the government instructed the UNHCR in May 2015 to suspend any new registration, even for those who were to be already in the country, leading by that to depriving a large number of refugees from the aid that comes with the fact of being registered (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021).

The third phase of policy shaping is marked by a shift towards pushing for return (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). This comes in the light of Aoun's access to Presidency as we can relate it with the evolution of the discourse. While after years of conflicting positions, the Lebanese influential actors agreed on that Syrians should return, the multiplicity of initiatives and the fragmentation of decision-making make it difficult to track (Fakhoury, 2021). These goes from the official offices created at the General Security for receiving applications of voluntary returnees (Vohra, 2019), to other committees managed by non-state actors such as political parties who coordinate with the General Security (Fakhoury, 2021). Here again, and as reflected by the previously-presented mapping of the political parties' stances, there is no consensus among these parties on, neither the modalities, nor the timing for this return (Fakhoury, 2021).

The Lebanese state behaviors and policies can be sorted according to three analytical categories. The first would be the local level, the second is the domestic level, and the third being the international level. Each one of these is presented separately below.

6.6.3. The Local level

On a local level, the state's inaction transferred the refugees' control and management to municipalities (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). It freed their hands in adopting all kinds of ad hoc measures and regulations that ranged from restrictive to inclusive (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). This made Hochberg (2018) to declare that the only consistency in the municipal policies was inconsistency. The Akkar case study of Chapter 4 gave us some informative examples in this respect. Many municipalities restricted refugees from receiving guests after a particular hour, or forbid them of accessing certain public spaces (Hochberg, 2018). In some towns, Syrians were simply asked to leave, or were prohibited to access the region. Elsewhere, the municipalities limited the movement of Syrians after certain hours through curfews. For instance, within one year in (2014-2015), around 45 municipalities were reported to have imposed curfews for no apparent reason despite being not allowed to do so (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Also, the UN Vulnerability Assessment of 2018 reports that 14% of refugee households have experienced imposed curfews in their areas of residency, varying from 1% in Beirut and Akkar, up to 39% and 45% in Southern districts (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018). These curfews were issued by municipalities in 97% of the cases (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2018).

6.6.4. The National Level

While many of the policies at the national level where already detailed above, it might be interesting to dissect them thematically. This step can help us also in understanding the motives later on.

Economy Related Policies

The policies addressing the economic regulation of Syrian refugees are mainly the following:

First regulated by the Ministry of Labor in 2013, organizing the work of Syrians in specific restricted domains, (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021), the Council of the Ministers revoked his decision and stated that eligibility for aid and assistance would be lost for active Syrians since they would no-longer be considered as "displaced" (Bou Khater, 2017).

Later, the Ministry limited their permission to work in low-qualified jobs such as construction, agriculture and cleaning, but made the regularization paperwork a procedural maze through requiring employers to prove that they could not find Lebanese for the same job position, and that they would abide by a quota of 90% of Lebanese in the total number of employed (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). Later, the government imposed the *kafala* on Syrian job-seekers, and asked the UNHCR to remove work-permit applicants from the list of aid beneficiaries (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021).

"Tawtin" related Policies

This category of policies and behaviors gravitates around the prohibition for Syrians of building any kind of long-term perennial form of shelter. In this respect, Lebanon's Supreme Defense Council requested the destruction of any informal housing that was made of long-lasting material, leading to the homelessness of around 3,500 Syrian families in Aarsal alone for example (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs dispatched "watchdogs" on humanitarian activities across the country in order to prevent any form of permanent improvements on shelters and settlements (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). More specifically, anything other than what is built from plastic or wood should have been destroyed (Hochberg, 2018).

No-Camp Policy

As we saw it earlier, Lebanon did not work for developing a camp policy for Syrians (Tsourapas, 2019). The initial declared motivation for that can be simply related to the past Palestinian "bad" experience which led to long-lasting camps that are outside of any form of state control (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Here again, Hezbollah leaders expressed their fear from soon having uncontrollable security "pocket zones" (Şahin Mencutek, 2017, p. 19), in which Sunni extremism could rise and threaten the country's security (Fakhoury, 2021).

Policy of Return

The internal political struggles between the anti and the pro-Syrian regime parties made it difficult to establish a unified vision about return: the case of agreeing over safe zones within Syria in one example for that (Geha, 2019). As we saw it through the discourse, calls for immediate return of refugees started to grow gradually in time. Some, like the FPM, had no problem in implementing it by force (Geha, 2019). Hezbollah accounts also for similar positions and actions (Fakhoury, 2021). When the conflict lost in intensity, the Syrian regime allies (Hezbollah, Amal, FPM) considered that Syrians can immediately return home since the conflict had ended, while the FM and LF considered the opposite (Geha, 2019).

Intentions were soon enough translated into actions. The Lebanese General Security started to relocate thousands of Refugees based on "voluntary" basis towards "safe zones" in Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2020). By the end of August 2019, the General Security had declared that since May of that year, it proceeded with the deportation of some 2,700 refugees, a step that Human Rights Watch qualified as "placing them at risk of arbitrary detention and torture" (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Since then, the trend for "voluntary" return continued to be implemented on a regular pace (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2020).

6.6.5. International Level

On an international level, the policy of Lebanon was already theorized under the concept of "refugee rentier state" (Tsourapas, 2019). This concept refers to states who use their status of refugee host states to extract a "refugee revenue" from various donors in return for keeping them within their borders (Tsourapas, 2019). Tsourapas (2019) argues that there are two types of refugee rentier state strategies: one uses blackmailing by threatening to flood potential donor states with

refugees, and another qualified as back-scratcher, which uses less-aggressive chantage strategies like promising to maintain refugees within their borders in return of aid and assistance for example. According to the author, Lebanon is a refugee rentier state. He traces the evidences of how the administration and political elite make profit from the international aid that Lebanon gets for hosting the Syrians. He also explains how official Lebanon uses the back-scratcher strategy in international donor conferences and through the discourse of ministers and Prime Ministers. This is also corroborated by our analysis on the international discourse of Lebanon, but also by some studies that have clearly shown how the government tries to bargain donations in counterpart of incentives such as issuing work permits to Syrians for example – who are funnily already employed on the black market – (Şahin Mencutek, 2017).

6.6.6. Tracing the Various Motives

The examined literature provides us already with some empirical evidences as well as interpretations regarding the various motives behind these policies. Below are the main elements that could be extracted from there.

Concerning the first phase, the open-door policy of the early days was motivated to some extent by humanitarian considerations. In fact, even Hezbollah was "owing" Syrians with a due for welcoming Lebanese – mainly Shia families from the South – during the 2006 war with Israel (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). But this argument is debatable and can be more explained by the political polarization between opposing political parties that lead to blockage in decision-making, leading to inaction (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Furthermore, the porous and uncontrolled nature of the Lebanese-Syrian borders discredits the intentionality of an open-door policy (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). In fact, and as presented previously, it is easy to cross the borders in various irregular forms. Others also argued that – Sunni – refugees were intentionally let in by Sunni decision-makers in order to counter balance demographically the power of the Shiite Hezbollah; yet, a counter-argument for that leans in the fact that officials at that time did not expect that the conflict would be prolonged (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021).

Concerning the "policy of exclusion", analysts saw the restrictive measures of job regulation as a way to diminish their number for reducing the effects on the domestic economy (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021). In general, the policy shift can also be linked to what some concluded as being the state's disengagement from the management of the crisis in order to send a clear signal

to the international community that it does not want to become an asylum for 1.5 million of Syrian refugees (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). But it is not clear if the real motive behind this was "chantage for aid" or fear from demographic imbalance. Some other also argue that the non-recognition of refugee status was a way of preventing their integration (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021).

The no-camp policy can be linked to the refusal of some political parties in creating security pockets that are outside of the state's control (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). These, led by Hezbollah, were opposed by those who saw that camps would be a solution against security threats (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). But the most important motive for prohibiting camps was the quasi-unanimous fear from the Palestinian precedent (Kikano, Fauveaud, & Lizarralde, 2021). In general, many agree that the Lebanese government continued to stress on securitization, not only through the no-camp policy, but also through its return policy (Brun, Fakih, Shuayb, & Hammoud, 2021).

Concerning the question of return, Fakhoury (2021) claims that the state's policy reflects on the clashing positions of the political parties which have competing underlying interests at stake. The debate evolves around the diverging interests and opinions in regard of the coordination with the Syrian regime, the timing for return implementation, and the positions towards donors (Fakhoury, 2021). In short, none of these reflect on the existential threat as much as on the strategic positioning of these actors in the regional game of power. However, the discourse analysis showed clearly that there are sectarian imbalance-related motives at stake.

Finally, when it comes to the perception of Syrians as a threat to the sectarian balance, we can assess that although mentioned, it its rarely evaluated deeply by analysts. In fact, it is clear that understanding this particular motive can only be rigorously done by "entering into the minds" of the main political actors and decision-makers. Since this is not yet scientifically possible, we must restrict ourselves in generating evidence-based interpretations. Zeynep Şahin Mencutek (2017) for example, gave it a try. Her policy review is a deduction of the following:

> Evidence shows that policy changes in border control and reception are reflective of the country's recognition that it is facing a demographic challenge, as well as its desire to appease negative public sentiment, and to renegotiate its sovereignty vis-à-vis increasing involvement of international organizations in refugee governance. On the other hand, it

> refrains from developing protection and integration policies due to a lack of capacity, ideational concerns (regarding the delicate sectarian balance) and its historical experience of a protracted Palestinian refugee issue (Zeynep Şahin Mencutek, 2017, p. 26).

This statement resumes in a way almost all what is at the core or our thesis. After this brief presentation, the final sub-section re-evaluates the motives behind policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state.

6.6.7. Conclusion

Assessing the Various Explanations

The previous overview provided us with sufficient elements to assess each of the supposed alternative explanations regarding the motives behind the Lebanese state's policies and behaviors. Below is the case-by-case assessment of these assumptions:

Concerning bureaucratic nonchalance, while this alternative could provide a sufficient explanation for the state's inaction in the first years of the crisis, it is obviously refuted later on by the actual proactivity of the state in taking measures against the Syrians.

Concerning the security-related motives, undoubtably, they do play a major role in orienting the state's behaviors. But if we think about it in a deeper way, we quickly realize that some measures cannot be simply explained by that alone. This is the case with forbidding the usage of any sort of perennial material in shelters' construction. If strictly related to security concerns, the no-camp policy would have been enough for that. These informal settlements and camps were still in place when the decision – and the execution of this decision – was taken. On another hand, refugees are allowed to rent and live in "hard" constructions. Therefore, the only explanation for this policy is the will of sending a strong message for both the refugees and the international community that their stay is temporary. This has to be linked to the fear of "*tawtin*", based on the Palestinian precedent, and thus, considered as fragilizing the sectarian status quo.

Concerning the economic motives, they seem to be valid to a certain extent. They are especially true on the international level. I fact, Lebanon has profited from vast amounts of financial support in the past decade. But as shown in the previous part, it is arguable if economic policies are not also related somehow to the threat of demographic imbalance. An additional explanation here

would be the *populist* response for the resentment of the Lebanese population against the Syrian refugees. But since part of this resentment is also sectarian, we can therefore say that some parts of the populist response through restrictive economic policies are demographic sectarian imbalance-related. With the last three sentences above, we reassessed also our fourth alternative explanation.

Concerning the complaisance with the Syrian regime-related policies, it is true that many pro-Syrian regime actors such as Hezbollah and its allies have motives that can fall under this explanation. Yet, this reality cannot explain alone the state's policies and behaviors. The residency and visa regulations for example do not attest for the best way to deal with the citizens of an "ally", even if these were decided upon informal cooperation and mutual agreement. Also, the return policy discredits this explanation. In fact, it is highly questionable if the Syrian regime actually wants these refugees back. Many of its policies contradict this allegation. This is the case for example with the Syrian Law Number 10 which, as presented in Chapter 4, aims at dispossessing fleeing Syrians from their belongings. And the implementation of the return policy, even if processed through negotiation and cooperation, does not allow us to consider the complaisance policy as the sole motive of the state's policies. Here again, the perception of fear from sectarian imbalance cannot but be considered as one of the main drivers of the policy of return.

Finally, the last envisaged scenario was about the fear from an existential threat through demographic imbalance of the sectarian status quo. As stipulated in the last sub-section, the validation of such an explanation cannot be solely based on pure evidences. In fact, this needs interpretation. Nevertheless, the interpretivist nature of our ontological stance makes such a step possible. Indeed, we have seen in Chapter 2 that constructivism considers that behaviors are guided by intentions. And these can be interpreted in order to understand identity. The validity of this explanation can be proven through two main elements. First, the recurrence of this interpretation through the various analyses found in the literature give to this explanation additional authority. Second, the intersectional reading of the main empirical evidences seems to corroborate this particular scenario. In other words, even if not enough for explaining each action or policy by its own, it is maybe the only explanation that can be interpreted as a valid one across all the presented actions of the Lebanese state.

Answering the Second Research Sub-question

Concerning our second research sub-question that was about *how has the Syrian refugee crisis shaped the policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state on the local, national and international levels?* The answer for this question seems also to be straightforward. From an initial "ostrich policy", the state evolved towards a "policy of restriction", then escalated later towards trying to implement policies of return. On the local level, the state did not adopt any policy. Hence, the municipalities and local communities had to deal with the crisis by their own. On the national level, the state issued and tried to implement some of its restrictive policies in many different sectors. Some of these sectors are economy-related such as the regulation of the labor market, some others are security related, such as the no-camp policy. Almost all of these policies can be interpreted as driven to some extent by the perception of refugees as constituting an actual threat to the sectarian status quo demographic fragile balance. Finally, on the international level, the Lebanese state acted as a "refugee rentier state" by using chantage in order to attract international aid.

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have managed to provide answers for the thesis' two research sub-questions. This was only possible through (1) presenting the general context of Lebanon before and upon the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, (2) linking the Lebanese societal perception of resentment against refugees to the positions of the political parties, (3) identifying the most influential actors of identity among the main political parties, (4) mapping the stances of these parties in regard of the Syrian refugees, and (5) explaining the various mechanisms of the Lebanese *consociational* political system that regulate consensus in the definition of the Lebanese state's interests. These steps enabled us to (6) analyze the state's official discourse through its ministerial statements and Presidential speeches, and (7) to trace back the potential underlaying motives of the state's policies and actions towards Syrian refugees.

So, (1) *how has the Syrian refugee crisis impacted on the Lebanese state's official discourse on the national and international levels?*

On both levels, the state's discourse saw an escalating trend by (1) reprioritizing Syrian refugees as a much more important existential threat than the Palestinians; (2) by reaffirming and

reinvigorating the negation of "*tawtin*" in all its forms; (3) by "normalizing" the idea of non-voluntary safe return; (4) on the domestic level, by justifying the state's restrictive policies; (5) and on the international level, by (a) exercising chantage for international aid, and by (b) gradually forcing a redefinition of Syrian refugees as simple voluntary displaced rather than asylum-seeker refugees. The last point provides an additional justification for our proposed new definition of Syrian refugees as being *internationally displaced persons*.

And, (2) *how has the Syrian refugee crisis shaped the policies and behaviors of the Lebanese state on the local, national and international levels?*

The Lebanese state's policies are most probably driven by a perception that considers refugees as a threat to the sectarian status quo demographic fragile balance. The Syrian refugee crisis was first mitigated through (1) "ostrich policy", (2) then "policy of restriction", and then (3) evolved towards policies of return. On the local level, (4) the state did not adopt any policy. (5) On the national level, the state issued and tried to implement some of its restrictive policies in many different sectors such as security and economy. Finally, on the international level, (6) the Lebanese state acted as a "refugee rentier state" by using chantage in order to attract international aid.

A final step is addressing the literature of migration as developed in Chapter 5. In fact, we have seen that Bjerre (2017) presented the host states' policy responses towards migration inflows. In this respect, one of the five types of migration policies is related to the constant construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of migrants' categories. The Lebanese policy response falls – among others – under this type of refugee-immigration policy. All along this chapter, we have repeatedly seen how official Lebanon through its discourse and policies tried to redefine the Syrian refugees as being *displaced*. Moreover, in order to justify the implementation of policies of return, the state's narrative tried to push towards the differentiation between *safe* return and *voluntary* return. This led to the construction of a completely new "hybrid" category of refugees by Lebanon. This category called *displaced* ("*nazihun*") is denied of any rights of integration or assimilation, and is regulated by restrictive legal regulations as we have seen it through the text. Once again, this gives also more authority for our redefinition of Syrian refugees as *internationally displaced persons*.

CONCLUSION

Lastly, the thesis has one final task to deliver. This task resides in providing an explicit and comprehensive answer to the main research question. But before that, let us first recapitulate the main ideas developed in the different chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2 led us to understand what defines *identity* and *state identity*. For *identity*, we have seen that constructivists consider it as constructed, changing, multiple and malleable. *Interests* are the reflection of identities in particular *contexts*. We have also learned that states have interests that are reflected through their *discourses* and *actions*. *Actions* cannot contradict the *content* of their identity. If so, *identity* must be reconstructed. *Identity* changes through *challenge* or *negotiation* within the state's *structure*. State identity is tightly linked to *security* through the state's perception of *threats*, such as in the different *other* (immigrant or refugee) for example.

Chapter 3 informed us that the *structure* of the Lebanese state is based on *confessional consociationalism* in which *actors* of Lebanese identity can *change* the state's identity through *negotiation* based on *consensus*. Also, this structure is relatively *fragile*, since based on a *sectarian status quo* determined by the demographic weights of each community. Therefore, both the Lebanese society and actors perceive demographic change as an existential *threat* to their state's identity.

Chapter 4 let us realize the complexity and gravity of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Furthermore, the historical contextualization of this crisis allowed us to understand more the motives behind the Lebanese state's policies towards various migration inflows to the country. These motives are determined by the state's interests which perceive immigration – especially when Muslim Sunni in majority – as a *threat* for its *fragile* balance. Hence, the massive inflow of Syrian refugees can be interpreted as a potential threat in this regard. Empirical evidences from the literature and the field attest about this.

Chapter 5 and 6 showed us how the definition of *refugee* in migration and refugee theories is not compatible for the description of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a constructed category by the Lebanese state. In this respect, the perceived *threat* of their potential resettlement, "*tawtin*", pushed the Lebanese state to refer to them as *displaced*. This was corroborated by the analysis of the state's discourse and its refugee-related policies. It led us to redefine the Syrian refugees of Lebanon as *internationally displaced persons*.

Finally, Chapter 6 showed us how the Syrian refugees have shaped the Lebanese (1) official discourse and (2) its actions and policies. In this regard, we can clearly conclude that while the refugees did provoke a change in the state's discourse and actions, this change was more or less in line with the content and interests of the "preexisting" Lebanese state's identity. To be more specific, the original content of the Lebanese identity, based on the interest of preserving the sectarian status quo at any cost, was neither altered nor challenged by the Syrian refugees. The discourse and actions of the state were readapted to address the Syrian refugees who were perceived as a threat. It made the state to reassess its threats by prioritizing Syrians over Palestinians as a more imminent threat for its identity. Both the rhetoric of its discourse and the deep motives behind its policies prove this trend.

So, *how has the Syrian refugee crisis affected or shaped the Lebanese state identity?*

Most of the answer is situated in the last paragraph. First, it is important to note that the Syrian refugee crisis obviously did have an impact on the Lebanese state identity. Since discourse and actions reflect on identity, the clear shift in the discourse as well as in the policies reveal that the identity was impacted. Second, for the modalities if this impact, the simple answer is that the Lebanese state identity, based on some strongly embedded elements of content in its structure, was reinforced and reaffirmed. The content had incorporated through decades consensual concepts such as *coexistence*, *power-sharing*, or the strict opposition to any type of "*tawtin*". And these concepts were constantly reaffirmed and institutionalized through the National Pact, the Taef and Doha Agreements. Neither the discourse nor the actions present elements of contestation or challenge for these core concepts. On the contrary, they almost go beyond the "minimal required". Therefore, we can conclude that the Lebanese state identity, although fragilized by the developments, and sometimes questioned by some actors, was reaffirmed by the Syrian refugee crisis.

Nevertheless, the problem remains elsewhere. The Syrian presence, if prolonged, will definitely have a different impact on Lebanon. With a deeply deprived mass living in poor conditions, coupled with the current economic and financial crisis that shake the country, the Syrian refugees are unfortunately a social "time-bomb". The upcoming years will feed us more about that.

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