



T.R.

BURSA ULUDAG UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**LEBANON'S POLICY TOWARDS THE SYRIAN CRISIS:
ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTI-COMMUNAL STATES**

(MASTER DEGREE THESIS)

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Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Ferhat PİRİNÇÇİ

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Tezin niteliği	Yüksek lisans
Mezuniyet tarihi	08/03/2022
Tez danışmanı	Prof. Dr. Ferhat PİRİNÇÇİ

LÜBNAN'IN SURİYE KRİZİNE YAKLAŞIMININ ÇOK TOPLUMLU DEVLETLER BAĞLAMINDA ANALİZİ

Bu çalışmada Lübnan'ın Suriye krizine yönelik yaklaşımı incelenecektir. Bu konu analiz edilirken, Lübnan devletinin karmaşık yapısını ve tarihsel tecrübesini ele alarak Suriye krizine yönelik her bir aktörün uygulandığı yaklaşım ve bu yaklaşımı belirleyen arkasındaki sebepler analiz edilecektir. Lübnan içindeki siyasi ve mezhepsel bölünmüşlük, krize yönelik yaklaşımını özellikle de politik, ekonomik ve sosyal eylemler anlamında büyük ölçüde etkilenmiştir. Bu eylemlerin sebepleri ve sonuçları incelenecektir. Lübnan'ın tepkilerinin yanı sıra, politik ve stratejik anlamda krizden çıkardığı dersler ve öneriler, Lübnan'ın kriz ile başa çıkma mekanizmaları analiz edilecektir. Bu çalışmada, siyasi yapısı ve coğrafi konumu nedeniyle Lübnan'ı yıllardır sarsan olayların yanı sıra, son iki yılda Lübnan'ın başına gelen olaylar da analiz edilecektir. Ekonomik kriz, protestolar, en önemli limanı vuran patlama ve küresel salgın, Suriye krizi söz konusu olduğunda Lübnanlıların tepkilerinin daha net bir resmini oluşturmak için bu çalışmada analiz edilecektir. Ayrıca bu yılın Ocak ayında Lübnan halkıyla ve Trablus'taki kamplardaki Suriyeli mültecilerle Lübnan'da yaptığım görüşmeler, Lübnan'ın bu krize nasıl bir yol izlediğini ve tepkilerini nasıl olduğunu analiz edilirken büyük ölçüde yardımcı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lübnan, Suriye Krizi, Lübnan Yaklaşımı, Suriye Mültecileri, Çok Toplumsal Devletler

ABSTRACT

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LEBANON'S POLICY TOWARDS THE SYRIAN CRISIS ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTI-COMMUNAL STATES

In this study, Lebanon's approach to the Syrian crisis will be examined. While analyzing this issue, the approach applied by each actor to the Syrian crisis and the reasons behind this approach will be analyzed by considering the complex structure and historical experience of the Lebanese state. The political and sectarian divide within Lebanon has greatly affected its approach to the crisis, especially in terms of political, economic and social actions. The causes and consequences of these actions will be examined. In addition to Lebanon's reactions, the political and strategic lessons and suggestions from the crisis, Lebanon's coping mechanisms with the crisis will be analyzed. In this study, besides the events that have shaken Lebanon for years due to its political structure and geographical location, the events that have happened to Lebanon in the last two years will also be analyzed. The economic crisis, the protests, the explosion that hit the most important port and the global epidemic will be analyzed in order to create a clearer picture of the Lebanese response when it comes to the Syrian crisis. Moreover, the interviews conducted in Lebanon with the Lebanese people and Syrian refugees in camps in Tripoli in January of this year will be of great help in analyzing how Lebanon has followed and reacted to this crisis.

Key Words: *Lebanon, Syrian Crisis, Lebanese Approaches, Syrian refugees, Multicommunal States.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my great pleasure to express my deep sense of thanks and gratitude to my mentor Prof. Dr. Ferhat PİRİNÇÇİ, who, at my insistence to work on a thesis related to the events concerning the Middle East, and especially Lebanon, agreed and gave his full support. I would also like to express my thanks to Res. Assist. Tunç Demirtaş for any response, help and support and advice while writing this thesis.

I owe a one huge appreciation for all the support and help when it comes to Arabic sources and for his interest in me at every part of this thesis to my husband who was also one of the reasons why I decided to write on this topic.

I am extremely thankful to all the friends I met in Lebanon during my stay there, and for their willingness to patiently answer all my questions during the interviews.

And as most important, I am very thankful to my family for their constant encouragement through my research and writing period.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMAL - Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniya
FM – Future Movement
FPM – Free Patriotic Movement
FSI – Fragile States Index
GOL- Government of Lebanon
IDF – Israel Defense Forces
ILO – International Labor Organization
Kataeb – Phalanges Party
LAF – Lebanese Armed Forces
LAU – Lebanese American University
LCRP – Lebanese Crisis Response Plan
LF – Lebanese Forces
LNМ - Lebanese National Movement
MOF – Ministry of Finance
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization
PM – Prime Minister
PSP- Progressive Socialist Party
SDHP- Social Democrat Hunchakian Party
SISC - Supreme Islamic Shiite Council
SSNP- Syrian Social Nationalist Party
TASHNAG- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
UN- United Nation
UNDP- United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Work Agency
VASYR- Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WFP- World Food Programme
WHO – World Health Organization

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Figure 1¹

¹ The World Bank: Country Profile - Lebanon.

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian crisis of “Double Tragedy” , as R. Rabil states in the title of his book, would be an ideal name to describe the consequences it had.² As such, it caused immeasurable damage in its country and then in the countries of the region. This thesis will discuss the tragedy and the way in which countries of the region, in this case Lebanon, are struggling and dealing with it. All this will be explained in the light of these two countries' socio-economic, cultural and security conditions.

Lebanon declared its independence in 1943 and Syria in 1946. However, through the years Syria saw Lebanon as part of its territory. Syria finally accepted Lebanese independence in 1991. Considering this Syrian influence, it is clear that years back up to today the Syrian influence over Lebanon is on a high level. In addition to the influence of other countries, Lebanon is certainly a country that since its independence has struggled to maintain and create stability within the country. The reasons for this are primarily the division of the population in terms of religion. Because of these divisions, Lebanon has been suffocating in Civil wars for years. The Civil war that took place in 1975 is also a war in which Syria played a major role. The war intensified in the following year, so Syria gave itself the right to become even more active in the war. Its goal was to calm the situation between the two warring parties, but as the intensity of the war increased, so did the activity and interests as well.

There is a large number of the negative impacts of the crisis that will be emphasized in this thesis, as well as the attitudes of different Lebanese institutions on the magnitude of the crisis in each field. One of the biggest negative impacts is the number of refugees who have arrived in Lebanon and who have made such an already vulnerable state the number one in hosting the refugees in the region. In addition, Lebanese plans made and implemented will be examined. Also, we will see that the crisis only deepened poverty and greatly affected the lives of the Lebanese residents. This part will be shown and analyzed through the interviews that were conducted with the Lebanese citizens. This

² Robert Rabil, “*The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: The Double Tragedy of Refugees Impacted Host Communities*” , 2016.

analysis will help us understand the way Lebanon has set itself up and responded to the crisis.

Due to the not-so-established political atmosphere in Lebanon at the time of the Syrian war, having government unity collapsed then, this only delayed the reactions of both blocs in Lebanon to the crisis. But one thing was certain and that was that tensions between Sunni-Shiite groups had increased and that was the greatest fear and instability for Lebanon that was inevitable. Especially because both sides were committed, the Sunni side which was anti-regime and the Shiite groups who were pro-regime. This division will become even deeper when Hezbollah gets involved in the war and thus causes even greater problems in the country. The inability of the government to address the crisis properly only led to a series of problems that needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

Due to its political disorganization, the Lebanese government has failed to achieve stability for years. All the crises that befall them make life difficult for both the people and the Lebanese, but also for the refugees. Lebanon's response to the crisis has largely boiled down to not accepting refugees officially and believing it will leave Lebanon at some point. That is why all the help that is collected to help the people of Syria is international assistance. This money has been raised since 2011, and the Lebanese government says they are using it to reduce the negative impact of the crisis on all sectors of Lebanon, including the economy and other institutions where the Syrian presence is felt.

The issue of refugees and their crossing of borders arises, which the government, that was not capable at that time, should have solved urgently. Their status should have been determined, and radicalism at the borders prevented and tensions between the groups deepened as soon as possible. The reason why Lebanon does not want to determine their status lays behind the bad experience with the refugees, but also the fear that the number of Sunni Muslims would increase and thus the "balance" would be disturbed. The last census was conducted in 1932 and since then, the fear of new conflicts that could be caused, no new census has been conducted. If refugees from Syria or possibly Palestine were included in the new census, it would mean a predominance of Sunni Muslims, which Hezbollah would never accept.

When it comes to financial aid, Muslim Sunnis have always enjoyed the help of Saudi Arabia, and the Shiite group has always been supported by Iran. These two countries are always connected with all the events that take place on the territory of Lebanon. Also, the Shiite Muslim group, or March 8th were supported by the Syrian regime. However, these two connections cannot be defined in the same way. The ideology that underpins the Hezbollah group originates from Iran. Their relationship is based on ideology. While on the other hand, the connection between Hezbollah and Syria has a more tactical connection. For a period of time, Syria was able to control Lebanon, various religious groups and influence political decisions. Here the connection is more pragmatic than it is with Iran and Hezbollah. On the other side, there is Saudi Arabia supporting Sunni Muslims and the Bloc March 14, it is clear that all changes in relations between Syria and Lebanon have automatically affected relations between Syria and Saudi Arabia and vice versa.

According to all the facts and historical relations between these two countries, also the event that will occur later, it can be concluded that the crisis has only deepened religious divisions in Lebanon and also led to radicalization in certain parts of this country. Aim of this research is to show the clear picture of how Lebanon, Lebanese residents, different parties in different historical periods reacted; on the other side to make it easier to understand, the impacts of the crisis in different sectors of Lebanon will be examined.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

There are numerous researches and thesis that were already done on the topic of the Syrian crisis and its impact globally and on the countries of the region as well. Having this on my mind, I made my goal to set a new perspective on this topic. Furthermore, it is very important for me to point out that this work analyzes the reactions of all the ethnic and religious groups from the beginning of the crisis to this day. In the absence of the studies related to the latest events, I believe this work will be an investment in explaining the worsening situation as the crisis and global epidemic hit Lebanon. I hope that this will provide a new perspective in understanding the complex situation in Lebanon and in the region.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Syrian crisis has caused an incredible catastrophe, not only in Lebanon and countries of the region, but it can be freely said it caused the global crisis. It has undoubtedly caused great negative impacts on the countries of the region. It has impacted their economy, security and social segments. Considering the incredibly sensitive political structure of Lebanon as well as the economic crisis that has accompanied Lebanon in the recent years, it is very clear that the crisis affected them on a huge level. It has also left negative impacts on the relations between the society in this country.

Taking all this into consideration, the main questions that would be covered and analyzed and will hopefully help to find out the consequences and reactions that Lebanon had regarding the crisis are as follows:

- Has the Syrian crisis increased the fragile political structure of Lebanon?
- How did the historical background and relations affected the Lebanese response to the crisis?
- Is the lack of the Lebanese government addressing the crisis properly the result of their fragile political structure?
- Did the crisis caused the changes between the fractions?
- How did Lebanon cope with the new economic, social, political and security pressures on an already vulnerable country?
- Taking into consideration all divisions in the Lebanese political structure, what were the reactions of all the groups regarding the crisis?
- Did the Lebanese community see the arrival of Syrians as a threat? How did they react?
- What were the consequences of Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict and how did the radicalization of the groups in Lebanon affect the community?
- How did Lebanon cope with the deep economical and financial crisis?

This is the main part of the questions that are supposed to help in analyzing the problem and consequences. Giving an answer to these questions, it will be easier to draw the picture of how Lebanon reacted to the crisis, reasons behind it, their interests and sufficiency to address the problem properly.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Today marks almost 10 years since the harmless protests turned into a global problem. Over time, the Syrian crisis has hit the countries of the region including Lebanon. The main objective of this thesis is to analyze the reactions of Lebanese political actors and citizens, to understand their reactions towards the crisis in the light of the history and relations with Syria. Basically, with a general view of the history of Lebanon and Syria, this thesis aims to explain how Lebanon, as a country that is due to different factors and almost in all segments very unstable, responded to the crisis coming from the borders. It will be done through the literature overview and surveys. The main focus will be on the reactions and the reasons behind them, but at the same time there will be space given for the impacts of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's different segments in order to understand the complex situation better.

This thesis will cover a historical part of the links between Syria and Lebanon, from the day they were the part of Greater Syria to the day of independence of both of the countries; this part aims to facilitate understanding of today's events. Also, the period of the Lebanese civil War and Syria's role in it will be covered and consequences discussed. Moreover, considering all these historical facts that will be displayed, today's period and relations between these two countries, between the political groups and communities will be analyzed. Through all the divisions and historical facts that have befallen Lebanon, including the economic crisis and global outbreak of the pandemic, this thesis aims to reflect Lebanon's policies and possible answers and proposals for a better future for Lebanon.

CHAPTES' BREAKDOWN

Chapter One

In this part, the theoretical framework that was most suitable for this paper will be analyzed. In order to fully understand Lebanon's responses and reactions, it is very important to first understand its political structure and the way it acts when it comes to internal issues. Once this part is clarified, any subsequent crisis that comes from the borders will be easier to understand and analyze. In addition to the political structure of Lebanon, which is general seen as a fundamental problem for what is happening in this country, it is also important to state in which group of countries Lebanon actually belongs when it comes to its weaknesses. Therefore, in this chapter, the division of the states according to their strengths and weakness will be given; then through the historical events that befell Lebanon and also through what is happening today in this country will help a lot in determining the status of this state.

Chapter Two

In many articles and books, Lebanon is called the “miniature of the Middle East” or “Mirror of the Middle East”³. The reason behind this can be seen in Lebanese history. Lebanon, like many countries in the Middle East, is the territory where different people used to live, so that the residents of Lebanon have always been divided into different groups, whether ethnic or religious. The influences of these groups of people and their culture can still be seen and felt in Lebanon today. When it comes to religious divisions, they are mainly divided between Christians and Muslims. The remnants of these cultures, people and traditions have greatly defined the demographics of Lebanon. In fact, this knowledge will help us understand how and why certain groups are responding to the Syrian crisis. In this section, Lebanese attitudes will be analyzed in the light of the historical ties between Syria and Lebanon. Lebanon is still struggling with the aftermath of the civil war, its political institutions are not regulated enough to respond to the crisis properly. One of the first conclusions is that the crisis was tragic for the majority population, contributed to greater instability and great poverty of the population, which caused dissatisfaction, and their dissatisfaction and conflict.

³ Zahide Tuba Kor, ‘*Ortadoğu’nun Aynası Lübnan*’, IHH Araştırma ve Yayınlar Birimi, Birinci Basım Aralık 2009, pp. 1.

The Syrian crisis that started in 2011 had very negative effects, primarily within its own country, and as the crisis spread, it crossed borders, so the neighboring countries were also affected. Taking into account the geographical proximity of Lebanon and Syria, but also their intertwined histories, it was clear at the beginning that the negative impact of this crisis will be felt on Lebanese ground as well. This section will present a spillover from the Syrian crisis. How the crisis affected the socio-economic segment, how it affected politics, whether it caused an increase in radicalization, and to what extent it shook the security of this state will be analyzed in this part.

Chapter Three

This section will explain Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system, after which it will be possible to understand the ways in which the Lebanese government responded to the Syrian crisis. By explaining this concept that the government has taken different steps when it comes to the crisis, this work will contribute to literature in this part. Based on literature review and interviews, this section is subset to show us how the Lebanese government responded to the crisis. Lebanon's presence in the crisis is based on rights, but at some moments their reaction was also adapting and learning the best way not to spread the crisis too much. Taking this into account, we will consider all their approaches and add to literature as such and allow further research based on these facts.

Since 2012, a great number of refugees have moved to Lebanon, but due to the attitude of the Lebanese government, they have not been able to establish places where they could live a normal life. The split of this crisis was negative for Lebanon in terms of economy, politics, culture and opportunities for the state of Lebanon. There are a number of decisions and plans that were supposed to address the further negative effects of the crisis, but due to the instability and disunity of the state of Lebanon, these plans have not been implemented in most cases. Also, in these responses, states are also pressured by international refugee organizations to provide assistance and relief to find a solution for displaced people. In the case of Lebanon, the government itself, from the beginning until today, has not been officially accepted by Syrian refugees and the establishment of camps for them. The reason for this is the negative experience and the belief that the refugees will not stay in Lebanon for long. However, given the geographical location of Lebanon and Syria, and the historical connections, it is impossible for Lebanon not to react to the influx.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based primarily on explaining concepts related to the way Lebanon is governed and a multi communal concept that is largely responsible for the Lebanese reactions towards the crisis. For this study, a qualitative research method was adopted in order to better understand the complex situation. In order to highlight the new perspective with this thesis, the comprehensive literature overview was done. I have used many primary and secondary sources that would help in answering the research question. This thesis consists of articles, surveys and reports. In order to draw a clearer picture of the Lebanese attitudes towards the crisis, I also have conducted interviews in Lebanon with the people who were in some way affected by the crisis. The surveys that were conducted consisted of 10 open-ended questions. Two surveys were conducted- one consisting of questions only prepared for Syrians and the other consisting of questions only for Lebanese citizens.

LIMITATIONS

To be able to better understand Lebanon and events occurring in this country and do the research that would be built on facts, I really believe it is very important to understand the Arabic language. Not being able to speak Arabic might be one of the limitations I have faced. However, thanks to the help of Arabic-speaking friends, I was able to gather the necessary information for a particular issue.

As for the surveys and interviews conducted in Lebanon, due to the pandemic and the restrictions, it was not possible to achieve the number of the participants that was initially conceived. All things considered, the information received from both literature and surveys were sufficient to answer the research question.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to better understand the chaotic policy of Lebanon and the attitudes it has towards the Syrian crisis, as well as the reasons behind these attitudes, it is necessary to implement a suitable theoretical framework. The countries of the Middle East are known for their chaotic system that is generally very far from a democracy. But if we look at the Lebanese example of the political division we can say that they apply democracy more compared to other Middle Eastern countries.

Given all multiethnic and religious divisions, Lebanon has somehow succeeded in establishing a working political institution. However, although they are evenly divided, the complex situation has led to different responses and reactions to the Syrian crisis. In this chapter the system that is implemented in the Lebanese political structure will be explained. Beside the system and political structure that is implemented in this country, there will be a word on the status of the states in International Relations. Explaining the status of the states which can be strong, weak, failed, collapsed or fragile, will be of a great help in determining the status of Lebanon and as such understand the actions and reactions that this country is taking today.

1. States in the theory of International Relations: An Alternative Classification

(Strong states, weak states, failed states, collapsed and fragile states)

In order to make the events in Lebanon understandable, it is first important to understand what kind of a country Lebanon is. Here arises the need to analyze the relationship between the strength of this state and its reaction to what is happening inside or outside the country. States are divided into different divisions based on different terms. However, what is important to understand when it comes to Lebanon is the division based on their ability to react. Looking from this aspect, states are divided into strong and weak, fragile, failed and collapsed states. In the following, regarding the categories of these countries, definitions will be presented and that will allow us to understand what is behind the descriptions of these categories.

1.1. Strong States

“**Strong states**, unquestionably control their territories and deliver a full range and a high quality of political goods to their citizens. They perform well according to indicators like GDP per capita, the UNDP Human Development Index, Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, and Freedom House’s Freedom of the World Report. Strong states offer high levels of security from political and criminal violence, ensure political freedom and civil liberties, and create environments conducive to the growth of economic opportunity. The rule of law prevails. Judges are independent. Road networks are well maintained. Telephones work. Snail mail and e-mail both arrive quickly. Schools, universities, and students flourish. Hospitals and clinics serve patients effectively.”⁴

1.2. Weak States

“ **Weak states** (broadly, states in crisis), include a broad continuum of states: they may be inherently weak because of geographical, physical or fundamental economic constraints; or they may be basically strong, but temporarily or situationally weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism or external attacks. Weak states typically harbor ethnic, religious, linguistic or other intercommunal tensions that have not yet become overly violent. In weak states, the ability to provide adequate amounts of other political goods is diminished or is diminishing. Physical infrastructural networks are deteriorated. Schools and hospitals show signs of neglect, particularly outside the main cities. GDP per capita and other critical economic indicators have fallen, sometimes dramatically; levels of venal corruption are embarrassingly high and escalating. Weak states usually honor rule of law precepts in the breach. They harass civil society. Weak states are often ruled by despots, elected or not. “⁵

1.3. Failed States

“**Failed states** are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous and contested bitterly by warring factions. In most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals. Occasionally, the official authorities in a failed state face two or more-

⁴ Robert I. Rotberg, ‘*Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Cause and Indicators*’ in: Rotberg, R., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, p. 4.

⁵ Rotberg, pp. 4.

insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at the groups within the state. “⁶

It is useful to mention that the actual effectiveness of a state is reflected in its way of acting. Therefore, it is easy to distinguish between states that are strong, states that are weak and those that end up in the category of states that are described as failed or collapsed. However, here we can note that as a state can go from strong to weak, it can also be the other way- from weak to a stronger one. Here it is necessary that the state strives for structural and institutional changes that would not lead it to collapse. Here are some examples. The examples of Somalia and Sierra Leone are mentioned, where the authorities and rights that belong to citizens have been totally disintegrated and as a result these countries have fallen from fragile states within the framework of collapsed states. ⁷ Another example is the example of Lebanon which is considered as very enlightening when speaking about the fragility of states. This is an example from the period of 1943, where, as today, the leaders could not find an agreement on the division of power. Such circumstances in which Lebanon found itself led to it belonging to the group of collapsed states. The same thing happened in the 1990s during the Civil War. But when peace was established after the war and a political compromise was reached- here the politicians finally acted together and this is very important for the maintenance of the state- the state was reconstructed. This became possible with the actions of Syria and also with the promised security for the people. So, from the collapsed state, with certain measures taken, Lebanon managed to revive after these disintegrations. ⁸

1.4.Collapsed States

“***Collapsed state*** is a rare and extreme version of a failed state. Political goods are obtained through private and or ad hoc means. Security equated with the rule of the strong. A collapsed state exhibits a vacuum of authority. It is a mere geographical expression, a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen. There is dark energy, but the forces of entriness have overwhelmed the radiance that hitherto provided some semblance of order

⁶ ibid, pg. 5.

⁷ Andrea Cornwall, Deborah Eade, ‘ *Deconstructing Development Discourse Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*’, Practical Action, 2010., Chapter 28, pg. 283.

⁸ Robert I. Rotberg, ‘ *Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Cause and Indicators*’ in: Rotberg, R., When States Fail: Causes and Consequences, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, p. 10.

and other vital political goods to the inhabitants (no longer the citizens) embraced by language or ethnic affinities or borders. “⁹

These definitions are mostly the same, explained in different sources. Our aim is to find one which would perfectly fit Lebanon and help to understand Lebanese reactions as a state. There is one more definition left and after giving its explanation, it will be possible to eventually find the one that would be the most suitable for Lebanon. Those are fragile states. To be able to conclude that Lebanon belongs to fragile states, it is needed to first identify and understand the characteristics that determine a country’s fragility.

1.5.Fragile States

There are some basic characteristics that determine the fragile state. First of all, these are the impossibility and inadequacy of action in terms of institutions and administrative structures. These are mostly inefficient institutions that are also corrupted. It is mentioned that “*the rule is based on selective coercion, not on the legitimacy and rule of law.*”¹⁰ Fragile states are also characterized as countries that are not able to define policies that would benefit citizens, or even if they determine some policies, those are mostly not based on legitimacy and there are many omissions in the law. When it comes to economics in fragile states, the situation is no better here either. Because as it is stated, “*..they lack coherent national economies which are capable of sustaining a basic level of welfare for the population and of providing resources for running an effective state.*”¹¹

In such states the people are mostly living on very low economic standards.

Another characteristic that is cited as a result of such a state is the connection between citizens and the state. In strong and developed countries that provide their citizens with basic political, economic, and social rights, they contribute to making the citizens of such a well-organized state feel safe in their country without further desire to ask other countries to do so. In this way, security and trust in the states are created. While on the other hand in the fragile states that do not provide basic rights to their citizens, it

⁹ Ibid, pg. 9-10.

¹⁰ Lothar Brock, Hans-Henrik Holm, Georg Sorensen, Michael Stohl, ‘*Fragile States*’, Polity Press, UK, pg. 17.

¹¹ Brock, Holm, Sorensen, pg. 17.

becomes the reason for citizens not being connected enough with their states. Instead of relying on the state, they turn to their ethnic communities to fulfill their basic needs and the rights that a state should actually provide. What can be concluded is that in such states “community of citizens” or “community of sentiment” are not developed enough to represent the basic connection that is at the national level.¹²

When defining fragile states there is not much difference between definitions in different resources. However, in order to better understand the difference between the fragile states and others, it is important to give more examples and explain the ways in which they are defined so that a difference between the definitions can be easily established. Fragile states are always defined as states that lack the basic rules that a state needs to be functional. These countries are characterized as:

- “Weak, ineffective and unstable political institutions and bad governance, conducive to loss of state autonomy, informalisation and privatization of state, personal and exclusionary rule, neopatrimonialism, and prebendal politics;
- Inability to exercise effective jurisdiction over its territory, leading to the recent concept of ‘ungoverned territories’;
- Legitimacy crisis, occasioned by problematic national cohesion, contested citizenship, violent contestation for state power, perennial challenges to the validity and viability of the state, and massive loss and exit of citizens through internal displacement, refugee flows, separatist agitation, civil war and the like;
- Unstable and divided population, suffering from a torn social fabric, minimal social control and pervasive strife that encourage exit from rather than loyalty to the state;
- Underdeveloped institutions of conflict management and resolution, including credible judicial structures, which pave the way for recourse to conflict-ridden, violent, non-systemic and extra-constitutional ways in which to articulate grievances and seek redress;
- Pervasive corruption, poverty, and low levels of economic growth and development, leading to lack of financial capacity to discharge basic functions of

¹² Ibid, pg. 17-18.

statehood, including, most importantly, obligations to the citizens such as protection from diseases and guarantees of overall human security. “¹³

2. Lebanon as a Fragile State

After theoretical explanations and divisions of states, their weaknesses and strengths, it will be easier to decide in which group Lebanon should be placed. These definitions greatly help to respond to the reactions that Lebanon applies to any events in which it finds itself. Also, based on this division, the weaknesses and strengths of the Lebanese political system can be understood and better explained.

When talking about the states, it has to be noted that they should be immutable during their history and their existence. That is why sometimes it can be very confusing to determine which group countries like Lebanon belong to. Lebanon is a country that throughout history has faced a lot of ups and downs. The situation it is in today represents a difficulty in determining its condition. As stated in the examples above, Lebanon has often changed, it failed and it has risen. That’s why in some of the resources it is stated that “*Lebanon today qualifies as weak rather than failed, because its state is credible, civil war is absent and political goods are being provided in significant quantities and quality.*”¹⁴ However, after the economic crisis, explosions, conflicts and protests, insufficient action of the politicians and lack of basic rights and needs of citizens, leads us to wonder whether instead of fragile states Lebanon actually belongs to failed states. If we take a look at Fragile States Index¹⁵, which measures the vulnerability of a particular state on the basis of four basic indicators, it will greatly help to decide in which group of the states should Lebanon be placed. These indicators include cohesion, economic, social and political indicators. Cohesion indicators are measured according to security apparatus, factionalized elites and group grievance. Economic indicators include decline, uneven economic development and human flight and brain drain. Political indicators include state legitimacy, public services and human rights as well as the rule of law. And

¹³ Andrea Cornwall, Deborah Eade, “*Deconstructing Development Discourse Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*”, Practical Action, 2010., Chapter 28, pg. 283.

¹⁴ Robert I. Rotberg, “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Cause and Indicators” in: Rotberg, R., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, p. 17.

¹⁵ Fragile States Index, powered by The Fund For Peace. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/indicators/>

the last one- social indicators include demographic pressures, refugees and IDPs and external intervention.¹⁶

Based on these measurements, 179 countries and their fragility are shown annually in a certain period. This section will be of great importance in order to accurately see the picture of Lebanon and its fragility in the last two years under the influence of the events that took place. In addition to the statistics on the status of countries provided by the FSI, there are detailed analyzes that show what countries are going through and what actually affects their changes in status when it comes to defining their position as a state. One of the articles analyzes the situation in Lebanon in the last two years after all the events that took place in the area. Looking at the historical part of Lebanon and the wars that happened and also the Arab Spring from 2011, Lebanon is rather characterized as a resilient country that managed to withstand all these shakes. Yet, due to the vulnerabilities within the structural and political institutions, as well as ethnic divisions, the recent events that have befallen Lebanon have shaken this country. Although the FSI states that in 2020 the fragility status of this country when compared to other 178 countries was not at such a bad level (40th in 2020¹⁷), in Lebanon there was a decline in the economic indicator which would lead to an even worse situation in 2021.

After the end of the war in the 1990s, the government of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri launched programs that would help Lebanon recover both economically and infrastructurally. To achieve this, the government decided to take on debt and thus allow the country to recover. This project did bring some economic growth, yet this was not for the long term. It is stated that *“Against the backdrop of budget deficits and a growing public debt, a reduction of tax rates to attract investment led to budgetary austerity which, in turn, led to use of indirect taxes to account for budgetary shortfalls, and reduced investment in social services”*¹⁸, and, *“...subsidies to commercial banks and attractive interest rates to foreign depositors to shore up foreign currency reserves resulted in huge fiscal costs, with the payment of high interest rates by the central bank failing to garner enough returns for interest in capital repayment.”*¹⁹ Having in mind the clientelistic

¹⁶ Fragile States Index: Indicators. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/indicators/>

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Wilson Wendy, ‘ ‘ *From one crisis to the Next in Lebanon* ’ ’, Fragile States Index, 2020.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

political structure of this country, it is clear that this model for long-term economic recovery could not succeed, but on the contrary deepened inequality and increased poverty.

This economic attempt to sustain Lebanon, years later, has caused further dissatisfaction among citizens starting from economic collapse in October 2019 to protests against the government and the Lebanese political structure. That year, regardless of ethnic divisions, everyone stood as one and began to express their dissatisfaction with the protests caused by the country's inefficiency, constant problems and setbacks in politics and political institutions that they believe are the main problem of the country's economic decline. The protests that began in 2019 are exacerbated by the emergence of COVID-19, and eventually by the explosion that only contributed to this country going from one crisis to another, contributing to the fragility status. As mentioned above, compared to the level of fragility from 2020, Lebanon among 179 countries has dropped to 34th place in 2021 according to the Fragility States Index, which clearly shows us that the situation and fragility here are worsening each year.²⁰

2.1. Confessionalism

Lebanon is rich in its diversity in all areas and the formation of the Lebanese state and society was a complex process. The diversity of the religion in Lebanon has forced many communities there to find the ideal way of communication and interaction. Seeking this, in 1943 Lebanon's religious leaders signed an unwritten "National Pact". This Pact defined the country's political system as confessionalism. This system will later be questioned by many, due to the inability to implement the reforms needed for Lebanon. Secularization in Lebanon seemed impossible until the 20th century, all because of religion, which remained the most important factor in Lebanon regardless of the other factors. For this reason, nations based on religious differences have become the basic criteria for determination in this society. The biggest conflict in Lebanon, which also caused mistrust between religions is the long civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. What made this situation even worse is the absence of official or unofficial institutions that could mediate between certain populations and thus calm the tensions. Confessional tensions in this state arise due to difficult agreement on the form of the

²⁰ Fragility States Index: Countries Data <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>

government and identity of the state. The political structure of the post-war period is questionable because of this heterogeneous society. Another reason is the political reform that should have been made with attention paid to the balance between confessional groups and the changes in society that occurred after the war. Understanding Lebanese confessionalism would be the most important term that might help in understanding Lebanese policies. It is primarily important to understand the division of people in Lebanon. It is a country which is divided in almost all segments, including religion, culture, and ethnicity. This diversity has made it difficult to create a stable political system since all the groups have their own opinion and interests on a particular problem. In Lebanon, one ethnic community, in this case Arabs, has been divided and formed many other religious communities. The same happened with the Christian community and they are divided within their community of Maronites, Orthodox, Catholics, Greek Catholics and Armenians. ²¹Confessionalism is described as a form of consociationalism. According to political scientists, this form of state is defined as *“a state which functions are durable despite major internal divisions along ethnic, religious or linguistic lines in which no sub-group commands a majority.”*²² *“Confessionalism is a system of consociational government that exerts equal political and institutional division by involving all religious divisions represented.”*²³ Lebanon is an example of a confessional state where all political positions in different institutions are distributed equally to all religious representatives. In particular what is done by implementing confessionalism are the distribution of government seats in the parliament so that all religious groups are equally divided to represent their communities. Different communities have developed different approaches and had different interests regarding the country's development. Such a complex confessional structure of Lebanese society determined the state structure of a modern Lebanon. Due to this, in Lebanon clan and corporate structures have been created on the basis of local religious communities. These communities are capable of influencing the political system and all the decisions made. As a result, a system of confessionalism has been implemented and it still exists

²¹ Petallides, Constantine, “Cedars to the East: A Study of Modern Lebanon”, Vol. 3, No. 12., pg. 1/1, 2011.

²² Melkite Catholic et al., *“Factsheet: Understanding Lebanese Confessionalism What Is Confessionalism ? What Is the History of Confessionalism in Lebanon? How Does Confessionalism Contribute to Lebanon ”*, no. 26 (2007).

²³ Ibid.

as the only way for governing and leading the country. Most of the time this form of the system has been questioned due to the all conflicts that has happened in this country.

Taking into the consideration that confessionalism is a form of consociationalism, the meaning and implementation of consociationalism and consociational democracy, its roots and ideologies will be explained as the next theoretical term.

2.2. Consociationalism

In many scientific and journalistic discussions it is represented as an ideal model for resolving political issues. According to A. Lijphart, there is an adequate and effective way to resolve conflicts and issues in a simpler way in multi communal states. He presents his consociational democracy in last 1906s and it aims to make easier to understand how plural societies establish democracy. He claims that this model of democracy is ideal for societies and countries such as Lebanon. Although the definition of his model has been represented over time in other words, this model preserved its main definition: *“Consociational democracy means the government by an elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented culture into a stable democracy.”*²⁴ He also claims that there must be some criteria for establishing this model of democracy and it consists of four main characteristics. In order for this model to be implemented in the plural societies as we have in Lebanon, there must be the cooperation of elites within the grand coalitions in which they have their positions and represent them. Second characteristic implies proportional representation in assemblies, as well as proportional allocation of positions in the administration. Third implies the autonomy of social groups in areas that are important to them and the last fourth characteristic is related to the veto mechanisms to protect national interests.²⁵

As the most effective way to overcome conflicts, whether external or internal, Lijphart advocated the establishment of “power-sharing” political mechanisms. Thus, in plural societies, the development of democracy depended on the development of political elites and this way the conflict would be overcome. The whole role in the development of democracy is attributed to the elite who should be ready for reforms- political or social.

²⁴ Lijphart, A. (1977). *Consociational Democracy*. In *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (pp. 25-52). NEW HAVEN; LONDON: Yale University Press.

²⁵ Ibid.

In this way, the effort of the elites to establish reforms and act unanimously would, in fact, lead to the stabilization of the system.²⁶

As stated earlier, in order for this model of democracy to be successful in states such as Lebanon, it is important that they first accept and make changes that would facilitate governance. One of the matters, and there are more than one, that needs to be changed is for elites (politicians) not only to decide when it comes to their interests, but to answer on all matters that considers society as a whole with the help of democratic methods.

Another principle of consociationalism is based on the idea that ethnic groups have equal rights. There is no majority rule, leaders present their decisions to the smaller groups and try to find common compromise and make a decision that is in everyone's interest. A state that established consociational democracy has a system based on the proportional division of population and groups operating in all political and administrative institutions. According to this model, these groups may have "separate schools, community organizations and a distinct identity while sharing certain overarching values and institutions with the rest of the society."²⁷ The main idea of this model can be explained as a model where there is no "institutionalized dominance of any group but rather equal to equal relations and proportional distribution of public resources."²⁸ What consociationalism is supposed to bring to Lebanon and countries like Lebanon, is the fact that there is no majority in the state but there is a certain equilibrium among the groups. It should exclude the economic and social differences. People should be connected by the principle of loyalty and the one that is maybe the most important to implement in Lebanon is the existence of several political groups and no national blocs, fighting for the interest of all the community and not only their own.

Lebanon is a country where a consociational system is implemented, where the division of power is based on sectarian identities and this is the way the political scene is

²⁶ Lijphart, A. (1969), "Consociational Democracy.", 21 World Pol., pp. 207.

²⁷ Sammy Smooha, Theodor Hanf, "The Diverse Modes of Conflict-Regulation in Deeply Divided Societies," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 33, no. 1-2 (1992), pp. 26-47, doi: 10.1163/002071592X00031.

²⁸ *ibid.*

presented to the world and solve or rather “do not solve” the problems that prevail in the country.²⁹

2.3. Examples of Multicommunal Societies and Lebanon’s case

In the literature, multi communal societies are also referred to as plural societies. Lebanon with its history happens to be one of them. These types of societies exist in many countries and the way they operate in different countries also differ. First of all, it is important to point out that such societies are mostly unstable and this instability was influenced by the colonial past of particular countries. The most important characteristic of these societies is their division, whether cultural, ethnic or religious. These divisions affect policies that are established and because of their diversity, politics are only practiced along ethnic divisions. There is mostly disagreement among these communities when it comes to decision making and leading the country, which will also clearly be seen in Lebanon's case. Lebanon, due to its differences hasn’t managed to be politically stable because each side is equally fighting for its own interests. This problem dates back to 1932, when the only census was conducted. The reason behind this is the fear of a change in the balance between the Christian and Muslim population. If there were a change, it would automatically mean a larger or smaller number of representatives of a certain population in political institutions.³⁰ As already mentioned, in order for such societies to survive, they need to establish a form of democracy and in Lebanon, according to Ljiphart’s theory, the best way to survive is consociational democracy. Also, in such societies, politics are conducted on the basis of the ethnic features, where each group strives to take the best place in politics for themselves. This can provoke ethnic conflicts and even civil wars. Lebanon is a country rich in diversity. However, these differences have both good and bad sides. The development of the culture in muticommunal states enriches such countries, however when it comes to conflicts or external impacts, decision making and reactions are quite complicated.

²⁹ Hassan Krayem, “*The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement*,” *Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Selected Essays*, vol. 52, no. 1 (1997), pp. 411–435, <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html>.

³⁰ Milne JS. ALVIN RABUSHKA and KENNETH A. SHEPSLE. “Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability.”, Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill, 1972., pp.4, doi:[10.1177/000271627240400123](https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627240400123)

In many communal societies, the state's economic and political systems tend to be dominated by a single or multiple communal groups that are passive towards the needs of the other groups within the society. When it comes to multi communal societies, Lebanon can be an ideal example through which the meaning of multi communal can be defined. In many cases, multi communal is still used as another word for plural or diverse societies. In such societies, increasingly instigated, political, economic led "by single or multiple communal groups", and as such generally fight only for their interests without involvement of the smaller groups.³¹ This is the reason why Lijphart claims that implementing his Consociational Democracy is an ideal model for these societies. Although Lijphart sees it as an ideal model for heterogeneous societies in Lebanon, this model has also shown it has its advantages and disadvantages.

The idea was to build a state on the foundations of this democracy in a very diverse society. This way of governing the state enabled equal participation of members of all the groups, which meant that this form of democracy was defined by ethnic and sectarian factors. However, in addition to these factors, there are also families or family traditions that include the tradition of inheritance of positions, which is very common in Lebanon. Specifically, in Lebanon, high-level positions such as ministers, ambassadors, security positions are already occupied by the members of elites or political families. This usually leads to complications, because they control the state in almost all areas including politics, economy and foreign affairs.³²

Looking at such a system, it is clear that any response to the regional conflicts and crisis affecting Lebanon's peace has become difficult to come by; and the reason for this are the different interests of the different groups.

According to Shepsle and Rabushka, ethnic plural societies can be divided into several categories and Lebanon belongs to one of these categories. The categories are divided as follows: balanced competition societies, dominant majority societies, dominant minority societies and fragmented societies.³³ Lebanon belongs to the last

³¹ William Little, 'Introduction to Sociology – 1st Canadian Edition', Bcampus, Chapter 11., 2014.

³² Imad Salamey, 'The government and Politics of Lebanon'', First Edition, London, 2014, pp. 1-14.

³³ Alvin Rabushka, Kenneth A. Shepsle, 'Politics in Plural Societies'', Theory of Democratic Instability, pg. 88.

group. Other examples can be found in other countries and they will be mentioned below.

Balanced competition can be seen in Belgium, Malaysia, Trinidad and Guyana. In such societies no community stands out, the number of ethnic communities is small and none of them imposes its values on the entire political order. The protection of minorities is highlighted here and the number of multi-ethnic coalitions needed for rule is very small.³⁴

The second category are **dominant majority societies** and they include Rwanda, Zanzibar, Ceylon, Mauritius, Cyprus and Northern Ireland. What is characteristic for these societies is that one ethnic community stands out and it has a strategic advantage. In such societies, multi-ethnic coalitions are almost non-existent. The dominant community is the one that has the advantage and minorities and their rights are only important who come to division in the dominant community. Minorities are dissatisfied with the rights given to them and therefore seek communal protection.³⁵

The third category are societies with a dominant **minority**, societies in which the minority got dominance even before the creation of the state. Here are just two examples- Rhodesia and South Africa. Such societies have limited political power within the dominant communities they acquired in the pre-national period. However, in these communities there is also a fear of dominant communities and their political power.³⁶

Another category that stands out and describes the various plural societies and includes Lebanon are **fragmented societies**. In addition to Lebanon there are also Yugoslavia, Congo, Sudan and Nigeria that can be included. What is characteristic for fragmented societies are large numbers of ethnic groups and none of them is dominant. Another important feature of these societies are: “

1. A multiplicity of ethnic groups;
2. The absence of effective brokerage institutions, e.g. national political parties, and

³⁴ Rabushka, Shepsle, pg. 90.

³⁵ Rabushka, Shepsle, pg. 90.

³⁶ Ibid, pg, 90.

3. The tendency for authoritarian rule by military or paramilitary organizations.

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Political institutions in such societies are not the best organized, which could be seen through the example of Lebanon. Creating coalitions in such societies is sometimes very weak and even impossible. Even when coalitions are formed, they are short-term or do not reach the goal which they were formed for. Therefore, in fragmented societies, political conflicts occur very easily and most of the time it is caused by the mistrust between the groups.

3. POLITICAL SYSTEM IN LEBANON

“ Lebanon is a sectarian state – the sectarian state par excellence. “

D. Hrist³⁸

Since the period after declaring independence, democracy in this country has been on very unstable feet, very fragile. What will follow from this year until today essentially lies in the inability of this state to establish a certain form on which Lebanon would be governed. For years, under the influence of external actors, when this country finally got rid of all the influences, due to its inexperience it still hasn't found an ideal solution for leading the state. Understanding Lebanon, its policies, its treatment of problems, crises and conflicts within the country and the region, in fact explains the entire Middle East. In order to understand today why Lebanon has certain reactions, it is important to go a little further into history, do a detailed review of the literature, read the statements of important people in certain periods, and finally understand the reactions of Lebanon. Joane Randa Nucho, in her book, explained the “Everyday Sectarianism” in Lebanon. ³⁹What is explained here will in fact explain all the events that are happening in Lebanon. Sectarianism is something that is lived in Lebanon in every part of their lives, this can be seen in many articles, books, but mostly on the streets and in conversations with people. The concept of sectarianism in Lebanon permeates all segments of life, action and

³⁷ Ibid., pg. 178.

³⁸ Hrist David, “*Beware of small states: Lebanon, battleground of the Middle East.*” Nation Books, 2011, pg.2.

³⁹ Joanne Randa Nucho, “*Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon*”, Princeton University Press, pg. 1-30.

reaction. This term refers to several things, which makes it difficult to understand the actions of the state.⁴⁰ The first thing it refers to is the political party, where due to sectarianism a system of confessionalism develops. It can easily be said that “Sectarianism and politics are two sides of the same coin in Lebanon.”⁴¹ In a plural societies such as Lebanon, the political system and actions depend on individuals and their interests. The system in Lebanon can be described as a patronage system. It is an important feature of the social structure in Lebanon. This system dates back to the period of Ottoman rule.⁴² From that period until today, this system has continued to operate in modern Lebanon. All the activities of the system are related to the economic and political actions of the groups or families that represent Zuama. What is characteristic of such systems is the strong role of strong and wealthy families in a particular country. In Lebanon clientelism is developed and the roots of this form can be found even from the ancient times in the patron-client relationship. At that time the land would be offered to the clients in exchange for the loyalty. When a parallel is drawn with a modern society, the similar connection between politicians and the people in Lebanon can be seen today. Political leaders today, in exchange for voters, promise loyalty and fulfillment of the interest of those who will vote. Political leaders are called Zaim⁴³, and in political societies such as Lebanon, they have great influence on elections and the election of officials. Their political and social position is very important, especially because Zaim comes from the same families. Political leadership is often hereditary and policy-making is seen as a family business. It is often possible to see that there are several members of one family in the government who perform different functions. A large number of the representatives in the parliament actually represent the Zuama system and work according to it. It is also important to note that they differ in the way they express their views and due to that, some of the representatives may have modern attitude towards a certain interest, while others may take a more traditional stance. The most important and influential families in Lebanon are as well as their political parties represent the Zuama

⁴⁰ Alexander D. M. Henley, ‘*Religious Authority and sectarianism in Lebanon*’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pg, 1-34.

⁴¹ Rima Majed, ‘*The shifting Sands of Sectarianism in Lebanon*’, Global Dialogue, Magazine for International Sociological Association.

⁴² Albert Hourani, “The Emergence of the Modern Middle East”, University of California Press, pg. 142, 1981.

⁴³ Ibid.

system. They can represent larger or smaller groups and create politics through their activities in political parties. There are different types of Zaim and they inhabit different parts of Lebanon. They can be separated into three groups and one of them is Feudal Zaim or Zuama.⁴⁴ They are more traditional and religious and this is the perspective through which they are active on the ground. Various religious groups represent this type of the Zuama, mostly Shiites from the South Lebanon and Bekaa, Sunnis from Akkar and also Druzes. Important families that have a role here are Jumblatt and Assad. Beside this type of the Zuama, there is also populist type who own certain properties and in those parts they inhabit, especially the northern part of the country in Christian parts, they establish patronage ties with families from those areas and expect support from them while providing protection.⁴⁵ And the last division of the Zuama system is a group of the Zaim that originates from the Muslim community or more precisely Sunni community. They use a patronage system to enable urban workers to exercise their leadership. These Zuama examples are mostly found in the coastal part of the country. The families that have an important role here are Karami, Mukkadam, Salam and Kulaylat.⁴⁶ Another of the main features of this system is the idea it is based on. As already mentioned, the patronage system according to which Zaim has its patron/boss relation with the citizens and during the elections the basic services are promised to the voters in exchange for votes and loyalty. In this way they strengthen their positions. In many resources, Zaim is shown as a very important role on the Lebanese political scene and their duties are based on organizing the groups they lead. Thus they can make their positions stronger through arming and getting stronger in a political way. This feudal way of governing in modern Lebanon has two important roles and they include for Zaim to enable the particular community to use the services provided under the patronage system. Another feature is their ability to have the right to impose sanctions on all those services and conditions from which citizens can benefit. In addition to internal influences in the political system, their

⁴⁴ Lemarchand, Rene, and Keith Legg. "Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis." *Comparative Politics* 4, no. 2 (1972): 149–78. <https://doi.org/10.2307/421508>.

⁴⁵ Fawwaz Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon", Heinrich Boll Stiftung Middle East, pg. 85.

⁴⁶ Albert Hourani, "The Emergence of the Modern Middle East", University of California Press, pg. 172-173, 1981.

influence is also established and large when it comes to Lebanon's foreign political affairs.

3.1. Structure of the Political System in Lebanon

Lebanon's history since independence has been marked by alternating periods of political stability. It is a homogeneous country which is dominated by Arabs. Lebanon is deeply divided in religious, cultural and political terms. Beside the ethnic homogeneity, there is also a religious division into Muslims and Christians. Muslims and Christians are also divided according to their different teachings. Muslims are divided into Shiites, Sunnis, Druze, Ismailis, Alawites and Nasuri. Christians include Maronite Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrians Catholic, Roman Catholic.⁴⁷ These are two leading religious groups in Lebanon. Religious friction has been present for more than 10 centuries and at the same time undermines the idea of the development of the unique national identity. Since none of the religions has a dominant majority, conflicts take place among all the groups. It is possible to see the conflicts among Christians against Muslims, Christians against Christians, Muslims against Muslims. Throughout the history in Lebanon various forms of confessionalism has been implemented. The reason for this was the aim to protect the identity of communities. This would also help in establishing the balance between them. The modern form of confessionalism was established by the constitution from 1926 and with the census from 1932 the relationship between Christians and Muslims was established. In 1943, the National Pact was passed and it determined the number of representative groups. The distribution of the main political functions was as follows: the president had to be always Maronite, the Prime Minister had to be from the Sunni community and the Speaker of the Parliament was elected among the Shiite community.⁴⁸ Even though the distribution was planned to bring equality between the groups, due to the deep divisions and other factors the conflicts between the groups are common in Lebanon. In 1963 the ideology of secular-oriented nationalism took place in Lebanon. It brought counterbalance to the dominance of Shiite religious groups. The constant marginalization of Lebanese Shiites by the

⁴⁷ Catechetical Corner, "Who are Christians in the Middle East?", United States of Catholic Bishops, 2015.

⁴⁸ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *"A history of Modern Lebanon"*, Pluto Press, pg. 88, 2007.

Maronite-Sunni coalition led to the deterioration of ethno-religious relations and the politicization of the issue of religious identity.⁴⁹

The division of power in Lebanon is not a new concept and the roots of this kind of administration can be found in 1861⁵⁰. Since then, all established regimes have pursued a policy based on this division, regardless of the regime in question. As such, Lebanon, despite the wars, conflicts and all the violence that took place in this territory, none of them has changed the division of power. Lebanon, managed to survive but with frequent conflicts and the inability of the groups to agree on any issue regarding the functioning of Lebanon as a state due to the deep divisions. As already mentioned, there are 18 religious sects in Lebanon, and any political decision regarding domestic or foreign policy depends on these groups.⁵¹ The aim is always to make a balanced decision so that all the parties are satisfied, but this is often not the case. The last census was conducted in 1932 and since then the census has not been conducted again. At that time, the number of Christian communities that included Maronites, Christian Greek Orthodox and Catholics, Armenians and others, was significantly higher than the Muslim community represented by Sunni and Shiite communities. The reason why the census was not conducted after 1932 is the fear that it would change the balance between the communities. In this way, the presence on the political scene and decision-making on any issue in Lebanon would change if any party gained a stronger position compared to others. These groups in Lebanon live in different geographical parts of Lebanon. Sometimes it is possible for more of them of different backgrounds to be in the same place; but most of the time they have their parts they inhabit.

The first time when the division of power took place in this territory was in 1861 during the rule of the Ottoman Empire.⁵² At that time, different religious groups still lived in different parts of today's Lebanon. Conflicts arose between these groups for different economic and trade reasons. Each of them, especially the Maronites at the time, wanted to strengthen their position. This provoked conflicts that would later give rise to the first

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Fakhoury, T., "Debating Lebanon's Power-Sharing Model: An opportunity or and Impasse for democratization", *Studies in the Middle East The Arab Studies Journal*, 22, pg. 230-255.

⁵¹ Petallides, Constantine, "Cedars to the East: A Study of Modern Lebanon", Vol. 3, No. 12., pg. 1/1, 2011.

⁵² Marie Joelle Zahar, "Power-Sharing, Credible Commitment and State (re)Building: Comparative Lessons from Bosnia and Lebanon", 2008.

configuration of power and power-sharings. But there was not too much violence between the communities. After the end of the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon in 1920 fell under the French mandate along with Syria. What will happen next when it comes to the political system in Lebanon then and today, also the influence of Syria, actually dates from this period. In 1926, France tried in various ways to determine the most appropriate way of political order. With this mandate in Lebanon, there was an even greater sectarian enlightenment due to the fact that the number of Maronites strengthened and increased. They supported the creation of Greater Lebanon, while other sectarian groups, especially Sunnis, did not want independence. In 1926, from Greater Lebanon it became the Republic of Lebanon and with this the political activity had changed.⁵³ According to the new constitution, legislative power is given to the senate and the chamber of deputies. The aim was to continue the idea of creating an integrated Lebanon, but with this power sharing it became difficult to achieve this goal. With these divisions, the deepening and highlighting the differences between the groups. But in some points, regardless of these religious, national or sectarian differences there still was a room for a compromise between them. The reason for this was a desire to create a state in which they could strengthen their positions. The Maronites still had a significant position then, which will later and even today cause dissatisfaction of the other groups. But even these solutions, which France left as a dowry, were only good for a short-time period. In the long run, they only brought and led to political destabilization. Although the aim was for each group to have a certain position and as such a share in decision-making, there were still conflicts that made Lebanon vulnerable to the deepening of sectarianism and clientelism. Also, Syria's influence was still deeply felt in Lebanese political ground. They used the factional and sectarian divisions in order to increase their influence.

The next unwritten power sharing act was established in 1943.⁵⁴ The establishment of the National Pact will lead to the end of the French mandate, and under this Pact, Lebanon's largest Christian and Muslim communities have decided to make a compromise. Lebanon has thus sought unification and tensions have been reduced and the possibility of an agreement between the two largest communities has diminished. In

⁵³ Kamal Salibi, "A house of many mansions, The History of Lebanon Reconsidered", University of California Press, pg. 17, 1988.

⁵⁴ Fakhoury, T., "Debating Lebanon's Power-Sharing Model: An opportunity or and Impasse for democratization", Studies in the Middle East The Arab Studies Journal, 22.

previous years, both communities had different views on Lebanon's future. The Maronites advocated that Lebanon remains under the French influence, while the Muslim community supported unification with Syria. However, with this unwritten agreement that will complete the Constitution, both sides have decided to give up their interests and work for the unification of the state. The National Pact was based on both sides agreeing to neutrality, ie. Nor will the Maronites seek to support French influence on the Lebanese decisions, nor will the Muslims support the idea of the unification with Syria. Secondly, all communities are guaranteed the rights on education, religion and other issues they find important for their communities. The third important item brought by the unwritten agreement is the representation of the communities in all state affairs according to their demographic size. The Pact sought to maintain the autonomy of 18 religious groups. In some segments, the unwritten agreement did regulate and facilitate the functioning of a state that had been under the influence of other powers for centuries. However, the National Pact, for various reasons, has begun to lose its strength over time. First of all, given the number of religious groups, it is clear that the division of political functions was an extremely sensitive topic. All religious groups had certain positions in the institutions. The Christian Maronites, who had always considered themselves superior to other groups had great power. They had the presidency of the Republic, while the Sunnis had the Prime Minister elected from their community. According to the National Pact, the number of Christian and Muslim seats in the Parliament was 6:5, and the two groups represented their communities. The aim of this Pact was an attempt at unification, but by the time it has started to lose its value. Although the first few years of the Pact have brought peace with numerous attempts to unite and represent all groups equally, there were still political and military crises that would lead to a civil war. ⁵⁵The influence and interference of external actors in Lebanon's internal affairs has further shaken the Pact, which under all of these influences has lost its main aim it was established for.

The next act that will regulate power sharing and political institutions in Lebanon is the Taif Agreement signed in 1989 in Saudi Arabia. ⁵⁶The aim of this agreement was

⁵⁵ Kamal Salibi, "A house of many mansions, The History of Lebanon Reconsidered", University of California Press, pg. 193-197, 1988.

⁵⁶ Matthijs Bogaards, "Formal and Informal Consociational Institutions: A Comparison of the National Pact and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon", Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Taylor & Francis Group, pg. 32, 2019.

to end the war that lasted for 15 years and determine the divisions of action on the political scene so that each side would be equally aim of this agreement was to end the war that lasted for 15 years and determine the divisions of action on the political scene so that each side would be equally satisfied. When the war ended, all sides accepted the conditions that were represented with this agreement. In 1943 National Pact made these divisions in 6:5, but with the Taif Agreement the divisions were made equally between all the religious groups.⁵⁷ A slightly greater balance was established between the groups, so that the Muslim population was more politically involved. What is also regulated is the equal distribution of the seats in parliament between the two major religious groups. Places were determined proportionally according to religious affiliations and districts. Also, with this Agreement it is decided that the president will always be chosen from the Maronite Christian community, the role of the Prime Minister, who was supposed to be from the Sunni community, was strengthened and the Speaker, whose mandate was increased to 4 years with this agreement, was from the Shiite community.⁵⁸ This agreement also increased the number of seats in the Parliament. In order to establish the balance and proportionality, Lebanon was divided into 26 districts. These units are grouped into five regions. These include Beirut, South Lebanon, North Lebanon, Bekaa and Mount Lebanon. From all these regions, it was sought that each religious group has a certain number of seats in parliament.⁵⁹ The number of representatives depends on the number of the citizens in a certain region. These reforms changed the authorizations but division of power remained the same. The Taif Agreement reduced the greater influence of only community, in this case Maronites influence, and power was divided among the most important religious groups. On the political scene, both Sunnis and Shiites got on their importance. When it comes to the judiciary and the executive power in Lebanon, they are also based on previous written and unwritten acts, primarily the National Pact and the Taif Agreement. The right to elect a president under the 1943 National Pact was given to the National Assembly, and as it is well-known today, the president had to be Maronite Christian. In that period, the powers of the president were greater than in the period after

⁵⁷ *ibid*, pg. 32.

⁵⁸ Bogaards, "Formal and Informal Consociational Institutions: A Comparison of the National Pact and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Taylor & Francis Group, pg. 35, 2019.

⁵⁹ Lebanese Arabic Institute, "Administrative Divisions of Lebanon", *Culture and Society* <https://www.lebanesearabicinstitute.com/administrative-divisions-lebanon/>

the Taif Agreement. At that time, the president had control over the Prime Minister, had a right on veto and was the head of the government. After the Taif Agreement, the president retained most of the powers, but they were also defined and more controlled. He retained the veto right, was head of state, Chair of a Supreme Defense Council and Commander of the armed forces.⁶⁰ What is also regulated by the Taif Agreement are the relations between Syria and Lebanon, but also other reforms concerning the economy, election laws and social development. The goal of these reforms was to create an integrated state and free it from foreign influences and interference in internal affairs. Achieving this was possible only with the creation of non-confessional regime, but they failed to establish it. Although the Taif Agreement was supposed to bring the rule of the institutions and not individuals further events proved that individuals still had significant roles in running this country. Namely, at that time, the “Troika”, the President of the Republic, the President of the Parliament and the President of the Council of Ministers saw themselves as the only representatives of their communities.⁶¹ Hence the first weakness of this agreement, which failed to implement a government based on institutions and not individuals. In such conditions, it happens that individuals struggle to prove their strength in relation to each other and to compete for supremacy. The political situation creates enough room for foreign actors to act and influence the communities they support within Lebanon. Thus, Syria, which already has a long history intertwined with Lebanon, has found this as an ideal opportunity to influence the domestic policy of the country. From this, a parallel can be drawn between the actions of the two countries and their influence in different periods in Lebanon. Just as France influenced the prominence of the Maronites during the term of office, now during the Taif period Syria could easily influence Syria’s political allies and strengthen their position. Syria’s influence on the government has also been great and its position has been strengthened, just as during the mandate of France and their influence on the strengthening position of the president. Although the withdrawal of Syria was authorized by the Taif, due to their strong position and influence, Syria had a right to also influence articles related to their withdrawal. When the first elections were held according to the new electoral law

⁶⁰ Bogaards, “Formal and Informal Consociational Institutions: A Comparison of the National Pact and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon”, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Taylor & Francis Group, pg. 32, 2019.

⁶¹ Khalil Gebara, “Pluralism in Lebanese Politics: Formalizing the Informal Senate”, *Baker Institute for Public Policy*, pg. 2.

established by the Taif Agreement, the first conflicts and dissatisfaction of the religious groups emerged. Under the new electoral law, cabinet decision-making required the support of two-thirds representatives in the cabinet. The others who disagreed had a right to veto. In this case, the election of the new electoral law was not supported by the Christian group. The Muslim representatives ignored this and continued the vote, which in essence, without the presence of the Christian community, did not meet all the rules set out in the agreement.⁶² This sequence of the events led to boycotts and conflicts, but the strength of Syria's influences and their support for the Muslim community led to this being ignored. For this reason, the deepening of the sectarian divisions emerged again and this was far from what the Taif Agreement was signed for. The influence of external actors and their presence in Lebanon's domestic politics did not in any way lead to democracy and integration of the country, but on the contrary caused divisions between the groups. Elites sought to strengthen their individual positions without caring about the interests of others. This led to a great dissatisfaction among religious communities in the 2000's over the political representation.⁶³ Although exposed to a number of factors that had both negative and positive impacts, and despite the numerous partition, conflicts and the civil war, Lebanon has managed to sustain the division of the powers. However, the democracy that was planned for years to be established has not been established to this day.

With this historical background of Lebanon concerning the political structure, it is possible to see and understand the Lebanese political system. The reasons for numerous conflicts and the interventions of external actors are made possible due to this political system. Moreover, it is possible to point out both pros and cons of this system, but in most cases this type of the power distribution has led only to the disagreements and conflicts between the groups. The confessional system in Lebanon on the one hand allows in a very divided country in terms of religion, sects and political affiliations to survive until today. However, this arrangement can be described as a double-edged sword. Throughout history and due to the impacts of various external interventions, it has been clear that

⁶² Marie Joelle Zahar, "Power-Sharing, Credible Commitment and State (re)Building: Comparative Lessons from Bosnia and Lebanon", 2008.

⁶³ Fakhoury, T., "Debating Lebanon's Power-Sharing Model: An opportunity or an Impasse for democratization", *Studies in the Middle East The Arab Studies Journal*, 22.

the aim was to establish the system that will create a balance between the groups. In this way, the tensions and conflicts would decrease.

3.2. Religious groups in Lebanon and their importance in Lebanese Political System

Religion in Lebanon has an important role in all spheres. As mentioned before, the political structure is based on confessionalism. This political system represents the organization of state power and it is done according to the division of society into religious communities. Religion in this country is strongly connected with all political acts and processes and it directly affects the legislative branch of government. ⁶⁴Thus, religion in Lebanon is much more complex than in other Arab countries. For Lebanon it is specific that in a very small area there are different cultures, religions, political groups and different interests. This can be seen as a beautiful part of a particular country, but this is not the case with Lebanon. These divisions and differences have only brought problems and disputes to this day. This comes even from the early history of Lebanon and continues until today. According to the World Bank Data, the estimated number of the Lebanese population is 6, 825, 442 million (2020). ⁶⁵ Although it is known that in Lebanon, due to the political power, religious division, the last census was in 1932 and the reason for this is the fear that if the new measurement occurs, there might be a change in the position of the religious groups. ⁶⁶That is why the exact population of Lebanon is generally very difficult to know. In Lebanon, the ethnic division consists of 3 groups and includes: Arab 95%, Armenian 4% and other 1%. ⁶⁷ Religious division consists of: Muslim 61.1% (30.6% Sunni, 30.5% Shia, smaller percentages of Alawites and Ismailis), Christian 33.7% (Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group), Durze 5.2% (2018 est.) ⁶⁸ Of all of these groups, the largest one belong to Maronites, then there are Sunnis, Shiites and Durzes. Muslim and Christian communities do not form a united structure inside their communities. They are also divided within the communities, they have their religious

⁶⁴ Gebara, "Pluralism in Lebanese Politics: Formalizing the Informal Senate", Baker Institute for Public Policy, pg. 2.

⁶⁵ The World Bank: Population, total: Lebanon.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LB>

⁶⁶ Joanne Randa Nucho, 'Everyday sectarianism in urban Lebanon: infrastructure, public services and power', Princeton University Press.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ World Population Review: Lebanon. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/lebanon-population>

leaders and leading communities. What is important to understand here is the attitude of the citizens towards the state and their attachment to the sectarian divisions. When it comes to the election for political institutions, absolute equality of religion is supported and the principle of equal representation is implemented.

4. CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON

4.1. Maronites

From all of the Arab countries, Lebanon has the largest percentage of the Christian population. Both Christians and Muslims in Lebanon are represented in the form of many different groups. The Lebanese state structure is based on power-sharing between large sect groups, Maronites, Sunnis, Shiite and Druze. These are the largest communities. The census that was conducted under the French influence in 1932, determined the distribution of sectarian power. The highest population at that time had Maronites, after them Sunni Muslims and the least crowded Shiites. According to these measurements, in Lebanon, Maronites have taken on the most important duties in the state since 1934. Any other census after that time was not conducted, as every religious community is afraid of overestimating the number of the representatives from other communities. This further could lead and provoke sectarian conflicts. The Maronites are the largest Christian community in Lebanon. The group of Christians in Lebanon include the Maronites, but also Rum Orthodox Christians, Rum Catholic Christians and Armenians. As far as the political scene and its influence are concerned, the Maronites are the most effective. The Maronites represent a Christian group that is very important and politically active. They mostly have the support of Western countries. In Lebanon, the president must always be a Christian, therefore it is easy to conclude the importance of this group. They mainly live in Beirut, have strong international ties and are highly developed culturally and touristically. The largest political party they lead is the Phalangist or al-Kataeb party.⁶⁹

The Maronites are the oldest Christians in the Middle East and they represent the largest group of Christians in this region.⁷⁰ The Christian families that stand out and are very effective on the Lebanese ground are Chamoun, Gemayel or Frangieh. Throughout

⁶⁹ Global Security, 'Lebanese Political Parties', <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/lebanon/political-parties.htm>

⁷⁰ Catechetical Corner, "Who are Christians in the Middle East?", United States of Catholic Bishops, 2015.

history, they had strong ties with the West, especially with France. During the Ottoman period and also under the French mandate, they had the strongest political role in Lebanon. Even today, their influence on the political Lebanese scene is of a huge impact. They strive to represent Lebanon to the West as much as possible and to keep good relations with them. Because of their identity, they only partly consider themselves as Arabs, there are those who point out their Phoenician roots. Before the civil war started, the Maronites were the strongest politically and economically. However, due to the large number of Maronites leaving Lebanon at the war time, their number decreased over time. Although this is not officially represented, their number and importance after the war was reduced. During the civil war, their biggest fear and threat were Sunni Muslims, while today it has changed. With the strengthening of the Shiite community, the fear that strong positions in politics will be taken by them emerged. In order for them not to lose their positions, Maronites actually agreed on making alliances with the Shiite group. This can be seen during the elections in 2009. Even though all the religious groups have different priorities and interests, they sometimes sign up for making unexpected alliances in order to keep their high positions on the political scene.⁷¹

4.1.1. Greek Orthodox Christians

A group of Christians who are second in number after the Maronites. The Greek Orthodox Church is the oldest church in Lebanon and its official name is the Antioch Orthodox Church. In dogmatic, ritual and cultic terms the Antioch Church differs from the other Orthodox churches. Orthodox people settled in Lebanon for the same reasons that led other nationalities or religious to seek refugee there, i.e. due to the persecution for religious beliefs by the ruling Syrian religion.⁷² The Orthodox in Lebanon had no political aspirations, however, the International Commission of 1861 granted the Orthodox in Lebanon the same rights as other nations. Orthodox intellectuals in Syria and Lebanon were of Arab origin of secular nationalism.⁷³ Lebanon's Muslim rulers largely pursued a policy of religious tolerance, so the majority of the population continued to

⁷¹ Zahide Tuba Kor, "*Ortadoğu'nun aynası Lübnan*", IHH Araştırma ve Yayınlar Birimi, Birinci Basım Aralık 2009, pg.75-76.

⁷² Catechetical Corner, "*Who are Christians in the Middle East?*", United States of Catholic Bishops, 2015.

⁷³ J. P. Spagnolo. "Constitutional Change in Mount Lebanon: 1861-1864." *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 1 1971: 25-48.

adhere to the Christian religion. During the Civil War, they advocated unity with Syria and the Orthodox Palestinians sided with the Muslims, the Lebanese Orthodox did not create their own militia, although some Orthodox Christians fought in the Maronite militias. The focus of this community is the idea of uniting Syria and Lebanon. They don't have a specific region where they have settled.⁷⁴ As for the relations with other religious groups, they have quite normal relations with all the groups. They are not connected with the Western countries as much as the Maronites Christians are. They accept their Arab identity as long as the Muslims are not trying to make the obvious connection between the Arab identity and the religion. When it comes to the establishment of their own political party, they managed to establish it only after the outbreak of conflicts in Syria, while other communities have had their political parties already established since independence.

4.1.2. Armenians

The fourth largest church in the Christian religion is the Armenian Apostolic Church. As head of the Armenian Church is the Catholicos of all the Armenians, who has his residence in Yerevan. Lebanese Armenians are completely independent, except in the religious matters. The Armenian Catholic Church dates its history back to 1742. The chair was transferred to Lebanon in 1750 and after resolving territorial disputes between secular and ecclesiastical administration, from 1867 to 1928 it was in Constantinople. The chair of the Armenian Catholic Church has been located in Beirut since 1928 and according to the official statistics for 1951 there were 14,218 Armenian Catholics in Lebanon. According to the last official census from 1932 conducted in Lebanon there were 5,800 of the Catholic Armenians. They have seats in the parliament but the number is nothing to compare to the other bigger communities.⁷⁵

4.1.3. Melkite Catholic

Greek Catholics are unions belonging to one of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Representatives of this community make up about 6% of the Lebanese population and

⁷⁴ Kelidar, Abbas. "The Struggle for Arab Unity." *The World Today* 23, no. 7 (1967): 292–300.

⁷⁵ Scott Abramson, "Lebanese Armenians; A Distinctive Community in the Armenian Diaspora and in Lebanese Society", *The Levantine Review*, Volume 2, Number 2, pg. 197, 2013.

about 12% of Lebanese Christians. The church was formed due to the huge socio-economic changes. This process was also influenced by the strengthening of economic and political positions of France in this area. More than 2/5 of all Greek Catholics live in the province Bekaa, in Zahlia, which is the center of the Lebanese Melkites. From the very beginning, the Melkite community was characterized as a very economical active community. Nevertheless, their high level of education and knowledge have given many of them the opportunity to successfully occupy many important positions in the state. The Melkite community elects six of its members in the parliament.⁷⁶

5. MUSLIMS IN LEBANON

5.1.Sunni

Sunni Islam is considered as the largest form of Islam implemented in the world. The Sunni reflects the most important principles of traditional Islam, adherence to values contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the idea of the community leadership in resolving the vital problems. Muslims in Lebanon also are divided into Sunnis, Shiites and Druzes. Sunnis, who represent the third largest community and make one-fifth of the total population ethnically belong to Arabs and they speak Arabic. They emerged in Lebanon during the Arab conquest in the 7th century, however, secular nationalism among Lebanese was rather weak and the Arabization of the Greek, Syrian and Phoenician populations took place quickly, but was not accompanied by "Sunnization". However, when it comes to religion they have different religious beliefs compared to Shiites. The places they inhabit are Beirut, Sidon, Tripoli, Baalbek and also they live in Akkar region. As for the political positions, Sunnis in Lebanon, like the Maronites, have a very important position both in politics and in economy. However, even though they are not the largest Muslim community in Lebanon, they are inferior to the Shiite in terms of population. According to Lebanese constitution, the Prime Minister is elected from the Sunni community. Throughout history, they have always tried to surpass the number of Maronites and strengthen their position. During the Ottoman period, they had a really high position, but over the time due to the different events that happened in Lebanon, this influence diminished. Their goal is to make Lebanon in the region and to have great

⁷⁶ Catechetical Corner, "Who are Christians in the Middle East?", United States of Catholic Bishops, 2015.

relations with the Arab countries. As with the Maronites, there are families here whose position is extremely important. Today, as Sunni family there is the Hariri family, but also the Kerami, Selami and Sulh families have important roles as Sunni families. Recently, beside the fact that Maronite Christians used to be Sunni's biggest competition, the strengthening of Shiites in Lebanon has actually caused more dissatisfaction among Sunni Muslims.⁷⁷

5.2. Shiites

Shiites in Lebanon and their position has been changing through history and under various influences. What mostly impacted their position were the geographical position of Lebanon, existence of other religious groups inside Lebanon, and external actors. This all has determined the position of Shiites. During the rule of the Ottoman Empire, their positions weren't at an enviable level. Only later, with new political changes in Lebanon did their role stand out. As Israel consolidated its position in southern Lebanon, Shiites were negatively exposed to this influence. As they were mostly settled in the southern part of Lebanon, they automatically were exposed to all conflicts that took place there. Also, the global identity crisis of Arabs and Islamic society has also negatively affected Shiites. As persecuted throughout history, they found it difficult to find a way to develop due to the fear and feeling of insecurity. Especially in 1943, the structural basis of the Lebanese state based on Maronite-Sunnis rule was illustrated in the National Pact, which caused the Maronites and Sunni groups to be more superior compared to Shiite groups. Until the signing of the Taif Agreement, Shiites were politically, economically and socially neglected. Because of Christian Maronites and after them Sunnis and their number, only representatives from these religious groups were always in high political positions.⁷⁸ Although they weren't very influential politically and economically in the 1970's, their role in politics has increased by that time. As the events were occurring in Lebanon, their position changed according to that. One of the positive impacts on Shiites was the Iranian Revolution. This factor might be counted as the first positive impact towards strengthening the position of Shiites. It inspired the Shiites in Lebanon to ask for

⁷⁷ Minorities at Risk Project, Assessment for Sunnis in Lebanon, 31 December 2003, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f3aab1e.html>

⁷⁸ Ziadeh, Hanna. '*Sectarianism and Inter communal Nation-Building in Lebanon*', Hurst and Company, January 2006, pg. 91-92.

more privileges. Also, demographic changes that increased the number of Shiites, affected their position in Lebanon. As their number were increasing, they asked to be more included in all Lebanese sectors. But Shiite influential families such as it is in case of the Sunnis and Maronites are not very active. The way how Shiites are growing and making their role stronger is through the Hezbollah and Emel parties. With the sociopolitical developments in Lebanon, Shiites had different attitudes over time, but it has never been possible for them to be considered as homogeneous. This caused their positions not to be very stable. However, with the emergence of Hezbollah, this will change over time. Hezbollah is influential in southern Lebanon, Bekka and the Southern Beirut region. Thus, Shiites and their position by the time became stronger in these areas. Also, after the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989, their impact increased. This happened due to the new rules according to which their number in the parliament and the positions got more important and more effective. The number of the representatives in the Parliament increased and the speaker was decided to be from the Shiite group.⁷⁹ With this Agreement, Shiites are becoming even more active. However, like the other two groups, they don't have common interests and visions when it comes to Lebanon. This affects the governance and decisions that are made in this country. Also, increasing importance of the Shiite groups and their activities cause dissatisfaction among other religious groups. This, most of the time, might lead to the inability of the state to lead the country.

5.3. Druze

The Druze, like Maronites, always played a vital role in the formation of confessional democracy in Lebanon. After the Druze ruled in Lebanon for several centuries, the political significance of their community decrease after some period and by the 20th century it was no longer so comprehensive. As it is the case in modern states that identity is tied to the country and belonging to it, in Lebanon belonging to the country is tied to the religious divisions and national identity falls as a second important thing. This is where all Lebanese external and internal problems are. From these divisions, Lebanon as a country sets priorities for the risks and dangers that are coming from the inside or

⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 127-140.

outside the country. These divided groups decide on what are the priorities. Since everyone has different interests it has always been difficult to agree on one and keep Lebanon's policy clear. This has been affecting and causing inequality since 1943, because there has always been one group that is excluded or at least not as important as the other groups. In this case there are Druzes and Shiites whose role haven't been as important as Maronites and Sunnis who enjoyed greater privileges. This inequality has caused instability and poor governance, and a constant fear that tensions and conflicts may arise between the groups. In addition, these divisions have caused Lebanon to be strongly influenced by external factors, for example, Saudi Arabia, Iran, France which through these groups have a strong influence on whatever is happening in Lebanon.

Although Druzes are an important political figure in Lebanese politics, the percentage living in Lebanon is only 8%. For this reason, their politics and democracy have always been based on filling in what is missing in a clever way, and they have done so with diplomacy or by creating allies with stronger groups. The two strongest families that run politics are the Jumblatt and Yazbek families. They are at the head of the Progressive Social Party in Lebanon and are definitely against Hezbollah and for Hezbollah to be armed.⁸⁰

As Lebanon establishes independence, the politician's form a system in which any religious and ethnic group would be entitled to act in a Lebanese political system. There are 18 recognized religious groups, but the exact number of members of certain religious groups is unknown. The reason for this is the fear that one group with an increase in the community will cause an imbalance so that the exact number has never been made public.⁸¹ Religious diversity in Lebanon is closely linked to its colonial past. Under the influence of France, these divisions took place during the period of their mandate and that influence is still felt in Lebanon even today. Over time, these divisions from Christians and Muslims have expanded to even greater divisions within these religions, making it much more difficult to make equal decisions and to govern Lebanon;⁸² today, these divisions are leading to a disproportionate crisis that has brought people to the lowest

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸² Al Arsiss, A. And Sidani Y. M., '' *Understanding religious diversity: implications from Lebanon and France*'', *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, Vol. 23 no. 3, pp.467-480.

level of life. Also, these divisions and representation in politics, in foreign policy, have led to the inactivity of institutions today that will later help us understand what Lebanon has to do with the Syrian crisis.

What negatively impacts Lebanese political structure are the elites. They have always been in power in this country from the war period until today. They can be seen as the biggest culprit for the crises that took place here. Namely, social differences in Lebanon greatly influence the emergence of tensions between the religions. It even went so far that the wealthier communities blamed the poorer ones for the economic situation. The elites are the ones who control the rich part of the population in this country. The economic situation in Lebanon was in good shape until Israel attacked in 1982. After this, differences and inequalities in society grew and from the economic crisis led to the national and religious crisis. The reason behind this are the political elites whose priorities towards Lebanon are shaped only according to their interests. Therefore, while they are increasing their wealth and popularity, the conflicts that emerge only deepen the tensions even more.

6. POLITICAL ALLIANCES AND PARTIES IN LEBANON

*“Parties in Lebanon do not meaningfully represents the interests of the population, a function which parties in a democratic system are supposed to perform. Because they are sectional-confessional in their strength and composition, they are not capable of aggregating interests on a national level. They are generally too doctrinaire and the population is too fragmented to allow for adjustment and balancing of divergent views.”*⁸³

In the book, *“The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967-1976”*,⁸⁴ Several opinions are given and Lebanese performance as a state in political and social terms is discussed. Three opinions are dominant and all of them are different. Also, this thesis is mostly based on one of them, that mostly helps to understand why Lebanon has such reactions. The first opinion is based on political order, better said disorder and every failure or raising in the state is tied to this. Another one is related to the confessional

⁸³ Alvin Rabushka, Kenneth A. Shepsle, *‘Politics in Plural Societies’*, Theory of Democratic Instability, pg. 188.

⁸⁴ Farid El Khazen, *‘The breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1975’*, Bloomsbury Publishing, First Edition, 2020, pg. 25-26.

political system, which by definition should bring a democratic state in which with the consent of all the groups can bring an ideal governance. The question that arises here is how much implementing this type of democracy in Lebanon is smart and enough to govern the state. Due to all the factors and also actors from the region, Lebanon seems to be the state not able to fully implement this and thus have an ideal leadership of the state. Such an example due to the lack of its full establishment has only led to poor governance. This thesis is mostly based on this opinion in order to explain all the crises and falls this country is going through. Another opinion that explains the worsening situation are the external actors. Due to a large number of external actors that have a great influence on internal policy and events of this country, it has led to the Lebanon we have today. Some even believe that the war in 1975 mostly broke out due to the external actors and their interests. Perhaps, it can be taken as the best example where it can be seen how much influence both internal and external factors have on Lebanon. Even before the war, Lebanon has always been under the influence of other actors and their interference brought Lebanon to the state it is today.

In communities such as Lebanon, under the influence of a large number of religious sects, numerous political parties have been formed. Unlike in Western countries, parties in Lebanon do not play a leading role in the country's political system. Among the 128 members of the Lebanese parliament, no more than 40 are members of one or another party.⁸⁵ The activities of those parties are based on sectarian divisions. Therefore, in each party, politicians gather around one leader. This causes them to be very different compared to Western political parties whose activities are based on democracy. Due to frequent conflicts and difficult agreements in Lebanon, parliament has a weak role. The result of this is the failure to solve fundamental problems in order for the state to survive.⁸⁶ Numerous political parties in Lebanon, which were founded again on the basis of religious groups, have rarely produced a positive outcome for this country apart from a poor governance. Even after the end of the French rule on this territory these parties began to form and deep down they never had a solid political structure. Established parties are committed to gathering around one leader. Coalitions made here do not play an important

⁸⁵ Petallides, Constantine, "Cedars to the East: A Study of Modern Lebanon", Vol. 3, No. 12., pg. 1/1, 2011.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pg 187.

role because all changes and decisions are made with the agreement of the leading political leaders.

As for the order in the political system, it has been impacted by a lot of factors. The Lebanese parliament's inability to form the government or to elect the president is something that is a common situation for Lebanon. This is all caused by the political divisions and maybe most important by the foreign interventions. Foreign actions and impacts in Lebanon have not stopped since it declared independence. All the divisions inside the country have allowed the external actors to intervene in Lebanese internal affairs, including all the conflicts and even the Lebanese Civil War. The election of the president or forming the government is not only impacted by the groups inside the country, but it also depends on the compromises that come from the outside. These impacts can be felt from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and also some Western countries. In the next part, political parties will be analyzed as well as their purposes of establishment. Parties operating in a consociational system can have different outcomes when it comes to governing. Due to the divisions that exist in Lebanon, it is possible to see these parties making different alliances. But on the other hand, it can also be the opposite. Instead of making alliances, conflicts can often occur as well. Also it is important to mention that in such societies, where the number of the ethnic groups is numerous, it is impossible to have great coalitions. Reason for that are large groups that support their leaders and parties, follow their ideologies and any bigger coalition would only lead to the competition, thus leading to the conflict. Although there are several political parties in Lebanon founded by Christian groups and regardless of their common religious affiliation, there are examples of internal conflict between those parties. One of these conflicts occurred between Michel Aoun who at that time was an army chief and Samir Geagea. It happened in the post-civil war period and the reason for this conflict was Aoun's request for Geagea to disarm his armed militias but he refused.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Abbas, Assi. *'' Lebanon's consociational model, Christian parties and the struggle for Political Power in the post-2005 period''*, December 2016, pg. 654.



Figure 2. 88

6.1. March 14 Alliance

6.1.1. Kataeb Party (Phalanges)

The Kataeb party or Falangist, was the best organized and dominated by one family. In the period of the war it was the strongest party that had all characteristics as a party in some better developed countries. The Phalangists supported the confessional system and were against communism. According to their doctrine, the Lebanese nation emerged from Phonicians and not from Arabs. This party has good relations with the Western countries and they support the idea of a neutral Lebanon. This Maronite party is of great importance in Lebanon. The president of this party is Samy Gemayel.⁸⁹ It maintains good relations with Arab countries, but the same can not be said for Syria and relations with this country⁹⁰. This party enters the war as the strongest, but during the war the Shiite population from which Hezbollah originates will become stronger. It is possible

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Global Security, "Lebanon: Political Parties", pg. 1/1.

⁹⁰ Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, "Lebanese Political Parties", pg. 27.

to say that these two parties were the strongest, while others survived joining coalitions and unions. The Kataeb and Hezbollah parties can be described as the best organized and parties that had a very strong confessional basis. However, despite the fact that one group can be dominant due to the flexibility in the parties, it is possible to see members from one party in another one even though in a religious way they might be different. For example, these two parties also had deputies from other religious communities. Because of this flexibility, when it comes to forming the members in the parties, a member of the Maronite community could vote for a Sunni candidate and as a condition they might ask for that candidate to be in their district. Reasons for unification might differ, but mostly it is because of the national program, but it can include economic and social programs as well.

This religious division has never been more pointed out than in the last 15 years. Namely, in Lebanon before the civil war there were mainly two blocs- the Muslim and the Christian bloc. They were in conflict with each other, fighting for political and economic hegemony, but the division in the blocs between religious groups became more deeper after 1990, especially after the assassination of the Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Here two coalitions were formed, one that was more Sunni Muslims oriented- March 14 and the other Shiite oriented- March 8.⁹¹ The main components of the March 8 coalition are the Free Patriotic Movement, led by President Michel Aoun, the Shiite Amal Movement and Hezbollah. They represent the largest part of this coalition and are trying to maintain good relations with Syria and Iran. While on the other hand the March 14 coalition, which are mostly Sunni Muslim majority and have good relations with Saudi Arabia, and they are Western countries oriented. They are trying to minimize Hezbollah's influence in the country and are against the Syrian regime.⁹²

6.1.2. Future Movement

Future Movement was founded in the 90's. It was led by the PM Rafik Hariri, but after his assassination in 2005 this position took his son Saad al Hariri. Even though this party declared itself as a non-sectarian party in 2009, and it includes sectarian divisions,

⁹¹ Omri Nir, ' *The Sunni-Shi'i balance in Lebanon in the light of the war in Syria and regional changes* ', Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol.18, No.1, 2014.

⁹² Carla E. Humud, Lebanon, Congressional Research Service, pg. 6, 2021.

the number of Sunni community is more numerous compared to other sectarian groups. This party is the most important one in the 14 March bloc. As for the relations with other countries from the region, FM has close ties with Arab countries, but not very good relations with the Syrian regime. The biggest supporter of this party is Saudi Arabia, but through time and under the influence of different events that took place in Lebanon, the relations between these two countries were not always at its best. ⁹³

6.1.3. Lebanese Forces (LF)

The Lebanese Forces are led by Samir Geagea and was founded in 1976 by the president Bashir Gemayel. The purpose of the foundation of this party was to be “the military arm of the Christian forces” ⁹⁴, or as it is known, the Lebanese front. From August 1976 they became officially independent of traditional Christian leaders, whom young fighters considered too moderate. In early 1980s, the LF completely controlled East Beirut and the Lebanese mountains, they fought against the Syrian army and cooperated with Israel. After the assassination of the B. Gemayel in 1982, the group was led by E. Hobeika. This actually didn’t last for a long period since he was removed due to an agreement with Syria and in 1987 with his supporters he separated from the Lebanese Forces. Later, Samir Geagea was chosen as the president of this organization. Under his influence the party strongly criticized the Syrian influence and their presence in the country. They also opposed the new government that was established under the Taif Agreement. ⁹⁵The president of this LF Samir Geagea was in prison until the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and the disarmament of the LF. Another thing important for this party is that they took a place in the bloc on 14 March, and they also have good relations with the Free Patriotic Movement. Their participation in the election brought them a good outcome.

6.1.4. Social Democrat Hunchakian Party

Founded in 1887, in Geneva, this party’s operating in Lebanon held leftist positions and they advocated socialism, democracy and a fair distribution of a national income.

⁹³ Konard Adenauer Stiftung, “Political Party Mapping in Lebanon ahead of the 2018 elections”, pg. 23.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 33-34.

⁹⁵ Khazen, Farid el. “Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans.” Middle East Journal 57, no. 4 (2003): 605–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329942>.

Since 1972, the party has been blocked with the Tashnags and in 2000 election separated of them they won the first place. A number of parties that had some influence during the 1990s did not receive support in 2000 elections. In 1960s and 1970s after the sectarian conflicts arose in Lebanon and eventually led to the Civil war, the Lebanese Armenian community began to close ranks and the Hunchakian party was voted together with the Tashnags. In 2000, Hunchakian party joined forces with Rafik Hariri's Future Movement. As a part of the Lebanese parliament for years was a member of the Central Committee of the SDHP was Yeghia Jerejian. This party is very active in the Armenian diaspora and in Lebanon as well. Having their own official newspaper in Lebanon is one of the important influences they have in Lebanon. The advocate for a socialist ideology and they are conspirators for a planned economy for Lebanon.⁹⁶

7. March 8 Alliance

7.1. Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP)

This party was founded in 2001 and it is led by the Minister Talal Arslan. It is seen to be an extension of the party led by the Minister Majid Arsaln. When it comes to regional ties, it mainly maintains normal relations with the Arab countries. As for Syria, it can be said this party has close relations with them. For the relations within the country, this party counts as the first opponent for the Progressive Socialist Party whose leader is Walid Jumblatt.⁹⁷

7.1.1. Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)

A Christian political movement created by supporters of General Michel Aoun. He was a commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces in 1984-1989 and in 1988 he was appointed as a head of the transitional military government. The Free Patriotic Movement party started its official activities in 2005 right after General Aoun came back from exile in France. The party was registered in 2006, but it is possible to say that it has activities even before this. They were supporting Michel Aoun from the beginning, and they supported the Syrian forces' withdrawal. Aoun refused to recognize the Taif Agreement

⁹⁶ Scott Abramson, "Lebanese Armenians; A Distinctive Community in the Armenian Diaspora and in Lebanese Society", *The Levantine Review*, Volume 2, Number 2, pg. 197, 2013.

⁹⁷ Konard Adenauer Stiftung, "Political Party Mapping in Lebanon ahead of the 2018 elections", pg. 6.

and the government that was formed according to this agreement. He also demanded the withdrawal of the Syrian troops and announced the beginning of a liberation war against Syria. This is why he was seen as the most favorable Christian leader. When FPM joined the parliamentary elections that took place in 2005, the number of seats they gained was mainly from the Christian areas. As it already known, all these parties can make an alliance with any actor from the political scene as long as it works for their interests. With this, FPM allied with Hezbollah in 2006 and signed the Memorandum of Understanding. This actually was seen as a paradoxical move since Michel Aoun was always against Hezbollah's armed wing⁹⁸. Bearing in mind that this party was a part of the March 14 bloc until 2005, making coalition with the bloc 8 March just shows that each and every group in Lebanon works according to their interests. This Lebanese party has good relations with the countries from the regions, but due to the alliance with Hezbollah relations with the Gulf Council Countries is not on a very good level.⁹⁹

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

PSP's supporters are from the Druze group. It was founded in 1949 and led by Kamal Jumblatt.

*"It was a major element in the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), a front that comprised the PSP and other parties. The LNM played a major role in confronting the Lebanese Christian front, which included the Lebanese Kataeb Party and the National Liberal Party during the Lebanese civil war."*¹⁰⁰

After Kamal Jumblatt as a leader of the party comes his son Walid Jumblatt. Their beliefs and interest are based on the socialistic and secular principles, since they declared themselves as secular and non-confessional party. They support social reform and include representatives of various religious communities, but the most influential ones are from the Druze community. After Walid Jumblatt came as head of the party, he led it through the Lebanese Civil War and after the Taif Agreement was signed, they played a really important role on the political scene of Lebanon. When it comes to the blocs, Jumblatt took a place in the March 14 bloc, after the PM Rafik Hariri was assassinated. Progressive

⁹⁸ Assi, pg. 655.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pg. 29.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pg. 19.

Social Party has good relations with Arab countries, but not with Syria. In socio-economic terms their views were close to social democrats, because their aim was to strengthen the public sector, economy, create cooperatives and improve employment situation.¹⁰¹ When it comes to the foreign policy, they supported Lebanon's neutrality, but in practice they also supported Arab nationalist regimes and the Palestinian National Movement against Israel. The PSP supported political reforms and was against the confessional system. By the time, their political position has become stronger and the party has been in the parliament since 1951. After the Taif Agreement, the supporters of this party played an important role in the political system and had an active role in the government. Their relation with Syria deteriorated in the late 1990, and they started to support the reduction of the Syrian influence on Lebanon. They tried to strengthen their relations with the Christian leaders and worked on greater cooperation with the Christian parties.

7.1.2. Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)

SSNP was founded in 1932, by Orthodox politician Antoine Sadeh. It is led now by the MP Assaad Hardan and the party's president Hanna al Nashef. The aim of this party was to unify Syria. This would mean that countries like Cyprus, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine would unify. Their ideology lies in the principles of European fascism. After Lebanon's independence this party became one of the largest parties in the country, but in 1948 their activities were banned by the government. In 1949 this party attempted a coup but couldn't maintain it. This caused them to be outlawed and their founder Antoine Sadeh was killed. Due to all events happening this party remained under a formal ban during 1950's and in 1958 they were allowed to act on the Lebanese political scene. SSNP as a retaliation assassinated PM Riyad al-Solh.¹⁰² For this they remain banned, but still continued to expand their influence. With this influence they managed to organize a new coup attempt, which caused 3000 of its followers and supporters to end up in prisons. After all these negative impacts they had, after some time they started changing their ideology. They didn't abandon ultra-right doctrines, but they included some Marxism and pan-Arab ideas. They also had a role in the Civil War. They joined the war as part of the National Movement and fought on their side during the Civil war.

¹⁰¹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Lebanon: Political Parties", pg. 17.

¹⁰² Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Lebanon: Political Parties", pg. 17.

At the end of the war, SSNP supported Syrian existence in Lebanon. They are also known to be against the bloc 14 March, and ally with Syria and Hezbollah. Thus, this party has good relations with the Syrian regime and everyone who is supporting them. In the 2000 elections 4 members from this party were elected in the parliament.¹⁰³

7.1.3. Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnag)

As it is known, a number of Armenians are also present in Lebanon. Branches of a numerous traditional Armenian political parties operates in Lebanon. This party that represents Lebanese Armenians was founded in 1890. Reason for its establishment was to defend Armenians from the Ottoman ruling authorities. This Armenian party advocates populist socialism, but its Lebanese branch occupies a more right-wing position and defends the capitalist social system.¹⁰⁴ It is known to be one of the biggest parties that represent Armenians who are positioned mostly in Beirut, the Metn coast and also in Anjar in Bekaa. Their relations with the countries from the region are mostly good. The only country from the region they don't maintain good relations with is Turkey.¹⁰⁵ Until the Lebanese civil war, Tashnag party enjoyed their big influence in the Armenian community in Lebanon. They were against Nasseristic ideas, and operated in the alliance with Kataib. They were also focused and had good relations with the Western countries. However, during the Civil war in 1975, they refused to take part in the armed conflict and support the Christian bloc and many Armenian neighborhoods attacked the Lebanese forces led by Gemayel. After the war was ended, Tashnags sought to lead a bloc of Armenian parties and acted from pro-government positions. This led to their defeat in the parliamentary elections that took place in 2000.¹⁰⁶

7.1.4. Amal Movement

Before mentioning the emergence and strengthening of Hezbollah, it is important to look at the way Shiite actually got organized in Lebanon. The organization of Shiites and their strengthening, both religiously and politically began with Imam Musa Sadr. As already mentioned before, Shiites have their full support from Iran. In Lebanon, Shiites

¹⁰³ Ibid., pg. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Scott Abramson, "Lebanese Armenians; A Distinctive Community in the Armenian Diaspora and in Lebanese Society", *The Levantine Review*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Lebanon: Political Parties", pg. 17.

were still a minority and as such had no rights as other groups. Musa Sadr came to Lebanon in 1959. He was a man educated in Iran thus his movement had a great support from there. They became very active in Lebanese political ground in 1980's. He was a very important as a religious figure but also as a political one. The reason for that are his actions towards helping Shiites strengthening their position in Lebanon. This was their main goal, to support the development of Shiite position in all spheres in Lebanon. In addition, the fight against Israel is another important motive for supporting Lebanese Shiites. He directed his work in the direction of organizing Shiites. He did this through his speeches, gatherings of different characters. With his active work, he managed to be remembered as the first Shiite leader in Lebanon by establishing the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council (SISC). This council involved various activities in order for the Shiite group to stand out on the Lebanese political scene and other sectors as well.¹⁰⁷ As for the Shiite's political organization that would later lead to the creation of Hezbollah, it happened before the civil war in Lebanon. As part of the movement led by Musa Sadr, a military wing called AMAL - اللبنانية المقاومة - أفواج - Afwaj al muqawamat al lubnaniyya was created.¹⁰⁸ Under the leadership of THE Musa Sadr, this movement followed a moderate course. This means, they didn't want to take a part in the 1975 civil war and they supported Syrian intervention in 1976. This movement was mostly supported by Libya, where, after a while Musa Sadr disappeared. With his disappearance, the separation within the AMAL movement emerged. However, for some time to come, AMAL will remain more political than Islamist movement. The reason why divisions happened inside the movement lies here- some of them supported extremism and others supported the secularism form of this group. Another important factor that led to the creation of the extremism in Shiite organizations is the Iranian revolution. After this revolution, it was clear that the position of the Shiites wherever they were positioned would become stronger. Therefore, Iran as well as the Lebanese Shiites believed that an organization should be established in Lebanon and should be based on Iranian ideas. These ideas included accepting the doctrines of Wilayat al- faqih, fighting Israel and making Islam the basis of everything.¹⁰⁹ Although there were divisions within the AMAL group, none of them were enough to implement everything that was required.

¹⁰⁷ Nizar, Ahmad: "In the path of Hezbollah", Syracuse University Press; First Edition, 1st Printing (December 1, 2004), pg. 20-21.

¹⁰⁸ Nizar, Ahmad, pg. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pg. 42.

However, under the influence of these divisions, one of the leaders of AMAL – Sayyid Husayn al-Musawi left AMAL and established the Islamic AMAL. This was another step towards creating Hezbollah. ¹¹⁰With this creation Amal's popularity has increased under the influence of the Iranian revolution. In 1980's, Amal Movement became the largest political movement in Shiite community. It plays an important role in Lebanese politics and supports unity and equality among the Lebanese citizens.

7.1.5. Hezbollah

The socio-political mechanisms that have consolidated and rooted over time and the sectarian divisions that dominate in Lebanon, have prepared the ground for armed actors such as Hezbollah. These factors helped Hezbollah to become even more effective in the local and regional developments of the country. In addition, due to all these factors and transformations Shiite community in Lebanon increased its role in the Lebanese politics. Over time, Hezbollah became the hegemonic actor in Lebanese politics, with this, Shiites began to radicalize. ¹¹¹ Also, factors such as Lebanese civil war and the sectarian state system based on the privileged position of the Maronites-Sunni faction, as well as the Islamic Shiite regime in Iran, and the existence of Israel, have shaped the effects and the actions of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The founding date of Hezbollah is taken to be 1982 after a Shiite group left for Tehran. After the visit to Tehran, it was decided that the new organization will be named Hezbollah, which in Arabic means the party of God. It is based on the ideology of Khomeini, and the main representatives are Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy Naim Kasim. Iran's regional role strengthens after the establishment of Hezbollah. The connection between them is strong because it is based on the same religious concept. In addition, common goals and same interests strengthen the bond between these two partners. Also, the position of the Shiites in Lebanon has changed greatly from that period until today. This means they have become very important on the Lebanese political scene, and also in other sectors. They began to act in politics, because this was only way to preserve and maintain their interests. Hezbollah's participation in the political scene in Lebanon and especially joining the elections meant that it has partially integrated with

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pg 43.

¹¹¹ Shimon, Shapira. *"The Origins of Hezbollah"*, the Jerusalem Quarterly, vol. 46, 1988.

the Lebanese state structure. As a part of this structure, Hezbollah provides its supporters with the necessary economic resources, consolidates its dominance and prevents negative decisions that can be taken against them in the Parliament. Bearing this in mind, Hezbollah took part also in the 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005 and 2009 national-local elections. When participating in these elections, Hezbollah joined different alliances with the various sectarian groups.¹¹²

Through time there has been a lot of operations carried out by Hezbollah, most of them not known to everyone. Until the Syrian Civil War, Hezbollah was known for its aim to fight Israel. Fighting Israel, according to Hezbollah was some kind of jihad, and this idea played the main role in the formation of this organization¹¹³. Although the organization had several programs and ideas on which it was based, over time, due to the desire for greater participation in the Lebanese political scene, these ideas have changed accordingly. What remains the same to this day is loyalty to Iran and the goal of fighting Israel. In addition to Hassan Nasrallah, Naim Kasim contributed a lot to the development of this organization. At times, Hezbollah aimed to be present as possible in Lebanese political events; forming coalitions, political associations, etc. Hezbollah had to adjust in order to obtain these positions.

As for the structure within Hezbollah, it consists of a civilian and a military structure. Military structure is not very known and publicly defined as civilian. The reason for this is the fight against Israel. Keeping military organization secret allows Hezbollah to wage war against them effectively. On the other hand, the important bodies located within this organization are: the Consultative Assembly – Majlis al-Shura, the Central Council, which includes five more bodies dealing with administrative matters. The Body that deals with the work of the party and the activities of the other organs is an Executive Council known as Shura al – Tanfiz. This work has been monitored through several other bodies such as the Social unit, health, education, information, trade, finance and coordination.¹¹⁴ Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiites have strengthened their positions over time, all with the help of Iran's support. Using this, Iran was able to establish its

¹¹² Ibid, 378.

¹¹³ Mustafa, Yetim, '*Ortadoğu'da devlet dışı aktörler*', SETA Yayınları, pg. 369.

¹¹⁴ Ahmad, Hamzeh: '*In the path of Hezbollah*', Syracuse University Press; First Edition, 1st Printing (December 1, 2004), pg. 70-72.

policy in Lebanon, thus directly influencing Lebanon's internal decisions. Also, Hezbollah was armed by Iran and for any event within the country or in the region that would require the intervention of Hezbollah, it was done in an agreement with Iran.

In the Lebanese territories such as Jabal Amel (Sidon), Tyre, Haifa, Bekaa region and southern Beirut where Shiite community is more numerous, are the regions where Hezbollah has geographical and operational autonomy. Hezbollah considered its main political struggle and the main goal to fight against Israel. This was until the Syrian war that emerged in 2011.¹¹⁵ When it comes to the Syrian crisis, although a declaration was signed at the beginning of the war that neither side nor group would interfere in conflicts coming from the border, that has changed over time. Even though Hezbollah did not get involved in the war from the beginning, they followed the occurrences intensively. The reason for that was the protection of the Shiites and holy places on the border with Syria and in the Bekaa Valley. The moment Hezbollah decided to interfere in the Syrian war, Bashar al Assad's army suffered losses. Hezbollah entered by fighting on the side of the regime, which caused great conflict and fears between Sunni Muslims in Lebanon. Hezbollah's operation started in 2013 with the support of Iran. The goal was to support the regime and its survival and to regain the territories they had lost.¹¹⁶ After Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war, their control over Syrian territories increased. It controls a total of about 2.500 square kilometers in Syria, Qusayr, Qalamoun, Damascus, Halep and Idlib.¹¹⁷ With the Syrian war, Hezbollah has taken a more sectarian stance that will lead to a lot of conflicts inside Lebanon due to the sectarian divisions.

7.1.6. Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party in Lebanon

This party was founded in 1956, but their activities in Lebanon have been banned since 1963. Despite this, they managed to operate illegally until 1970. As a pro-Syrian Ba'ath party in Lebanon they have a huge Syrian support. They have important role on the Lebanese political scene and in 2000 elections they got three of their members elected in the parliament. Some of their representatives also have important positions. In Lebanon

¹¹⁵ Mustafa, Yetim: *‘Ortadoğu'da Devlet Dışı silahlı aktörler, Bir DDSA olarak Hizbullah’*, SET Vakfı İktisadi İşletmesi, 1. Baskı: Aralık 2018, İstanbul, pp. 365.

¹¹⁶ Hezbollah in Syria, Middle East Security Report, ISW Institute for the study of war, pg. 15. <https://www.understandingwar.org/report/hezbollah-syria>

¹¹⁷ Map of Syrian Control, Omran for Strategic Studies, 2017. <http://omranstudies.org/publications/reports/map-of-control-and-influence-syria-15-december-2017.html>

there are a numerous groups that support “Arab socialism”, whose representative was former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The oldest of them was the Independent Nasserist Movement. It was founded in 1950 and their motto was “Freedom, Socialism and Unity”. In 1958 the Murabitun militias were created and they fought against president Chamoun troops. Later, in 1971, this organization was formalized and they supported the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. The supporters joined the bloc of the National Patriotic Forces and its militias played an active role in the civil war. They were fighting against Phalangist and later against the Israeli troops. However, the militias that were created in 1958 were defeated by the PSP forces and Amal. This led to their movement to break down and stop existing. The only organization with the same ideology that exists and whose leader is Mustafa Saad, a member of the Lebanese parliament, is the Nasserist People’s Organization.¹¹⁸

7.2. Internal Disputes Between The Political Parties

As it can be seen, Lebanon's internal political instability has also defined attitudes towards the Syrian crisis. Political instability within Lebanese political parties has been even more shaken by the presence of Syria and its activities on this ground. The historical background and the Syrian belief that it has a certain power in Lebanon has made it possible to come to even greater conflicts and disputes inside the country that is already divided. As such, Lebanon obviously could not have a healthy approach to the crisis, given that the goals of other countries were being achieved in this territory¹¹⁹. When the Syrian army left Lebanon, the complacency within the parties, in this case, Christian political parties, increased. They have encountered difficulties in deciding who will represent the Christian part of the population. This directly affects the common interests and making agreements. It also has negatively affected the achievement of compressions for the formulation of the new electoral law. This law is supposed to improve Christian participation in the elections, to increase their influence and increase the number of voters.

¹²⁰ This might be seen as one of the first disagreements within the Christian political

¹¹⁸ Konard Adenauer Stiftung, “Political Party Mapping in Lebanon Ahead of the 2018 Elections”, pg. 11-12.

¹¹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, “*Political Instability in Lebanon*”, Global Conflict Tracker, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/political-instability-lebanon>

¹²⁰ Abbas, Assi. ‘ ‘ *Lebanon’s consociational model, Christian parties and the struggle for political power in the post-2005 period*’, December 2016, pg. 656.

parties as there will be more examples to come. The inability of the parties to agree on this due to their clashing interests caused their less impact on the elections. Especially for the elections that were planned to take place in 2009, this topic was raised. It could only be raised after the conflicts between blocs in 2008 were ended. It ends with the signing of the Doha Agreement with Qatar mediating. This allowed political parties to start their debate on the upcoming elections to come. The most important point from the agreement was that in the elections Future Movement, Hezbollah, PSP could represent their communities. On the other hand, Christian groups in Lebanon were represented by the Christian parties from both coalitions. The Future Movement had the power to ask for the elections in Beirut to be divided in three main regions. Since the number of Sunnis here is more numerous compared to others, this automatically meant the victory of the FM.¹²¹ The reason for this is that Christian political parties were not able to agree on the same interests that would be suitable for their community. The main goal for some of the Christian parties was to win the elections and obtain as many positions as possible in any part of the country. Thus, the Christian party LFP decided on an alliance with the FM, which represents the Sunnis, and this way guaranteed itself a certain number of the seats for its deputies. This political party did not seek to increase the influence of all the christian parties, instead their only aim was to increase their position in Northern Lebanon. Due to this experience, christian political parties came up with the idea to agree on a better electoral law and improve their influence in the 2013 elections. What they did was the proposal of a new electoral law. It was proposed by the Orthodox Gathering community and known as Orthodox Gathering electoral law. This law was based on proportional representation and that meant voters could only vote for their sectarian representatives. FPM, el-Marada and Kataeb supported this, believing that in this way Christian MPs would be less influenced by the Muslim groups. However, again guided by its interests, the LFP did not support this law. Reason for that was its victory in the previous elections as the largest Christian bloc.¹²² Beside this, what was also affected after Syria left Lebanon, were the presidential elections. Since the Lebanese president has to be from the Christian Community, they faced the clash of interests during the elections; the same happened with the presidential elections. Different positions and different

¹²¹ Ibid., pg. 656-657.

¹²² Ibid., 659.

support from the Christian parties led Lebanon to be without the president sometimes even for months even for years.

This division within the Christian parties was most of the time used by the Muslim parties to their advantage so they could easily manipulate their political visions. Christian political parties joined different alliances with other sectarian parties in order to strengthen their position. However, this has affected their general position in Lebanon and the expression of their interests as well as their implementation. Any conflict that would occur within Christian parties would mean that Muslim parties could manipulate their decisions. Also, different and sometimes paradoxical changes also had negative implications on Christian parties. For example, in order to increase their seats, parties such as FPM were ready to get into alliance with Hezbollah. Even though the same party once supported the disarming of Hezbollah, they formed the alliance later.¹²³ As a reason for that was the desire for as many seats as possible for the Christian population, thus guaranteed victories. This will cause the party's popularity to decline. In the system in which Lebanon finds itself, in addition to the historical events or external actors that mainly negatively affect events within the country, disagreements and different interests in the sectarian groups and even the same groups lead to the system collapse and the poor governance. The Syrian influence was possible due to the political instability and difficult compromises between the groups. This means that every problem that emerges in Lebanon should first be sought in the inadequacy of politicians to put the country in order and lead it in a proper way, leaving their personal interests aside.

The question that arises after everything is how is it possible that in a country where everyone is divided and taken their side, shifts still happen and old enemies become friends and vice versa. And this is possible and can be clearly seen through the historical part. In Lebanon, sectarianism is used as a tool to help certain groups stand out and compete in terms of political power, economy, military power.

As interests change, be it economics, politics, military power, so do relations between groups. Mostly when it comes to sectarianism in Lebanon, everything is focused on politics. However, in addition to politics, economics is one of the main

¹²³ Ahmad Nader, Nada Al Maghlouth, *"Lebanese Political Parties and Administrative Reform: An Impossible Promise?"*, Centre for Lebanese Studies, pg. 33, 2016.

factors that actually drives the deepening of this sectarianism. That's why in Lebanon the understanding of sectarianism does not refer only to religious divisions:

*“To say that one is “Sunni” or “Shiite” in the Lebanese context refers not only to religion by descent, but more importantly indicates political affiliation, societal belonging, and communal loyalties.”*¹²⁴

In fact, what led to this fear of instability in a deeply divided society is the fear of strengthening of one side and weakening of the other. These deeper divisions have brought only deeper problems from which Lebanon can't be extracted even today. What we can conclude here is that throughout history and today's events- this diversity has been more harmful than beneficial for Lebanon. One of the possible solutions for the survival of Lebanon would be the idea for policy makers to start making unanimous decisions, which, from this point, seems impossible.

8. INFLUENCE OF THE EXTERNAL ACTORS ON LEBANESE POLICIES

Lebanon is a small country but the partners it has outside the country are strong and their impact is huge. In addition to divisions within the country that provoke ethnic and religious tensions, it is impossible to exclude external factor and their impact on Lebanon. Since the independence and even before that, Lebanon has found itself under the influence of numerous regional and global powers. These powers have been fighting for its interests. Although the reason stated for their impact is always somehow related to implementing the peace and calm internal tensions, what actually happens after the intervention of any external factor is a negative conclusion. All the crises that have befallen Lebanon since declaring independence until today are largely related to external actors who have a great influence inside Lebanon and the communities they support. Abbas Assi in his book highlights the very important reasons why regional actors influence a country's domestic policies. In this case, he cites three examples of the influence and control of the external actors. The first of the reasons given when it comes to Lebanon is the Lebanese division in terms of religious and political groups. When each group is considered individually it automatically means they all have different interests.

¹²⁴ Rima Majed, *“The shifting Sands of Sectarianism in Lebanon”*, Global Dialogue, Magazine for International Sociological Association, Volume 4, Issue 4. <https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/the-shifting-sands-of-sectarianism-in-lebanon/>

This leads to different groups within this country having different views on external threats. This causes mistrust and divisions between groups in the country, while strengthening alliances with the countries in the region. Thus, each political or religious group in Lebanon may have different support abroad. External actors can use such opportunities to pursue their interests. The Lebanese Civil War is given as an example. The Kataeb party, which is led by the Christian population during this period allied with Israel to fight against Muslim groups. Hence the Lebanese problem that has been occurring for decades. Creating a gap within the country paves the way for external actors to manipulate the country.¹²⁵ Another reason why external actors choose to interfere in the internal politics of a country are the threats that could cause conflicts in their country.¹²⁶ Especially as it was the case with Syria and the Lebanese Civil War. Syria's participation as an external actor is promoted by fears that the civil war could bring chaos to Syria and provoke conflicts on the Syrian territory. In order to avoid the spillover effect, Syria intervened in the civil war. One more reason is cited for the external actors and their interventions. It is caused by the ethnic connection with certain groups. In situations when ethnic groups do not feel sufficiently represented in a particular country's political ground, external actors give themselves rights to intervene and try to resolve this. Even in this case, interventions do not bring positive results. It can only lead to the emergence of more conflicts and deeper divisions.¹²⁷

8.1.Saudi Arabia's and Iran's impact on Lebanon

Lebanon, because of its geographical position and also the different groups that inhabit it, represents the country that is very easy to manipulate. On the other hand, long wars and conflicts and also the unresolved political situation have led Lebanon to the point where even if it was brought into order it would not know how to properly lead the country. When it comes to the external actors that can easily impact Lebanese politics inside and outside, the greatest impact definitely goes to the two biggest actors that use Lebanon as a field they can measure their rivalry in are Saudi Arabia and Iran. Beside Iran and Saudi Arabia, France also has certain interests and in some way power over

¹²⁵ Abbas Assi, *Political Parties and the Struggle for Power since Syrian Withdrawal: Democracy in Lebanon*, I.B. Tauris; Sew edition (October 30, 2016), pg. 38.

¹²⁶ Ibid, pg. 39.

Lebanon. This influence is not as big as it used to be, but it can still be felt. For example, after the Beirut explosion the first president to visit was French president Macron. The reactions of people showed that he was very welcomed and they were ready to accept every solution he proposed. These countries' big influence is possible due to the huge divisions in Lebanon. Both countries have the communities they support, thus interfering in Lebanon became easy. In addition to the disorganized political structure, the state is always fragile. This makes the influence of the external actors bigger and easier. As already mentioned, in an already divided society, after 2005 two blocs were established in Lebanon. Those are March 8 and March 14. Based on their views and priorities when it comes to Lebanese national security, all decisions were made. What makes it complicated are different priorities and interests of the blocs and the parties inside them. Hezbollah, who is backed by Iran, is the most important part of the March 8 bloc. The relationship between Hezbollah and Iran is not only based on the same interests and ideologies, but also it is evident in the economic sphere. Iran backs financial support and military equipment to Hezbollah. This way, Hezbollah's role in Lebanon became stronger. From 2000 to the present, Hezbollah has played a strong role in the sociopolitics of the developments in Lebanon. As such, not only Hezbollah's interests are displayed on the Lebanese political scene, but also Iranian's as well. Through Hezbollah, Iran has a great power of influence on the ground of this state. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia had a major influence on the March 14 bloc, led by Saad Hariri.

Another strong influence of external factors, and the attempt to use this country by other actors for proxy conflicts, is the example of Saudi Arabia in 2017. At the time, prime minister Saad Hariri resigned as PM in his visit to Saudi Arabia. The reason that was stated was the negative influence of Hezbollah, who on the instructions of Iran is being active within Lebanon. This connection brings the danger to Lebanese security. However, this was only used as an excuse for resigning. There was another way to look at this resignation. Saudi Arabia's dissatisfaction with the influence and strength of Sunni group and the impact on Lebanon of Saad Hariri. Bearing in mind that the strength and activity of Hezbollah is spreading in Lebanon was a great concern for Saudi Arabia. Immediately after returning to Lebanon, Prime Minister Saad Hariri stated that he would not resign after the conversation he had with Michel Aoun. The reason for this is the hope that unity will be achieved between the groups and another important aim was to keep

Lebanon out of the events and influence of external factors.¹²⁸ This was mostly applied to Saudi Arabia's biggest rival Iran and Hezbollah. This event only shows the great impacts of the regional actors on the Lebanese internal policy. It also provoked even more uncertainty to the already uncertain Lebanese political structure.

8.2. Syria's and Israel's Impact on Lebanon

As already mentioned above, due to the Lebanese position and divisions inside the country, the impact of the regional or global actor is huge. The influence of the external actors is caused by various events that are happening in this country and in the region. Generally unstable situation in the region, numerous tensions and conflicts, Arab-Israeli war, different interests and support to different groups within Lebanon by Saudi Arabia and Iran, the influence of Western countries, directly or indirectly affect the system in Lebanon. Beside two biggest rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, Western countries, such as France, the United States and also regional actors such as Syria and Israel also have a big impact on the internal affairs of Lebanon. US influence is mostly linked through Israel. The reason why these countries are fighting here is to get better position and to support their allies they have on the ground. Over time, the influence of the external factors has only created a fertile ground for the collapse of Lebanon, numerous wars, tensions and conflicts. Although no country influencing Lebanon is able to fully achieve their goals due to the deep divisions and different alliances within the country still their influence has been felt in many areas.

Syria has a long history of influencing and interfering in the Lebanese internal but also external affairs. It has opposed the existence of an independent Lebanon until its declarations of independence and even longer. Throughout history, Syria's influence and its position on Lebanon were at an enviable level. The greatest influence of Syria and also Israel occurs with the beginning of the Civil War in Lebanon. When it comes to Israel, the first attempts to establish pro-Western or pro-Israel policy in Lebanon dates since its foundation. However, the real influence of Israel will be felt later. In addition to the historical background of Syria and Lebanon, and beside the Civil War where Syrian impact and presence will affect Lebanon, its impact was also felt during the Six-day war

¹²⁸ Politics Today, '*Hariri returns to Lebanon for the first time since resignation*', 2017. <https://politicstoday.org/hariri-returns-to-lebanon-for-first-time-since-resignation/>

that happened in 1967. Syria increased its interest in Lebanon when they lost the Golan Heights. Lebanon was the great point to start in order to use the armed groups and regain the Heights and put the pressure on Israel at the same time. Also, what made Syria interfere is the situation in the country. Social dissatisfaction among the people in Syria caused Syria's bigger interest in interfering in Lebanese affairs and taking control over it. This happened right before the Civil War emerged, and Syria at the invitation of the Lebanese government entered the territory in order to stop the PLO. The inability of the Lebanese state to stop the PLO also allowed Israel to become actively involved in the internal affairs and even to carry out the military action in the end.¹²⁹ Another example where Syria wanted to show its hegemony is seen after the signing of the Taif Agreement. By signing the Taif Agreement under the supervision of Syria, it was supposed to establish peace and stabilization in Lebanon. However, the goal of achieving democracy and resolving the conflicts in Lebanon was not Syria's main goal. With this, Syria wanted to realize its interests related to electoral laws and to postpone its withdrawal from Lebanon.¹³⁰ In this way, Syria was able to maintain its hegemony and influence. The moment Syrian army withdrew, Lebanon was only further weakened. This led to the fact that even after the withdrawal of the Syrian army, the Lebanese elite tried to find solutions and help from the external actors for their internal problems. The blocs that were created and supported by various external actors, 14 March led by the Future Movement and supported by the Western countries and Saudi Arabia on one side, and on the other 8 March bloc supported by Syria and Iran. Thus, after 2005 ethnic divisions deepened, as external actors supported their groups and interests within Lebanon in order to establish stronger position and achieve their goals. What was caused by such actions and interference is the difficult to lead the country and impossibility of establishing a power-sharing system as it was supposed after the signed agreements. The reason behind this are the divisions and different interests of the groups inside the country. Through these activities, Israel and Syria have strengthened their influence in Lebanon. Until 2005, Syria had an extremely large dominance and influence on Lebanon. Following the assassination of Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri, Syrian influence and dominance in Lebanon declined. Due to the suspicion that the assassination was carried out by Syria, the Sunni community put

¹²⁹ Raphael Lefevre, '*The roots of Crisis in Northern Lebanon*', Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014, pg. 16

¹³⁰ Lefevre, pg. 3.

pressure on the Syrian army to withdraw as soon as possible.¹³¹ This idea of withdrawal was also supported by the Western countries and also Israel. Due to the unstable structure in Lebanon, all events in the region and also the interests of outside actors led to the deeper creation of instability in this country. Same happened with the emergence of the Arab Spring in 2011. Even though the tensions and instabilities caused by the emergence of the Arab Spring did not directly hit Lebanon, it did affect Lebanon indirectly due to the regional actors and their relations with the Lebanese groups. Syria had the greatest influence in destabilizing Lebanon. The Syrian war did not only cause physical damage, but also marked the beginning of violence between Shiite and Muslim community. In addition to the increase in radicalization between Sunni and Shiite, the politicization between the groups emerged.¹³² The reason for this are their relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran, two major rivals on the Lebanese political scene. All these events happening in the region are negatively affecting Lebanon, especially due to its power-sharing system. Throughout the long history of this country, various actors have used this area to achieve their goals and interests, which has left Lebanon inadequate to respond properly today to the crisis inside and outside the country. Most of the time Lebanon found itself insufficient to act and itself allowed interventions by external actors in order to solve internal problems.

Israel's long-term conflict with the Palestinians has led to increasing the number of refugees in Lebanon. This number reached around 300,000 by the time. Due to the large influx of refugees, the PLO was able to almost create state within a state in southern Lebanon. Although Israel was bothered by the PLO's presence in that part of Lebanon, it still respected the territorial integrity of Lebanon but at the same time Israel took direct and indirect actions against security threats coming from Lebanese territory. However, since the start of the Civil War, conflicts and tensions on the Lebanese-Israeli border have culminated in an invasion by Israel. This happened in 1982, when the IDF decided to invade the southern Lebanon. Due to the previous invasion that took place in 1978, they couldn't defeat PLO, Israel believed that with the stronger plan and strategy this time would be possible. One of the other reasons why Israel invaded Lebanon dates back to

¹³¹ *ibid.*, pg. 16-17.

¹³² Ohannes Geukijan, *'Lebanon after the Syrian Withdrawal: External Intervention, Power-Sharing and Political Instability'*, Routledge, 2017, pg. 2.

the past. Namely, in addition to the desire to destroy PLO, Israel also wanted to achieve Zionist idea and plan concerning borders of Israel. With this invasion, according to some opinions, Israel wanted to spread all the way to the southern part of Lebanon, more precisely to the Litani River.¹³³ From this moment Hezbollah gets involved in the war with Israel. At the same time, the Israel's attitude changes and the goal of creating a security zone was suspended when Hezbollah inflicted significant blows on the Israeli army.

Another actors that have significant impact on Lebanon are the Western countries. Given that Israel is the main ally of the Israel in these area, it is clear that direct or indirect influence on Lebanese events could not have been avoided. These impacts are mostly felt during the time when there is the necessity to establish the peace in a particular area. However, even the idea is establishing the peace, interfering of any external actor actually only brings more conflicts and tensions in countries such as Lebanon. In 2006 when another war broke out, it directly happened between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah attacked Israel from the Lebanese territory, and the Lebanese government and army were not involved. Therefore, in order to end this war and finally establish peace in Lebanon, the international community acted and by resolution 1701 requested: *"..the full cessation of hostilities, the deployment of Lebanese forces to Southern Lebanon, parallel withdrawal of Israeli forces behind the Blue Line, strengthening the UN force (UNIFIL) to facilitate the entry of Lebanese Forces in the region and the establishment of a demilitarized zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River."*¹³⁴

8.3.The French Influence

The influence of France dates back to the period of Ottoman rule. With the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the influence of Western countries increased. Due to the presence of the Christian population on this territory, this caused the influence to become even greater. In the period between the 16th and 17th centuries in Lebanon, the most dominant

¹³³ Tayyar Arı, *"Geçmişten Günümüze Orta Doğu: Savaş, Siyaset ve Diplomasi"*, Cilt I, Baskı 7, Bursa Alfa Akademi Basım Yayın, pg. 104, 2017.

¹³⁴ United Nations Peacemaker, Security Council Resolution 1701: The situation in the Middle East, Israel, Lebanon, 2006. <https://peacemaker.un.org/israellebanon-resolution1701>

community were Christians or Maronites. ¹³⁵For this reason, their good ties with the Western countries, especially with France has strengthened their economic and political position over time. This will later cause even more tensions between the groups in Lebanon. The French influence on Lebanon continued their support to Maronites even until today. The Maronites supported all the French decisions at the same time. For instance, after the Ottoman rule when the independence of the two states, Lebanon and Syria, were to be declared, the Maronites were on the side that implied them to be under the mandate, while on the other hand Muslims believe that should support complete independence. The decision was made in 1920 in San Remo, where Lebanon and Syria were taken under the French rule. With this rule, France has established a system that will further deepen the ethnic and religious differences. Another way in which France has influenced the political structure that still prevails in Lebanon is the parliamentary democracy that has governed Lebanon since the 1926 institution. ¹³⁶This constitution implied guidance according to political characteristics. The constitution did not mean Lebanon's independence because France was still in charge of Lebanon's foreign affairs. Only since 1936, when French signed an agreement with both Syria and Lebanon regarding independence, a Christian president has been elected in Lebanon and for the Prime Minister they chose from the Muslim community. Under this influence, the same tradition continues until today. In 1943, with the aim of creating stability and cooperation between groups in Lebanon, Bishara el-Huri was elected president and Riyad Sulh as a Prime Minister. This is when the National Pact was created as an unwritten agreement that will determine the form of government in Lebanon that is still being established until today. According to this pact, the president of the state should always be Christian, ie. Maronites, PM Sunni Muslim and Speaker Shiite. ¹³⁷

Even though France left Lebanon in 1946, the influence it created from that period until today is still felt and implemented. The influence of France in the past was much greater than it is today. The political influence of France still exists and is causing conflicts within the country. Today's influence, however, is more based on soft power

¹³⁵ Kamal Salibi, *"A house of many mansions, The History of Lebanon Reconsidered"*, University of California Press, pg. 17, 1988.

¹³⁶ Tayyar Arı, *"Geçmişten Günümüze Orta Doğu: Savaş, Siyaset ve Diplomasi"*, Cilt I, Baskı 7, Bursa Alfa Akademi Basım Yayın, pg.88.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pg.91-92.

and accordingly in Lebanon, France operates using its economic, political and cultural approaches. ¹³⁸The latest events that have hit Lebanon, the 2020 explosion and the diplomatic crises that hit Lebanon recently, have been a reason for France to become more actively involved in resolving them. Failure to address these crises could be fatal for both the region and the West given that Lebanon is hosting a large number of refugees. After the explosion, French President Macron visited Lebanon, demanded the implementation of the deep reforms and even gave a plan according to which the work should be done. He also stated that only profound changes can overcome the crises caused by the confessional system established in Lebanon. Also, from the example of the recent Gulf crisis and Lebanon, Macron showed after his visit to Saudi Arabia that France still has the power to mediate between various international actors. With this visit, they agreed on supporting the recover of the relations between Lebanon and Gulf countries. Although France has the strongest ties with Christians within Lebanon, the political stability of the whole country is of great importance for them. They also support economic reforms and support negotiations with the IMF to enable Lebanon to carry out the reforms that are needed. The support lately is mostly related to supporting reforms, organizing conferences where the help and reconstruction supported by the international community is discussed and implemented.

¹³⁸ Joe Macaron, '*The French Initiative in Lebanon: Engage and Challenges*', Arab Center Washington DC, 2020. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-french-initiative-in-lebanon-endgame-and-challenges/>

CHAPTER TWO: IMPACTS OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS ON LEBANON AND THE SPILLOVER OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LEBANON AND SYRIA'S RELATIONS

1.1. Lebanese History after Independence and Relations with Syria between 1946-1970

Throughout history Lebanon has been the place of coexistence of a large number of different people and religions. This coexistence lasted peacefully until the 20th century when violence and great divisions between people and societies emerged. Development of the societies in Lebanon depend on Lebanese history and geography as well. The reason for this may be the remnants of the Ottoman rule, which greatly influenced the development of such societies in Lebanon. The expansion of European Powers in the 19th century led to this state beginning to aspire to nationalism, which also led to Lebanon being not only a ground for different religions and people, but also a crossroad of interests of neighboring and European countries. After the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War 1, the winning countries with the famous Sykes-Picot Agreement, divided what used to be called "Big Syria" into four countries which are: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.¹³⁹ The Lebanese people then were divided into two sides, one that welcomed the new division and called it real independence, while the other side considered this as cutting one body into parts and started protesting against that.

Ever since the Ottoman rule, these two countries have been seen as one, more precisely Lebanon was part of what was then called Greater Syria. This will mean that throughout history both countries and their relations have been intertwined and strained. However, this idea of a Greater Syria disintegrates the moment the League of Nations puts these two states under French rule after the First World War. The French forces left both countries in 1946 when both countries were going through political and social difficulties, as the various movements and parties in Lebanon had conflicts trying to adapt to the new constitution. On the other side, Syria had to deal with many presidential coups

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Thompson, "Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon", Columbia University Press New York, pg, 14-17, 1893.

between 1949 and 1970.¹⁴⁰ The internal instability in both countries led to an instability in the relations between them.

In 1970, major incidents occurred which reshaped the relations between the two countries for many years to come:

1. The defense minister of Syria, Hafez al Assad, led a successful coup and took over the control of the Syrian authorities along with his party. Hafez al Assad had a different prospect and agenda for the relations with Lebanon which will later be clear.¹⁴¹
2. The conflict between the Jordanian authorities and Palestine Liberation Organization in what is historically known as ‘the black September’ that caused the organization to move its headquarters and leadership to Lebanon.¹⁴²

After getting independence, these two countries did not officially establish their diplomatic relations until 2008. From independence to the establishment of diplomatic ties and later with the Syrian war, relations between them have seen ups and downs. But what can define them are tensions over Syria’s continued presence in Lebanon and interference in political decisions, reforms and the Syrian military’s nearly 30-year presence. Another event that caused tensions between these two countries will be the suspicion on Syria for the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.¹⁴³

The influence of France and its decisions significantly influenced the further course of development of relations between Lebanon and Syria and also the way of implementing policy in Lebanon. France always tried to support the Christian community, i.e. Maronites in Lebanon, and in that way enabled them to have a great influence on the political scene. At that time, there was still a part in the society that advocated reunification with Syria and wanted to keep the borders as they were. On the other hand, the Christian part of the population advocated the creation of a single state that would develop under the influence of the West, especially France. Although a part of the population wanted to unite with

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Aziz Ur Rehman, ‘Syrian civil war and struggle for survival of Assad regime and its impacts on wider Middle East’, Contemporary Middle East, pg. 26-31.

¹⁴² UNRWA, ‘Black September’, 1970. <https://www.unrwa.org/content/black-september>

¹⁴³ Imad Salamey ‘The Government and Politics of Lebanon’, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, pg. 97, 2014.

Syria, France made an effort to introduce a confessional form of government in Lebanon's political system. This allowed the Muslim group to participate in politics, and thus the desire for unification diminished with this idea. This form of governing will later turn out to be insufficient, due to the excessive external influences.¹⁴⁴

After getting independence both countries, guided by their own interests, were committed to their own well-being. In this period they both had one common interest and that was the withdrawal of France and all foreign armies from their territories. What they advocated was gaining complete independence. Problems and tensions arose when Lebanon and Syria were supposed to share state revenues after separating. Gaining full independence would be the goal for both countries but Lebanon has increasingly emphasized this. Another decline in relations between the two countries occurred during the Lebanese Civil War. What this war will bring about are the consequences that are still being felt in Lebanon. Syria's presence during the war made already complicated relations between the parties even more complicated. The presence of the army was supposed to end with the Taif Agreement in 1989, but their withdrawal took place later under the influence of Western countries. Although Bashar al-Assad wanted to strengthen his position in this territory and beyond with this presence, it eventually weakened his influence and political position.

1.2. Lebanese Civil War

Lebanon was once again divided between supporters and objectors to Palestinian operations being directed and executed from Lebanese lands towards Israel. This division will later lead to conflicts and eventually the beginning of the Lebanese Civil war. The war would be between the Lebanese front formed by majority Christian intellectuals and presided over by Camille Chamoun, the former president of Lebanon with the participation of Pierre Gemayel, the founder and leader of Kataeb Party, also known in English as the Phalanges. On the other side, Suleiman Frangieh who had just finished his presidential years all from one side, and the Lebanese National Movement which was a

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. 24.

front of left who supported and allied with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Headed by prominent Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt.¹⁴⁵

In 1976, a year after the beginning of the Civil War, Suleiman Frangieh, who was then the president of Lebanon asked Damascus to send the Syrian army to save the country and assure peace in the country. The Syrian forces did enter the country then and mainly resided in the northern part of the country. After that year, Lebanon became not only an external matter, but also considered to be a main focus in the Syrian internal agenda as well.

Two years after that, in 1978, in order to stop the PLO operations starting from the Lebanese lands towards North Israeli territories, and with cooperation with the Phalanges and the Lebanese forces. The Israeli army invaded Lebanon from the southern borders; the same side of the conflict that had invited the Syrian army to enter the Lebanese territories.¹⁴⁶ The Israeli invasion of South Lebanon succeeded at pushing the PLO to the North, away from the Lebanese-Israeli borders, however, could not stop the military operations against them. Seeing Israel as their biggest enemy, the Syrian authorities then considered this as a national security threat which led to a reformulation of the political alliance composition in the country. Syria was later accused of assassinating multiple leftist leaders like Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of the Lebanese National Movement.¹⁴⁷

In 1982, and with the help of their Lebanese allies, the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) succeeded at invading their second Arabic capital city- Beirut.¹⁴⁸ Having noticed the inefficiency of the United Nations efforts, Hafez Al Assad decided to take the lead in negotiating with the United States of America. Those negotiations did not reach where Al Assad had hoped and found himself forced into a war against Israel and its allies, the Lebanese forces and Phalanges on the Lebanese lands.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Philip Khoury, ‘‘ Syria and Lebanon, 1943 – 1975’’, Middle East Research and Information Project, 1985.

¹⁴⁶ Fawwaz Traboulsi, ‘‘ A History of Modern Lebanon’’, Pluto Press, Second edition 2012, pg. 193-211,.

¹⁴⁷ Lamis Andoni, ‘‘ Walid Jumblatt: Kingmaker’’, Aljazeera, 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2011/1/22/walid-jumblatt-kingmaker>

¹⁴⁸ Charles Chuck D. Freilich, ‘‘ Israel in Lebanon – getting it wrong: the 1982 invasion, 2000 withdrawal, and 2006 war’’, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, pg.43.

¹⁴⁹ Dan Naor, ‘‘ Divide and Conquer: The Consolidation of Hafiz al Assad’s policy towards Lebanon – the early stages’’, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 53, 18-20.

During its resistance against the Israeli invasion that lasted for months, Syria found a new strategic ally in the Lebanese Islamic resistance, which will be later named Hezbollah. This ally, which was active mostly in south Lebanon due to the relatively high Shiite population there, will be trusted and supported by the Syrian regime until this day. After years of negotiations, Israel and Lebanon signed the 17 May Agreement, which is a framework that defined the relations of the two countries. The Palestinian Liberation Organization had to leave Lebanon and Israel had to withdraw southwards towards, and by 1985, Israel was only 19 km inside the Lebanese territories.¹⁵⁰

1.3. Importance of Taif Agreement, reasons and impacts

After the withdrawal of PLO and Israel from Lebanon, and with the continuity of the Civil war, the Syrian regime found itself having an even bigger role in Lebanon. Their allies got stronger and the strong presence of the Syrian regime inside the Lebanese parliament and the Lebanese government was reflected through these allies in the mid and late 80's.¹⁵¹

In 1989, the current president of Lebanon Michel Aoun, who was then the Lebanese Army Chief, stated in a conference his complete refusal of the Syrian presence and interference in the Lebanese internal and external policies. He led with his party, the Free Patriotic Movement- a revolution against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.¹⁵² This revolution will soon get violent between the Syrian army and their allies- the Lebanese forces and the progressive Socialist party from one side, against the Free Patriotic Movement and some divisions of the Lebanese army. Michel Aoun would later suffer a huge defeat and casualties, as the Syrian forces bombed and surrounded Baabda, the place of residence for Michel Aoun who had to flee the country and be in exile in France for over 15 years¹⁵³.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph G. Jabbara and Nancy W. Jabbara, *'Lebanon: Gateway to Peace in the Middle East?'*, International Journal, Vol. 38, no. 4, pg. 601-602.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 604-605.

¹⁵² Joseph A. Kechichian, *'A strong Army for a stable Lebanon'*, Middle East Institution, Policy Brief, No. 19, 2008.

¹⁵³ Los Angeles Times, *'Lebanon's Aoun in Exile at French Villa: Mideast: Mutinous general is spirited out of Beirut under an amnesty for war crimes'*, LAT archives, 1991. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-08-31-mn-1251-story.html>

On 22th October 1989, with the sponsorship of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and The United States Of America, and with the strong presence of Syria, an agreement was signed by all the Lebanese conflicting parties represented by the surviving members of Lebanon's 1972 parliament. This agreement will be later known as the Taif Agreement due to it being held in Taif city in Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁴

This agreement's purpose was to provide the basis for the ending of the civil war and the return to political normality in Lebanon, the agreement had four main resolutions:

- *General Principles and Reforms;*
- *Spreading the sovereignty of the State of Lebanon over all Lebanese territories;*
- *Liberating Lebanon from the Israeli occupation;*
- *Lebanese-Syrian Relations.*¹⁵⁵

The Taif Agreement was signed in order to bring political reforms after the war and to build national sovereignty. Also, according to this agreement the Syrian army was to withdraw from Lebanon two years after the war. However, this didn't happen until 2005. This agreement aimed to balance representatives in political institutions so all the groups could have a balanced number of their representatives in the parliament. In addition, the speaker who according to the rule should be Shiite with this agreement got a better position, so he who until that time had the right to be in power for only 3 years, was given the right for one more year. With this, it can be concluded that the number of Shiites have increased the number of representatives in parliament, thus strengthening their role. It was also decided that the president would always be Christian, the prime minister Sunni and the speaker a Shiite. This new division has brought about the changes that would explain what is happening in Lebanon today.

The following is a paragraph taken from the agreement which was ratified in the Lebanese parliament session on 4.11.1989:

¹⁵⁴ Karam Karam, '' *The Taif Agreement: New order, old framework*'', Accord, Issue 24, pg.36-39.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

“Lebanon, with its Arab identity, is tied to all the Arab countries by true fraternal relations. Between Lebanon and Syria there is a special relationship that derives its strength from the roots of blood relationships, history, and joint fraternal interests. This is the concept on which the two countries' coordination and cooperation is founded, and which will be embodied by the agreements between the two countries in all areas, in a manner that accomplishes the two fraternal countries' interests within the framework of the sovereignty and independence of each of them. Therefore, and because strengthening the bases of security creates the climate needed to develop these bonds, Lebanon should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Syria's security, and Syria should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Lebanon's security under any circumstances. Consequently, Lebanon should not allow itself to become a pathway or a base for any force, state, or organization seeking to undermine its security or Syria's security. Syria, which is eager for Lebanon's security, independence, and unity and for harmony among its citizens, should not permit any act that poses a threat to Lebanon's security, independence, and sovereignty.”¹⁵⁶

The Syrian impact on the Taif Agreement was wide and clear as each term of the resolution seemed to be in Syria's interest that the famous newspaper “Al-Safir” titled: “*The Al-Taif agreement is discussed in Saudi Arabia, but was architected in Damascus*”.¹⁵⁷ The Syrian military presence in Lebanon was extended for two more years. It was to be withdrawn by the end of 1991. This didn't happen until 2005. It was also agreed on the disarmament of all the fighting sides except for Hezbollah, the strongest ally of Syria in Lebanon, as it was considered to be a resistant power against Israel.¹⁵⁸

At the end of the Civil war, Syria's biggest Christian rivals were taken out of the Lebanese political picture of years to come, as Michel Aoun¹⁵⁹ was exiled to France where Amin Gemayel¹⁶⁰ also fled and stayed there for 15¹⁶¹ years and Samir Geagea was

¹⁵⁶ The Taif Agreement.

https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Amer Hamze, Lebanese citizen, January 2021, Tripoli.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Bahout, “*The unraveling of Lebanon's Taif Agreement: limits of sect-based power sharing*”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pg. 1, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Salamey, I. (2013). “*The Government and Politics of Lebanon*”, (1st ed.), pp. 29-51, 2014. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203746424>

¹⁶⁰ Amin Gemayel, Christian Political leader, president of the Republic of Lebanon in 1982.

¹⁶¹ Your Dictionary, Amin Gemayel, Biography. <https://biography.yourdictionary.com/amin-gemayel>

imprisoned for 11 years¹⁶². On the other hand, and after the assassination of the Lebanese president Rene Moawad who had some disagreements with the Syrian regime¹⁶³ Elyas Hrawi, a member of 1972 Parliament, was elected to become the president of the Lebanese Republic. Hrawi made sure to have good and stable relations with Syria¹⁶⁴, and it wasn't until 1991 when the 1991 Brotherhood agreement was signed between the presidents of the two countries in Damascus.

This agreement was the beginning of a new era of cooperation between the two countries. It was officially named "*Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination*", and it stipulated that both countries would start cooperating on all economic, security, social and cultural levels.¹⁶⁵ The first cooperation between the two countries after declaring independence took place in 1991. This cooperation will be of a great importance for the normalization of relations between these two countries. The treaty also granted the citizens of both countries the right to travel and reside in the neighboring country unconditionally.

The agreement will also become questionable throughout the years, especially after what was happening recently in Lebanon. As an agreement that was supposed to bring peace and better living conditions for everyone in this country, as time passed it actually showed that it might not have fulfilled its purpose. One of the examples is the blast that happened in the port of Beirut. Some of the analysts connect these unfortunate events with the past, with political mismanagement as well as with wrong decisions or not implemented. When it comes to the recent events happening in Lebanon, in the panel about the Beirut explosion we have analysts talking about core problems and why this country is in this condition. According to the web-panel from 2021, from the conversations with Lebanese citizens, it is clear that the Taif Agreement failed to establish and implement everything it was essentially signed for. As a result, Lebanon is in the chaos it is today. This went a little further than August 4 when the explosion happened, and put the core problem of these events plaguing Lebanon. Sami Atallah points out that

¹⁶² AlJazeera, "Geagea released from jail", 2005. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/7/26/geagea-released-from-jail>

¹⁶³ Salamey, I. (2013). "The Government and Politics of Lebanon", (1st ed.), pp. 70, 2014. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203746424>

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, pg. 71.

¹⁶⁵ Traboulsi, Fawwaz. "A History of Modern Lebanon." Pluto Press, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p4f5>, pg. 250.

after ending the civil war Taif Agreement which was essentially made to benefit the citizens then and today it turned out that this Agreement was never fully implemented and did not serve the citizens and their needs as intended. This only proves that such political institutions have been unsuccessful in meeting the basic needs of its citizens for almost 30 years. The reason for these events is the disagreement of the political parties in Lebanon, regardless of whether they are Sunnis, Christian or Shiites. When each side fights only for its part and not for the benefit of all, then the establishment and implementation of any agreement falls into the shadows and leads people into failure. When there are disagreements between these political parties, there is automatically a paralysis of the system, which as such is impossible to develop and has positive outcomes for its people and its state.¹⁶⁶

Another analyst, Nasser Yassin, points out the same thing. He says that the agreement that is supposed to bring peace has essentially brought everything but the peace. In such situations, the regional context is very important, but also the way the political elite in Lebanon sees it. All these regional engagements actually have deeper roots and Nasser also starts it from the Taif Agreement, which he says is based on three foundations- one of which is bribing warlords and militias who fought between the 1970s and 1980s and destroyed the country. Those who set the peace agreement did not make much effort to implement it, so all those who fought on the basis of this agreement overnight became and were given high positions in the Lebanese political system. The second is the one concerning regional engagement, which should also be sought in the period when the contract was signed because it is one its items, more precisely, the support and introduction of regional funds and money to help the reconstruction of this country. And as the third part of this agreement, he mentions the importance of sponsors, ie. The existence of an international body. However, all this on which the “peace” agreement was based went wrong, which means the political elites fought only to enrich themselves and to get the most of the power, be it political, economic or financial. This way of acting has put Lebanon in the situation it is in today. It is clear that this “formula” no longer brings anything good to this country and that it is time to set up a new pact, a

¹⁶⁶ Seta Web-Panel: *Beirut Explosion*, Sami Atallah.

new agreement that would include the needs of the people and finally make their lives normal and easy to live.

The question that arises here is how such a system survives after so many years. Due to the specific political structure mentioned earlier, clientelism, sectarian division even puts fear in the people, but also habits lead to the same people being elected for years. It is easy to say that they are the masters who use the opportunities and know how to be re-elected. This, of course, does not mean any improvement for this country. The protests that began in 2019 are the protests that have been repeated for years as a revolt and dissatisfaction of the people against the system. The fact that this country is just spinning in a circle and does not bring a solution as long as there are people who advocate only for their own interests and not for the interests and need of all. This only means, protests will grow, job opportunities will continue decreasing and the people will be pushed to poverty which has happened in the last two years.

1.4. Period after Civil War, Rafik Hariri and relations with Syria

In 1992, Rafik Hariri was elected as the new prime minister in Lebanon. The billionaire businessman who had lived long years in Saudi Arabia and had great relations with the Saudi royal family brought many projects with him to rebuild the country and especially the capital city Beirut.¹⁶⁷ Some of these projects were funded by Saudi Arabia, but most of them were funded by credits and loans which, many believe will later cause a loan crisis and become one of the main reasons of the current economic crisis. Lebanon lacked manpower to work on these rebuilding projects. Due to the big labor emigration during the Civil war years (mostly to Australia and Africa) and due to the general refusal of Lebanese people to work in jobs such as builders, porters and tilers as these jobs have a social inferior look among the locals. Thousands of Syrian workers started to arrive to Lebanon¹⁶⁸ to fill this need, thanks to the Agreement of Brotherhood that allowed all these workers to settle in without any restrictions.

¹⁶⁷ Haleh Afshar, ‘*Rafik Hariri: Rags to riches Lebanese premier*’, The Guardian, 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/feb/15/guardianobituaries.syria>

¹⁶⁸ Traboulsi, Fawwaz. ‘A History of Modern Lebanon.’ Pluto Press, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p4f5>, pg. 250. pg. 160 – 188.

The Syrian presence in Lebanon during the 90's was getting stronger, and they started to take full charges of all the aspects of the country, due to it military presence¹⁶⁹, their allies who were getting stronger with all the support they were getting, and due to their excellent relations with the speaker of the House of Representatives Nabih Berri¹⁷⁰ who hasn't been replaced since 1992, and the Lebanese presidents Elias Hrawi followed by Emil Lahoud, who thought that the only way to keep their chairs and not face the same destiny as Rene Mouawad¹⁷¹ was to obey the orders coming from Damascus.¹⁷²

During this time Syria was given the nickname "The older sister" among the locals. Its security and intelligence services had a reputation of being ruthless and omnipresent.

"The pictures of Hafez Al Assad and his sons were everywhere, the Syrian military checkpoints were on each city entrance, people were afraid of mentioning the syrian regime or presidency, many lebanese citizens were captured and sent to syrian prisons. For that, many of whom are still missing, we celebrated the death of Hafez Al Assad in silence as we hoped the regime would be weakened but it was not, during Emile Lahoud's era, the syrian security services grew in power, we all felt it." said a Lebanese citizen.¹⁷³

On 24th May 2000, the Israeli army withdrew from south Lebanon.¹⁷⁴ This day would later be called the National day of Liberation and would become a national holiday. People in Lebanon celebrated it all over the country, on the other hand, many question marks were put on the Syrian presence in Lebanon, now that the Israeli army has left and there is no further need or explanation for that.¹⁷⁵

1.5. Rafik Hariri's Assassination and Lebanese-Syrian Relations between 2005-2011

At the beginning of 2000's the Syrian regime felt the international pressure, mostly from the USA and France, to withdraw from Lebanon¹⁷⁶. The reason for this

¹⁶⁹ Adeed I Dawsha, "Syria and the Lebanese crisis", 185-189.

¹⁷⁰ Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nabih Berri.

¹⁷¹ 13th President of Lebanese Republic, 1989.

¹⁷² Steve O'brien, 'From Israel to Damascus', 2019, pg. 8-10.

¹⁷³ Interview with Amer Hamze, 55 y.o, Lebanese citizen, Tripoli, 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Dalia Dassa Kaye, "The Israeli Decision to Withdraw from Southern Lebanon: Political Leadership and Security Policy", Political Science Quarterly Vol. 117, no. 4, pg.561.

¹⁷⁵ Congressional Research Service: Lebanon, 2021, pg. 2. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/IF11617.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ Esther Pan, Middle East: Syria and Lebanon, Council on foreign relations, 2005.

pressure was to stop the expansion of the Iranian/Russian presence in the Middle East. In 2004, the 6 year presidency of Emile Lahoud, who was known for being loyal to Syria, came to an end. Seeing him as a major key for their control of Lebanon, the Syrian regime wanted to keep Emile Lahoud in his position and suggested the extension of his term for 3 more years, which was impossible unless the Lebanese constitution is amended. The Syrians then threatened Al Hariri and Walid Jambulat into implementing this amendment. They had no choice but to obey and accept the Syrian orders to extend the term of Emile Lahoud until November 2007.¹⁷⁷ Iran and Hezbollah welcomed this extension which caused chaos in the country. Multiple ministers and parliament members considered it illegal and an insult to Lebanese sovereignty and resigned, protests and opposition to Syria were increasing in Lebanon.¹⁷⁸ Backed by the Syrian security services, the Lebanese security services succeeded at aggressively suppressing the protests where more than 5000 protestors were arrested and imprisoned. The local and international pressures were growing that Rafik Al Hariri decided to resign as prime minister.¹⁷⁹

In September 2004, and due to the escalation of tension in Lebanon, the UN Security Council issued resolution 1559, calling all the foreign troops to withdraw from the Lebanese territories. The Syrian troops seemed to delay their withdrawal until a couple of months later, in February 2004, when Rafik Al Hariri was assassinated in an explosion that targeted his motorcade.¹⁸⁰

The assassination of Rafik Al Hariri caused a division amongst Lebanese people. The first side accused the Syrian regime and their allies in Lebanon of killing the Lebanese Prime Minister as he was known for opposing many Syrian decisions and his attempts to limit their dominance in Lebanon's interior and International affairs. The second side, which mostly consisted of Syria's allies in Lebanon, refused this accusation

¹⁷⁷ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Lebanese Elections: Syrian Key Interest Preserved*, for now, Policy analysis, policy watch 484.

¹⁷⁸ Talal Nizameddin, " *Squaring the Middle East Triangle in Lebanon: Russia and the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Nexus* ", *The Slavonic and East European Review* , Jul., 2008, Vol. 86, No. 3 (Jul., 2008), pp. 476-500.

¹⁷⁹ BBC News, "Profile: Former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri", 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13978635>

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

and cited that it was a US-Israeli crime to create chaos in Lebanon and put international pressure on the Syrians.¹⁸¹

The assassination of the Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri has caused numerous protest between the groups in Lebanon. One of the biggest protests happened on March 8th 2005, thousands of Lebanese gathered in central Beirut in order to show their support for Syria. The coalition of March 8 that included political parties such as Hezbollah, Amal, Syrian Socialist National Party and el-Marada Party went out to show their support for Syria. Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah then said his famous sentence:

*"No one can get Syria out of Lebanon, its mind, its heart or its future."*¹⁸²

This quote would summarize the value of the Syrian presence in Lebanon for Hezbollah. This will be demonstrated again, years later, when Hezbollah sent their troops to Syria to help the regime regain many territories and change the balance of the Civil war in the benefit of the Syrian regime after suffering from many defeats. After Hariri's assassination there were major changes between these two countries. This also gradually decreased Syria's influence over Lebanon. However, Hezbollah's relations with Syria have not changed significantly after the withdrawal of Syria in 2005. What happened here is that Hezbollah politically strengthened its role as he won 14 seats in the parliament and two ministers in the cabinet.¹⁸³

However, the March 14 coalition that includes Future Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Free Patriotic Movement and Kataeb Party did not go unanswered either¹⁸⁴. A week later, On March 14th 2005, another huge demonstration took place in the same location, central Beirut, thousands of people gathered to show their opposition to Syria demanding a fast Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. These two dates, will later become the names of the two biggest opposing alliances in the country, 8th march and 14th march.¹⁸⁵ These divisions that occurred after the assassination of the PM Rafik Hariri

¹⁸¹ Jim Muir, "Deep divisions haunt Lebanese politics", BBC News, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11392034>

¹⁸² Abbas William Samii, "A stable structure of shifting sands: Assessing the Hezbollah-Iran-Syria Relationship", Middle East Journal, Winter, 2008, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter, 2008), pp. 47.

¹⁸³ Joseph, Alaga, "Silahlı Mücadeleden İktidar Partisine: Hizbullah.", Birinci Baskı Doğan, 2007.

¹⁸⁴ Abbas Assi, "Lebanon's consociational model, Christian parties and the struggle for political power in the post-2005 period", Global Discourse, December 2016.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 47-48.

will lead to the conflicts inside the country. Especially, the conflicts between Shiite and Sunnis that took place in 2008. Due to this, Hezbollah will for the first time use its military forces against Lebanese state.

With international and local pressure growing, the Syrian authorities found no way but to make a full military withdrawal from Lebanon, Bashar Al Assad stated that the withdrawal would occur by the end of April 2005.¹⁸⁶

On April 30th 2005, the last Syrian soldiers crossed the Lebanese-Syrian borders, but that was not the end of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. During the first months following the Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon, many assassination attacks targetted politicians and journalists in Beirut that were opposing Syria and accusing it of all the chaos that was Lebanon was going through.

In July 2006, Israel launched a new war on Lebanon, After Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers on the Syrian-Lebanese borders, during the thirty days of the war, Syria provided its ally Hezbollah with huge logistical support. Thousands of Lebanese citizens mostly living in south Lebanon near the Israeli borders fled their homes towards Syria. The Syrians welcomed the Lebanese refugees and opened their houses for them.¹⁸⁷

The war of July ended by Hezbollah claiming victory against Israel, which caused the popularity of Hezbollah and Syria to raise¹⁸⁸, and for new alliances with some Lebanese parties. The most particular alliance is the one they made with Michel Aoun, the leader of the Lebanese Free patriotic movement who had opposed and was defeated by the Syrians in the early 90's.

In the following years, the relations between Lebanon and Syria were stable. There were also some attempts by the Western countries, particularly France towards Syria, but everything changed with the beginning of the Syrian rebellion in March 2011. In 2011 when the chaos began in the region it was obvious that Lebanon would by no means remain intact. Due to its geographical position but also the long and intertwined

¹⁸⁶ Aljazeera, profile: Bashar al- Assad, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/4/17/profile-bashar-al-assad>

¹⁸⁷ David E. Johnson, *“The Second Lebanon War: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza”*, RAND Corporation, pg. 9-13.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, pg. 49.

historical relations with Syria, Lebanon will certainly not stay out of these events. The protests grew quickly, within weeks. The conflict became a warfare as the Syrian regime was using fire power against the protestors who found themselves in need to defend themselves. Bearing in mind that this war can cause a great negative impact on Lebanon, there will be attempts on protecting Lebanon from what will happen in Syria.

What can be concluded is that each sect and political party in Lebanon was directly or indirectly affected by the Syrian conflict, which heightened the deep rivalries and sectarian tensions in Lebanon, and has caused big tensions and larger gaps among the political parties until today. In addition to the histories they share, Lebanon and Syria are politically, geographically but also economically connected. All of this has contributed to the inevitable Syrian crisis being the part of Lebanon as part of this crisis.

1.6. Arab Uprisings and Lebanon

Beginning in Tunisia in 2011, Arab uprisings followed in other Arab countries, not including Lebanon. The reasons that led to the mass protests were mostly because of the countries' corruption and repression of the ruling regimes, no rights on individual freedoms, a lot of human rights were violated, also people lived in very difficult living conditions, poverty was rising extremely, and the unemployment rate in these countries was increasing. When the first uprising took place in Tunisia, Lebanon was not hit by the crisis. There are some reasons discussed why the uprisings didn't take place in Lebanon. Some of the reasons are that Lebanon is such a country that it does not have a dictator against whom the people would go against and want to replace them. There is political chaos, inadequate answers, and a weak economy, but that was not enough for the people to stand up; until 2019 protests, and this will be discussed separately. Also, even though Lebanon is a Middle Eastern country, it is still a country that has had a little more democracy implemented compared to other Arab countries that decided to stand up for their rights and that have started awakening.

Although not directly impacted by the uprisings, the whole atmosphere in the region affected Lebanon, especially after the war that broke out in Syria. From that moment on, there has always been a fear in Lebanon of possible negative impacts in all of the country's sectors. But as said before, the impacts at the beginning were not to be

scared of. The problems for Lebanon at that moment were mostly related to Lebanon's economy and tourism sector.

What this war will cause in Lebanon is still felt in this territory. It will lead to even great sectarian divisions, to instability on Lebanon's borders, to radicalizations on the ground of Lebanon and terrorist attacks will bring more insecurity to this already vulnerable country. Moreover, due to the impact of the Syrian influence on Lebanon, which lasted for almost 30 years, is one of the reasons for the instability of Lebanon and the models of democracy that are being established in that country.

Due to its location, the 'Mirror' of the Middle East was never at peace. That is why all additional crises only lead to instability in the country, which unfortunately they unsuccessfully avoid. There are several definitions that define security. The general understanding is that security threats occur when military threats increase whether it is inside or outside a country. To this can be added the socio-economic threat means that living standards in a certain country will be affected due to the presence of refugees.¹⁸⁹ According to the literature but also the interviews that were conducted it is easy to conclude that Lebanon was affected by both factors.

2. SPILLOVER OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS ON LEBANON: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS

2.1. Political Situation in Lebanon at the time of Crisis

Political polarization and differences in political interests of the political groups in Lebanon have been more pronounced since 2000 and intensified when demonstrations began in Syria. Lebanon's internal political situation changed at that time. Following the withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon and the death of Hafez al Assad in 2000, the Syrian military presence faced criticism and resistance from the Lebanese population. In 2005 former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was killed and the alliance leaders in March 14 accused Syria for the attack. On the other side, allies on March 8 and Syrian officials didn't accept these accusations. The assassination of Hariri marked the beginning of a series other assassinations that caused even more conflicts in the country. This also

¹⁸⁹ Jacobsen K. Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes. *International Migration Review*. 1996;30(3):655-678. doi:[10.1177/019791839603000301](https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839603000301)

triggered the Cedar Revolution, demonstrations that demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the establishment of an international commission to investigate the assassination. Under this pressure, Syria had to withdraw in 2005 and return all the troops to Syria. In 2006, Hezbollah launched a series of rocket attacks on Israeli territory. It killed numbers of Israeli soldiers and caused Israel's reaction. Israel responded with air strikes and artillery fire on targets in Lebanon. These actions caused the ground invasion of southern Lebanon that resulted in the 2006 Lebanese war. Numbers of soldiers on both sides were killed during this war.¹⁹⁰ Between 2006 and 2008, a number of protests led by groups opposed to pro-Western PM Fouad Siniora called for the creation of a national unity government over which mostly Shiite opposition groups would have a veto.¹⁹¹ When Emil Lahoud's presidential term ended in October 2007 the opposition refused to vote for a successor unless an agreement of the division of power was reached. This resulted in leaving Lebanon without a president. In May, in 2008, Hezbollah and Amal forces sparked by the government statement that Hezbollah's communications network was illegal, occupied western Beirut and led to the 2008 Lebanese conflict. This was condemned as an attempted coup and numbers of people were killed and injured during the clashes between the pro-government and opposition militias.¹⁹² On May 21, 2008 the conflicts were ended with the signing of the Doha Agreement. As part of the agreement, that ended 18 months of political paralysis, Michael Suleiman became president and a government of national unity was established. In early January in 2011, the government of national unity collapsed due to the growing tensions stemming from the Special Court for Lebanon, which was expected to accuse Hezbollah members of assassinating Hariri.¹⁹³ Parliament has elected Najib Mikati as a candidate for the Hezbollah-led alliance on March 8 as a Lebanon's Prime Minister. In 2012, the Syrian civil war threatened to spillover into Lebanon, causing several incidents of sectarian violence and armed conflicts between Sunnis and Alawites in Tripoli.¹⁹⁴ The Syrian crisis also caused the

¹⁹⁰ Albert Hourani, *"The Emergence of the Modern Middle East"*, University of California Press, 1981.

¹⁹¹ Petallides, Constantine, *"Cedars to the East: A Study of Modern Lebanon"*, Vol. 3, No. 12., pg. 1/1, 2011.

¹⁹² Marie Joelle Zahar, *"Power-Sharing, Credible Commitment and State (re)Building: Comparative Lessons from Bosnia and Lebanon"*, 2008.

¹⁹³ Yusri Hazran, *"The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy"*, Crown Center Middle East Studies, No.2, pg. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 4.

huge number of refugees to come in Lebanon. As the number of Syrian refugees was increasing, the Lebanese Forces Party, the Kataeb Party and Free Patriotic Movement fear that the country's sectarian political system has been undermined.¹⁹⁵

The already mentioned coalitions that took their positions on the issue of support for Syria were separated into two different positions. The parties in the March 8 coalition supported the Syrian regime and the March 14 Alliance took a stand against the regime.¹⁹⁶ This division has led to even greater divisions between political and religious groups in Lebanon, therefore the impact of the Syrian crisis and spillover has spread on Lebanon. The first reason for that is the Hezbollah's participation in the war. The March 14 coalition has expressed its opposition to this decision from the beginning. Participation in the war by non-state actor has raised fears that divisions in Lebanon will deepen, both in politics and among Sunni-Shiite groups. Also, the participation of Hezbollah has increased insecurity on the borders of the country as well as within it. This posed a danger that the Syrian war could spread to Lebanon. Although Hezbollah essentially enjoyed an important role in Lebanon at its very first foundation, this move made Hezbollah lose its position in Lebanon and called into question its political situation.¹⁹⁷ In addition to Hezbollah's participation in the war, which has negatively affected the political divisions, the disagreement of the political groups on this topic has led to a political deadlock. The impossibility of resolving the Syrian problem between the two coalitions affected the political flow in Lebanon. Therefore, the presidential elections were postponed and the crisis has also delayed the general elections in Lebanon.¹⁹⁸

It is clear that Lebanon's exposure to the Syrian crisis had an inevitable negative impact on all segments especially on the political situation. The dynamics of the conflict within Lebanon and the impacts coming from the borders have affected the action of the political parties. At that time, Lebanon was about to formulate a new electoral law, but

¹⁹⁵ Ahmad Nader, Nada Al Maghlouth, *"Lebanese Political Parties and Administrative Reform: An Impossible Promise?"*, Centre for Lebanese Studies, pg. 24-27, 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Lynn Zovighian, *"Lebanon is Not Two Camps"*, Middle East Institute Part 2, 2008. <https://mei.edu/publications/lebanon-not-two-camps-part-2>

¹⁹⁷ Augustus Richard Norton (2007): *"The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics, The International Spectator"*, 42:4, 475-491.

¹⁹⁸ Christophe Abi-Nassif, *"The electoral path may not save Lebanon, but its citizens deserve the chance to walk it"*, Middle East Institute, 2019. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/electoral-path-may-not-save-lebanon-its-citizens-deserve-chance-walk-it>

due to the crisis coming from the borders and different interests among the parties this was postponed until 2013.¹⁹⁹ The political and sectarian tensions that are present in Lebanon even without the influence of external actors have intensified during this period. Due to the large number of divisions and political parties whose interests differ, the party's policies have always tended to achieve the victory regardless of the outcome. Due to the internal disagreements and also under the influence of the Syrian crisis, the parliamentary elections that were scheduled for 2013 have been postponed until 2014 and later until 2017.²⁰⁰ The behavior of the political parties in Lebanon is affected by various of factors. In Lebanon all the events happening inside or outside the country and responses on them are mostly linked to the Lebanese consociational system that Lebanon adheres to. In addition, history has a great influence as well as the regional actors. The system implemented in Lebanon is described as the system led by the elites whose aim is to turn fragmented political structure into stable democracy. Decisions that are made in Lebanon regarding any issue is shaped by this system. This system has never been the best solution since it has caused a lot of intra-sectarian conflicts and at the same time due to the great number of the external influences, Lebanon's decision making has always been complicated.²⁰¹ Although Lebanon tried to distance itself from the conflict coming from the borders, tried to implement its dissociation policy, political parties did not remain immune. They used this crisis to improve their political position within Lebanon. The Sunnis and the parties where they make up the majority and are mostly part of the March 14 Alliance have sought to weaken power of the regime and Syria in Lebanon.²⁰² In addition, there was a growing fear of strengthening of Hezbollah and the support provided to the regime. As already explained, parties in Lebanon are deeply divided according to their interests, so it is very common to see the same interests and alliances between the different sectarian groups. This is also possible to see within the same sectarian groups since everyone has their own interests. The Sunnis and Shiites have made their stances

¹⁹⁹ International Crisis Group, *"Managing Lebanon's Compounding Crises"*, Middle East and North Africa, Report Np. 228, 2021.

²⁰⁰ Yusri Hazran, *"The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy"*, Crown Center Middle East Studies, No.2, pg. 6-7.

²⁰¹ Khalil Gebara, *"Pluralism in Lebanese Politics: Formalizing the Informal Senate"*, Baker Institute for Public Policy, pg.3- 4.

²⁰² Geukjian, Ohannes. "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon." *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014): 521–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698181>.

on the Syrian issue very clear from the beginning. On the other hand, the Druze and Christian communities have divided opinion on the issue. They were also divided within the communities, and from this Druze parties PSP and LDP had different view on this issue and supported different sides. The PSP supported Syrian opositon and the LDP sided with the regime, thus supporting Assad. There are different motives behind the PSP's support to the oposition.²⁰³ What is mentioned are two main reasons, one of which is their will to strengthen ties with the countries in the region that also support the oposition. Another one is their suspicion that regime is responsible for the death of Kamal Jumblatt. As an ally of Hezbollah, the LDP has strengthened its positon by supporting the regime, proving that the Syrian conflict has only deepened divisions, both political and sectarian. The Chrisitan community had also divided views on this issue. The parties representing the Christian community in Lebanon have expressed their views on the Syrian crisis in line with those of the coalitions to which they belong. The FPM supported the Assad regime. The reason why they supported the regime as they cited lies in the fear that şf the regime in Syria loses, the Muslim Brotherhood would become stronger. Thus, this would increase radicalism and also a threat to Christians in Lebanon.²⁰⁴ The FPM justified its support by fearing the strengthening of the Muslim Brotherhood, while on the other hand the LFP led by Samir Geagea expressed its support to the Syrian oposition.²⁰⁵ Although both parties come from the Christian community, interests and opinion were deeply divided. This has led to different political parties from different communities having the same interests and vice versa. The LFP believed that the regime had weakened the Chrisitan community in both Lebanon and Syria, therefore supported the oppositon. Especially at the time when Syrian army was still present in Lebanon, Chrisitan influence was reduced. Samir Geagea was also prisoned at the time for oposing the Syran army's presence. For these resons, they supported the oposition and argued that extremism and the response to the Assad regime were the only way to fight for their rights and be protected from such regimes. The FPM then supported the so-called "Orthodox Gathering" electoral law reform. With this move he won all the sympathies of the

²⁰³ Ahmad Nader, Nada Al Maghlouth, *"Lebanese Political Parties and Administrative Reform: An Impossible Promise?"*, Centre for Lebanese Studies, pg. 24-27, 2016.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Kai Kverme, *"The Refugee Factor"*, Crnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/50945>

Christian community, as they believed that this was the only way to strengthen the position of the Christian community in Lebanon. Elections that took place in 2009 were more in favor of the Future Movement. With this, the Sunni community would grow stronger and the Christian community would lose their position or it wouldn't be strong as it used to be. The implementation of this new law allows FPM to strengthen the policy of the Christian community and their acts in the Lebanese domestic policies and also in Syria, and to reduce the influence of the Sunni community.²⁰⁶

Bearing in mind the huge number of the parties and different interests related to Lebanese domestic and foreign policy, making a decision in favor of only one side was impossible. This disagreement only led to even longer election delays. The FPM gained great popularity during this period due to the proposal they made and it also caused a fear between the parties from other coalitions. Strengthening of only one side leads to even deeper divisions and conflicts in an already deeply divided Lebanon.²⁰⁷ All important parties whose influence is huge have decided to postpone the election of the electoral law due to the inability of an agreement and they adopted a constitutional amendment to extend the parliamentary mandate.²⁰⁸ The political parties had different views on maintenance, i.e. the postponement of the elections and behind each of these reasons there were different motives. The FPM, as the largest Christian party, unlike others, was in favor of holding elections and creating electoral reform. Lebanese Forces also supported postponing the election.²⁰⁹ The Druze, led by Walid Jumblatt, supported the postponement of the election and thus took advantage of the conflict between the two coalitions. Another reason why the PSP supported the postponement of the elections is the desire to consolidate its position of political support and thus enable the party to balance and preserve its role. When it comes to the Future Movement they were very concerned that the adoption of the Christian Gathering law would strengthen the role of FPM, on the other hand they were also worried about strengthening of the Salafist groups. Concern

²⁰⁶ Abbas Assi, "The Syrian Conflict and the Postponement of the 2013 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections", Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, pg. 30-31.

²⁰⁷ Khalil Gebara, "Pluralism in Lebanese Politics: Formalizing the Informal Senate", Baker Institute for Public Policy.

²⁰⁸ Assi, pg. 27.

²⁰⁹ Corstange, D. (2012). VOTE TRAFFICKING IN LEBANON. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44(3), 483–505. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23280469>

stems from the fact that if they get stronger this group would fight the Future Movement to represent the Sunni community in Lebanon. Hezbollah was focused on having as much presence as possible in the Syrian crisis in support of the regime and believed it would strengthen its position in the community.²¹⁰ As already mentioned, the Future Movement supported the postponement of the elections in order to follow the events at the border. Should the regime weaken, Future Movement would strengthen its position in Lebanon in this way. All these factors have led to the postponement of the elections until the each side finds an ideal moment that would be in their favor.²¹¹ However, through some acts, political parties in Lebanon have shown that there is still room for compromise so that the state can continue to function normally. Although the elections were postponed due to the different interests and inability to make an agreement, they agreed on declaring PM Salam Tammam as a compromise candidate.²¹² However, although all these political parties sought to pursue their interests disappeared in order to preserve the unity and identity of Lebanon. In addition to the identity that has grown stronger over the time, the fear of entering new wars, which can easily happen due to the large number of the sectarian groups was another factor that impacted sectarian groups to give up on some of their interests. Another factor that also influenced decision-making in Lebanon are the allies from the region. As Lebanese wars have been raging in the past to the destroy the country, economic aid coming from Saudi Arabia or Iran is also one of the reasons why political parties have personally renounced their interests. These factors greatly influenced Lebanon's survival despite the spillover coming directly from the border.

2.1.2. Impacts of the crisis on the Lebanese Political Situation

Although almost 10 years have passed since the start of the Syrian War, the impacts on the countries of the region and especially on Lebanon can be felt even today. The Syrian war has not only affected Lebanon by increasing the number of refugees whose presence has increased violence, but the war has also had a negative impact on political stability in Lebanon. Lebanon is known for its fragile political structure which can be easily shaken by both internal and external events. The Syrian crisis has caused a

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Abbas Assi, *"The Syrian Conflict and the Postponement of the 2013 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections"*, Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies.

²¹² Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2016 — Lebanon Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016.

stalemate in the already fragile political system. The deadlock in politics at the time of the Syrian crisis was largely linked to the political dysfunctional situation in Lebanon. In a state like this where domestic politics are determined between different political groups with different interests, leading the country can only lead to collapse. The Syrian army left Lebanon in 2005. Since that period, divided groups within this country have taken their side regarding the support to Syria. On one side the March 8 Alliance took a pro-Syrian position, while March 14 Alliance took a position against Assad. Due to these divisions, the impact of the Syrian crisis later on the political situation in Lebanon was inevitable. The postponement of the parliamentary elections, the cabinet crisis and the upcoming presidential elections of that period were disrupted by the crisis. Political misunderstandings during the period of the Syrian war have led to the political paralysis in Lebanon. In 2012, shortly after the start of the war, for fear that the spillover could be felt on the ground of Lebanon they tried to find a solution for that. As the best one, the Baabda Declaration was signed, according to which Lebanon should remain out of what was happening in Syria. However, this neutrality did not last long. The reason behind this is the Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war on the regime side. This happened in 2013 and has caused political groups within Lebanon to become even more divided over their interests. With the Hezbollah's first indirectly then directly involvement, the articles of the Baabda Declaration were broken. This led to a resignation of the Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati due to the impossibility of negotiations between the two coalitions. March 14 Alliance was extremely against having the Alliance March 8 as a part of the cabinet since they were involved in the Syrian war on the regime's side. This has made it difficult or even impossible to form a cabinet.²¹³

Despite the fact that Lebanon has already been facing political crises even before the Syrian crisis, this one also affected the political situation in Lebanon. During the previous political deadlocks where the president was not elected for a long time, most of the time elections were postponed, this time president was not elected for 29 months.²¹⁴ The Syrian crisis and the dysfunctionality of the political structure in Lebanon led to this collapse and caused a great crisis in Lebanon. According to Lebanon's political

²¹³ Laila Bassam, "Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati resigns", Reuters, 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-mikati-idUSBRE92L0TG20130322>

²¹⁴ Samia Nakhoul, Tom Perry, "Lebanon's Aoun wins presidency to end two year political vacuum", Reuters, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-presidency-session-idUSKBN12V102>

system where from 128 seats in parliament should be divided into equal number for all the actors, this crisis would mean a great challenge. In the parliament out of 128 seats 64 seats are meant for the Christians where 34 of them must be filled with the Maronite Christians, 14 Rum Orthodox, 8 Rum Catholics, 5 Armenian Orthodox, other Christian minorities and 1 Armenian Catholic. As for the Muslims, out of 64 seats, 27 are for Sunni Muslims, 27 Shiites, 8 Druze and 2 Alawites.²¹⁵ Bearing in mind this division, it is quite clear that decision-making on any political issue is most of the time difficult or even impossible. The Baabda Declaration that was signed during the mandate of Michael Suleiman and according to which no group and alliance will take a part in the events coming from the region, will not interfere in the internal affairs, Hezbollah caused the opposite by the participation.²¹⁶ This decreased the possibility of reducing the impact of the spillover of the Syrian crisis. The political vacuum that emerged in Lebanon meant more power for Hezbollah. It has also strengthened his presence in Syria, making his political position more stable. Even when the Suleiman's mandate ended in 2014, the political vacuum caused by the disagreements on the issue of the Syrian crisis was not resolved. Government elections were also postponed but a consensus government was formed. This consensus decided on postponing the general elections until 2017.²¹⁷ However, the political vacuum continues and politics, basic functions, making decisions on the vital topics for the country were impossible for a full 2.5 years. Postponing the elections caused Lebanon to be dysfunctional in all important fields. Resolving the Syrian issue has become almost impossible because it has also been impossible to determine one person to lead Lebanon. All this caused by the two coalitions that have totally different positions and views on this issue. Until the 2016, both sides had one candidate each. On one side there was Samir Geagea proposed by the March 14 coalition and on the other one Michael Aoun who has been supported by the March 8 coalition.²¹⁸ Due to the almost equal number of seats in the parliament, the decision was

²¹⁵ Khalil Gebara, "Pluralism in Lebanese Politics: Formalizing the Informal Senate", Baker Institute for Public Policy, pg. 2-3.

²¹⁶ Counter Extremism Project, "Hezbollah's Influence in Lebanon", <https://www.counterextremism.com/hezbollah-in-lebanon>

²¹⁷ Ahmad Nader, Nada Al Maghlouth, "Lebanese Political Parties and Administrative Reform: An Impossible Promise?", Centre for Lebanese Studies, pg. 33, 2016.

²¹⁸ Ramez Dagher, "Lebanon's Divisive Presidency", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/62658>

almost impossible. The sectarian divisions contributed to the fact that the presidency remained vacant for full 2.5 years, making important decisions and functions of the political system totally blocked. Due to this dysfunctionality Lebanon was drowned to even great collapse. However, in 2016, a candidate supported by the 8th March Alliance was elected, but the crisis was not over with this. These elections only made making decisions easier and the functionality became possible. With all these examples it can be seen that the presence of Syria even before the war and with the beginning of it, their influence on every area in Lebanon especially on the political system was great. It caused divisions between the political parties and sectarian groups. Even the same communities following their interests supported other groups and were ready to join other coalitions in order to achieve their political aims.²¹⁹

The decision on the new electoral law and the postponement of the elections were directly connected with every change in the Syrian crisis. Every political group within Lebanon has been waiting for a certain step or change of events related to the Syrian war in order to express its opinion regarding the law that will be adopted in Lebanon. This was extremely important for every political party because in parallel with the events at the border, ie. With the strengthening of the regime or its weakening, the positions of the political and sectarian groups within Lebanon would experience the same.

2.2. Security dimension: Increasing radicalization in Lebanon due to the Syrian Crisis

“In Tripoli the Sunni inhabitants of the Bab al – Tabbaneh neighborhood and the Alawi of the Jabal Mohsen neighborhood, who have been crashing since the 1980s, are now fighting in the name of the Free Syrian Army and the Assad regime, respectively.”²²⁰

The Syrian crisis began in 2011, and at first it did not look like it would reach this scale. But the intensity of that influence has changed over the years. It is important to follow this whole process through a chronological path that will help us understand these events as well as possible. Lebanon is a country that is divided in terms of religion,

²¹⁹ Corstange, D. (2012). VOTE TRAFFICKING IN LEBANON. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44(3), 483–505. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23280469>

²²⁰ Myriam Cactusse, ‘*When the Syrian Crisis Shed Light on the Lebanese Crisis*’, Geographical Overview, Middle East and Turkey, pg. 197, 2013.

and as the crisis unfolded, the support of religious groups increased by one side or the other. Thus, one of the impacts of the Syrian crisis is the deepening and deterioration of relations between religious groups. For example, the Shiite group of Muslims who present themselves as currently the strongest political figure in Lebanon, supported the regime; on the other hand, the Sunni Muslims were on the side of the Syrian rebels. From the beginning, such a scenario brought only problems in Lebanon, because over time the radicalization increased.²²¹

The radicalization of the Lebanese Sunni Muslims occurs at the very beginning, when the Sunni Muslims, with compassion for their Sunni Muslim brothers, decided to give full support to the rebels. The largest part of the group of these Muslims is located in the city of Tripoli, in the northern part of Lebanon. As an aid to the rebels, they decided to open the “borders” of their city, helped them to settle down and even hid, but also supplied them with weapons.²²² Lebanon has been deeply involved in the crisis since the beginning and nothing much has changed to this day.

In addition, in the interview with a Lebanese student, he also claimed that Lebanese were mostly neutral at first regarding the Syrian crisis; the crisis was going upwards and that is the reason why Lebanese people didn’t want to interfere.²²³ But what he also mentioned and what can be found in the literature as well, is the fact that radical movements in Lebanon appeared even before the Syrian crisis started. The years of the increasing radicalization were between 2006-2008 and one of the examples is the dispute between Sunni and Shiite Muslims at Lebanese Arabic University where a great number of people lost their lives.²²⁴ After this conflict, Hezbollah sent its troops and after only one day they managed to take over the whole Beirut. The Sunnis, seeing that Hezbollah was getting stronger, decided that they would get stronger too, so that not everything would fall into the hands of Hezbollah. They then decided to take a radical step when they founded a group called Fatah al-Islam.²²⁵ It actually emerged from another

²²¹ Oytun Orhan, “*Suriye İç Savaşı’nın Lübnan’a Yayılma Olasılığı Üzerine*”, Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2013.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ From the interview with a Lebanese citizen, named Hassan Daezli, student from Lebanon- Beirut Arab University, January 2021

²²⁴ Interviewee, January 2021.

²²⁵ Simon Haddad, “*Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organization, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*”, Taylor and Francis, 548-569, 2010.

movement so called “Fatah al- Intifada”, and it is a Palestinian group that was supported by Syria with the location in Lebanon. The group was founded and established in one of the Palestinian camps located in the north Lebanon named Nahr el-Bared. Fatah al-Islam is a Sunni movement and they were not active for a long time period.²²⁶

*“We, the Islamists, are the Lebanese groups that suffered most at the hands of the Syrian regime. Following the crackdown on the Syrian Muslim Brothers in the 1970s and 1980s, Assad also repressed Islamists in Lebanon. Ever since, we’ve been paying the price for being Sunni. We are the pioneers of resistance against this regime, long before the Future Current even existed. Assad and his regime are our long and old enemy.”*²²⁷

They did get stronger against Hezbollah, realizing this defined them as a danger. And they believed that increasing the radicalization and violence would weaken the position of Hezbollah. After the clash that happened between the Lebanese army and this radical group, hundreds of people died on both sides. This caused Lebanon to see the aims of this group, which made it easier for them to choose the side they will remain on. After everyone condemned the actions of this movement, including Hamas and Hezbollah, their activity was officially ended. As mentioned before, there were some rumors in Lebanon that this group is backed by Syria and has connections with them. They refused to accept this, but this also left some room for increasing suspicions.²²⁸

Similar to this group another Sunni organization took a place but this time in Sidon city, in the south of Lebanon where Shiites mostly live.²²⁹ This conflict is also known as the Sidon armed conflict or Battle of Abra.²³⁰ In recent years, due to the increased number of Shiites in the region, the Sunnis have felt pressured and powerless. This was especially emphasized by Imam Ahmad Assir, who held speeches in one of the mosques in Sidon. According to them, the imam used every opportunity to “awaken” the Sunni Muslims and point out to them the dangers that they are being surrounded by. Because of his influence, the Sunni Muslims began to organize there in order to strengthen themselves in relation to Hezbollah. This is why they started buying weapons. This group is called Assir- after

²²⁶ Profile: Fatah al- Islam, BBC News, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-10979788>

²²⁷ A precarious balancing act: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict, Middle East Report no 132, 2012.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Marc DAOU, Sidon: Lebanon’s new hotbed of Sunni-Shiite tensions, Middle East, 2013.

²³⁰ AlJazeera World, Lebanon: The Battle of Abra, documentary, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/al-jazeera-world/2017/5/24/lebanon-the-battle-of-abra>

the imam.²³¹ One of the biggest reasons for organizing was the fear that Hezbollah would interfere in the crisis. When Hezbollah, which was primarily created to defend the oppressed and fight Israel and to serve as a gathering force in Lebanon and beyond, started using weapons against the Sunni Muslims, there was a fear that Hezbollah really only wanted to strengthen its role in Lebanon. From the moment he intervened in Syria, Hezbollah's identity changed, he lost what they believed was founded, and began to believe that Hezbollah still wanted to act in its sectarian order by starting to fight Sunni extremists. Although Hezbollah has repeatedly said that the fight against extremists is something it must do to preserve stability in the country, as they claimed: *".. if the party does not fight Sunni extremism in Syria, it will have to do so at home."*, over time it turned out differently²³².

Hezbollah began to fight both the extremist and those who were not. Because of this Hezbollah was blamed that with this action they brought instability to Lebanon, and that they brought "war" to their country²³³. Because of this, Hezbollah lost the meaning of its primary identity, and after the involvement in the Syrian war began to lose in popularity as this led to an increase in radicalization in Lebanon and the emergence of terrorist attacks. Therefore, what can be concluded is that in Lebanon, radicalism was already increasing, but the Syrian crisis was a trigger for more violence to happen next. At one point, the Syrian civil war turned Lebanon into a bomb that is ready to explode only if one side makes the wrong move. If Hezbollah gets involved in the war, the measures of this conflict could extend beyond the borders of the two countries. These conflicts serve to show two things:

First, the impact of the Syrian crisis and two- the Lebanese approach to such events. With the onset of the Syrian crisis, the radicalization and division between the Sunni Muslims and the Shiites due to Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian war. Here it is possible to actually see the complex structure of Lebanese politics and their inability to

²³¹ Interviewee, January, 2021.

²³² International Crisis Group, *'Hezbollah's Syria Conundrum'*, Middle East and North Africa, 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/175-hizbollah-s-syria-conundrum>

²³³ Armenak Tokmajyan, *'Hezbollah's Military Intervention in Syria: Political Choice or Religious obligation?'*, Vol.4, No.2, pg. 108-109, 2014.

respond to such conflicts. Also, these conflicts point up how easy groups in Lebanon can be or can get divided, thus leading to the use of violence on a large scale.

Another example that one of the interviewees mentioned and also has been in all media, is related to disputes between refugees and Lebanese residents. These clashes happened at the end of December 2020 and they show that violence between them is still happening. There are somewhere between 200-300 Syrian camps in Lebanon which are not registered.²³⁴ Due to the experience with Palestinian refugees, the Lebanese government did not change its position and approach regarding the establishment of formal camps for Syrian refugees. They believe if regular camps were set up and people were registered, it could have the same consequences as those with the Palestinians- and that would mean Syrians would settle for a long period.²³⁵ They are mainly in the northern part of Lebanon because they are close to the Syrian border and another reason is the Sunni Muslims who are the majority in the northern part. A small number of camps are located in areas where Christians and Shiites live. From an interview with one of the NGO workers, it was possible to conclude that the problems between Syrians and residents exist, but they do not happen very often.²³⁶ However, at the end of December 2020, in one week, there were two conflicts between the refugees and Lebanese citizens that did not end well. Bcharre, which is a Christian city in the northern part of Lebanon, was the first place where the first conflict took a place.²³⁷ It is important to note first that all the conflicts arose due to a personal problem- either it was a matter of jobs or money. In the first dispute, resident of Bcharre- Joseph Tawk was killed by a Syrian national. The reason given is that the Lebanese asked the Syrian to work for him and it ended by the Lebanese not paying him for the job he has accomplished. In addition, the mayor of Bcherre made a decision that no Syrian can stay in that area anymore. He demanded that the camp must be closed and that they leave the places where they lived and worked within 48 hours.²³⁸

²³⁴ Interview with the NGO worker in Lebanon, Tripoli, January 2021.

²³⁵ Venetia Rainey, Lebanon: No formal refugee camps for Syrians, Al Jazeera, 2015. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/3/11/lebanon-no-formal-refugee-camps-for-syrians>

²³⁶ Interviewee, NGO worker, January 2021.

²³⁷ The 961, Lebanon news, Breaking: Murder in Bcharre Sparks Rage and Calls for Deportation of all Syrians, 2020. <https://www.the961.com/bsharre-rage-calls-deportation-of-syrians/>

²³⁸ Interviewee, Tripoli, 2021.

Here, it is possible to see that way people in Lebanon, in this case Christians, react to the conflicts between Syrian nationals and Lebanese citizens.

On the other hand, in the same week, in north Lebanese region Minieh another conflict occurred. This was a personal issue as well as the first one, which is very important to point out. According to some reports, the problem arose at a football match when a Syrian who owned sharp objects attacked Lebanese residents.²³⁹ After the conflict, those who were attacked decided to respond to it and caused a fire in the camps where other refugees live, they caused all the camps to burn down and all belongings of about 75 families were destroyed.²⁴⁰ Unlike the Christians, all the Sunni Muslims living in this area opened the doors of their homes out of remorse, raised money for the refugees and decided to help make a new place for them. Even most of them stated that these types of disputes make them feel ashamed in the name of those who are involved and that they are horrified that such people exist in the community.²⁴¹

2.2.1. Instability on borders due to smuggling

Lebanon has always been considered a country whose stability in the slightest internal unrest or unrest in the region can be shaken. As the influx of Syrian refugees grew in parallel, so did the fear of internal unrest caused by the dissatisfaction of the Lebanese population. The negative impact of the crisis was also felt in the field of Lebanese internal security. Through interviews with interviewees, it was concluded that in addition to the dissatisfaction they feel with the reduction in jobs for Lebanese residents and lower wages caused by the influx of refugees, they also showed that fears of creating insecurity in the country may increase over time.

In a deep financial crisis, pandemic, corruption, protests, this country not only cannot find a way out for itself and its interests, but has also made life very difficult for migrants due to its dysfunctional policy. Lebanon has never officially recognized migrants as refugees, but has called them "temporarily displaced people" since the day the crisis began. They believe that they will either return to their country or go to another

²³⁹The 961, Lebanon news, "Syrian Refugee Camp Set on Fire in Lebanon", 2020. <https://www.the961.com/syrian-refugee-camp-set-on-fire/>

²⁴⁰ Hussam Hammoud, "Horrible Lebanese shelter Syrian refugees after camp attack", Middle East Report, 2020. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanon-syria-refugees-camp-attack-shelter>

²⁴¹ Ibid.

country. However, this has not happened to date, so the number of refugees has only increased. Before the crisis in Lebanon, Syrians did various jobs. But when the crisis began and almost 1.5 million refugees entered a country that could barely stand on its own two feet, the situation worsened for both sides. The Syrians and Lebanese have only been trying to survive in the last year, but refugees have been pushed to the brink of survival due to the dysfunctionality of Lebanese politics.

In order to survive and provide themselves with basic living conditions, a large number of them are forced to enter Lebanon by being smuggled by certain groups. This has only contributed to their insecurity and instability on the Lebanese borders. The phenomenon of smuggling on the borders of Lebanon has caused dissatisfaction among the people of Lebanon.²⁴² According to certain interviews, but also numerous articles, certain places in Lebanon that border Syria are also called “capital of smuggling”²⁴³ and are in fact proof of how much smuggling has taken on in this region.

2.3. The socio-economic impact of the Syrian crisis

Syria’s social influence on Lebanon, its influence on the economy and politics, is largely due to their long and very intertwined history. Because of their history, all the events that took place in one territory had an impact on another country, negative or positive, all depending on the current event. Constant Syrian involvement in the affairs of Lebanon began to provoke a revolt among the citizens. The crisis that came from the borders and also from a country that has always had a strong influence on Lebanon, was impossible not to feel in the territory of Lebanon. The question that arises is how this impact would be reflected. The impact of the crisis was felt in all spheres, especially in socio-economic sphere. As a result, Lebanese people have been outraged, as they have felt the impact of the crisis the most. According to World Bank statistics from 2013, there has been a decline at all levels within Lebanon in terms of economic activity, food import and consumption, tourism, employment, prices have increased, demand for housing has increased, negative impacts were felt in the area of infrastructure and the banking sector as well. As it has been known for years, Lebanon has been struggling with the problem

²⁴² Sam Dagher, “*Death by a thousand cuts*”, *Syrian refugees face dire conditions as Lebanon unravels*”, Middle East Institution, 2021.

²⁴³ Ibid.

with electricity.²⁴⁴ With the Syrian crisis, this problem has deepened even more, as the need increases with the more crowded population. Public debt has risen and the Lebanese lira has fallen, as a result the Lebanese banks were directly affected. Tourism has also declined due to the crisis in the neighboring country, further aggravated the economic situation in Lebanon. The social protection provided for refugees, including the housing, health, education, employment, has also been affected and has had a destabilizing effect on Lebanon. Dissatisfaction arose among citizens who were already in a difficult situation in terms of providing for their own survival. The number of places where they could work decreased or the salaries were extremely low due to the number of refugees who would agree to all jobs for a minimum wage in order to survive. Lebanese employers, having this option as much more favorable, mostly employed Syrians. Thus Lebanese citizens were slowly losing their jobs.²⁴⁵

Lebanon was in a good economic situation at the beginning of the Syrian crisis. When the Syrians arrived, they were in the search for places to stay, renting houses and thus contributing to the Lebanese economy. This initially was good for the Lebanese. However, after talking to one of the students from Lebanon- Hassan Daezli, Tripoli (student at Beirut Arab University), I realized that the situation has changed over time. One of the negative impacts he experienced and was polite to share was during his first university year. According to him, he and a huge number of the Lebanese students faced the inability to rent a house in the months he wanted. As he explained, most students would go to Beirut to study and thus seek accommodation. Before the arrival of the Syrians, the search for the accommodation was possible even in September when schools were almost open. However, after their arrival, the Lebanese residents felt a change in that field as well. Due to the large number of refugees, it was impossible to find accommodation, so in order to secure a place in time- they had to look for apartments much earlier.²⁴⁶

In a conversation with Hassan, a Lebanese citizen, he mentioned another example where he says the arrival of Syrians has negatively affected them. According to him,

²⁴⁴ The World Bank, *"Lebanon Straining under Multiple Shocks from Syrian Crisis"*, 2013.

²⁴⁵ The World Bank, *"Lebanon Bears the Brunt of the Economic and Social Spillovers of the Syrian Conflict"*, 2013.

²⁴⁶ Hassan Daezli, Lebanese citizen from Tripoli, student at Beirut Arab University, January 2021

business owners used Syrians because they did everything for a lower amount of money compared to the Lebanese citizens. It had a positive impact as well.²⁴⁷ But on the other hand, Lebanese citizens started losing their jobs and it was getting harder to get a job for that reason. Here, it is possible to see that the economic circle turned around. Initially, they had rental income and cheap labor, but after a while this turned from a positive to a negative impact for Lebanese. As a result, in 2016, the unemployment rate rose from 12 to 15 percent²⁴⁸. Therefore, they started arriving in 2012 and most of their presence was felt in 2013. Hassan says they were willing to do anything because business owners hired them rather than Lebanese. For example, they also worked as taxi drivers, because in Lebanon, in the absence of controls, almost anyone can take a car and call himself or herself a taxi driver. Therefore, those who could not find another job worked as taxi drivers. According to Hasan, he would often explain the location when he got into a taxi because the Syrians did not know. He also mentioned that the biggest problem with the refugees is mostly related to economic problems. Another negative impact they caused was their idea to buy fake passports and go to Europe. The price of a passport is around \$ 2,500. While young Lebanese had to work for months to afford passports at all.²⁴⁹ As a result of all this, in 2014 and 2015, slogans such as “You are our brothers, but do not interfere in our business” or “ As long as you don’t touch my money, you are my brother.” - appeared on the walls in various cities in Lebanon and even in Sunni cities.²⁵⁰ It is a little different in Christian camps and there are some rules there. One is that Syrians cannot leave the camp after 9 p.m.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Hassan Daezli, Tripoli, 2021.

²⁴⁸ International Labour Office: Lebanon, SWTS country brief.

²⁴⁹ Interviewee, January 2021.

²⁵⁰ Interviewee, January 2021.

2.4.Syrian Crisis Impacts on Demography of Lebanon

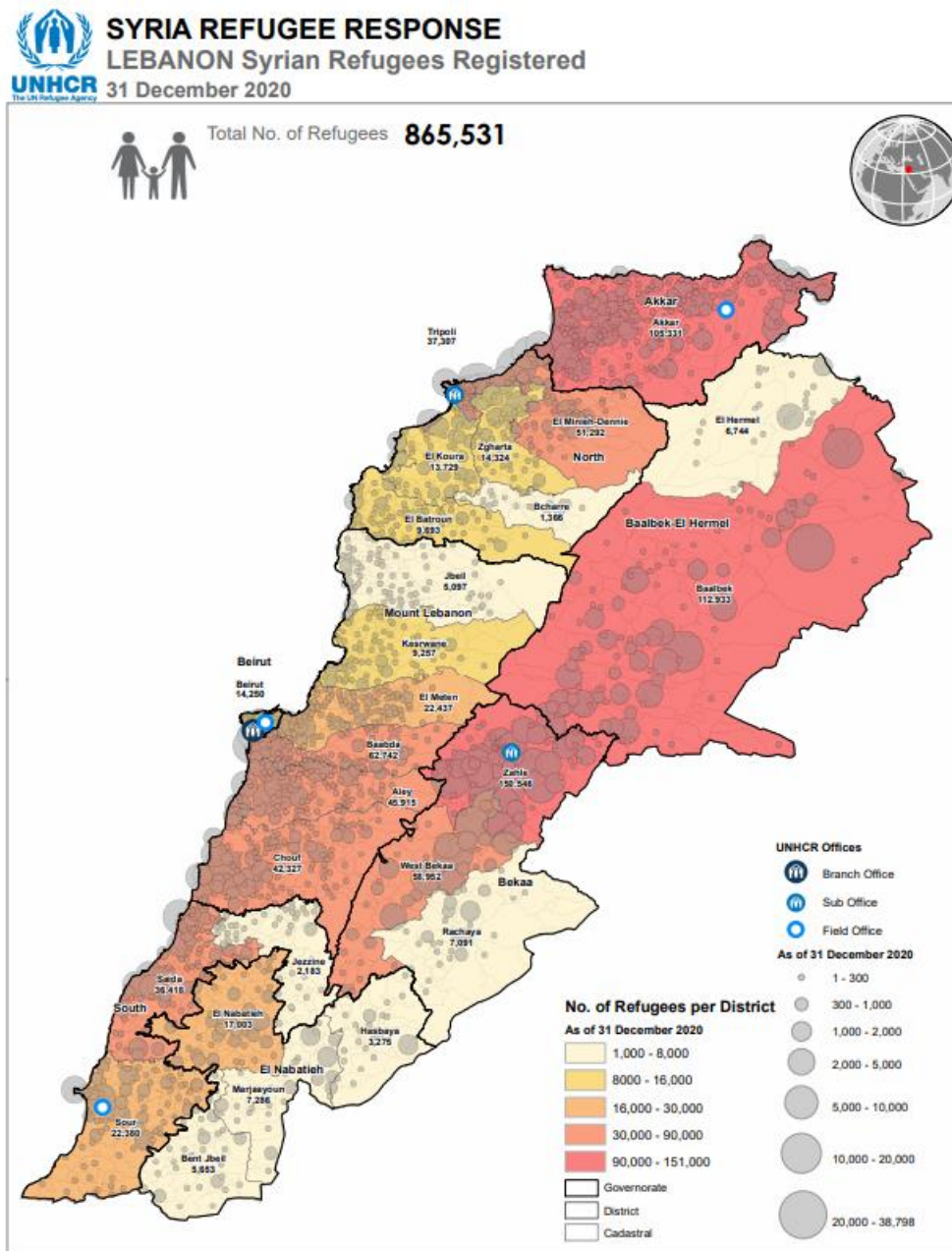


Figure 2²⁵¹

²⁵¹ UNHCR, Syrian refugees registered, 2020. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-operational-update-october-2020>

The demography of Lebanon is what throughout history until today has influenced the creation of policy and reaction to all the problems, crises and conflicts that have happened and are happening today in this territory.

Why demographics? The population of Lebanon and the groups into which they are divided, their effectiveness have always determined the state in which this country finds itself. The political structure and relation between Lebanese people are based on the first but also the last population measurement dating back to 1932. According to that last measurement, all the advantage went to Christians. So in Lebanon, the president is always Maronite (Christian), the prime minister is always Sunni (Muslim) and the body in parliament is Shiite (Muslim). The number of representatives in political institutions always belongs more to Christians, then to Muslims and lastly to Durzes.²⁵²

Since 1932, despite changes in demographics in various ways, including the large number of refugees who have settled there for years, no new population measurements have been made. The reason for this is the fear of Christians that they may lose their ruling position, or the fear of other groups such as Shiite Muslims who fear that the number of Sunni Muslims may outweigh the “balance” they have been striving for for years. However, it is difficult to decrease the number of refugees, including Palestinians and Syrians, who have been in the territory for years but unregistered. For example, by the end of 2014, more than 1.5 million refugees had arrived in Lebanon.²⁵³ Which is obviously more than enough to upset the demographic picture. With these illogical steps, Lebanon is still only falling into crises. According to this division, it can be seen that any response to events in the country and in the region are generally addressed inadequately. And basically, this is the biggest problem that needs to be solved first and foremost.

²⁵² Arnon Soffer, ‘ *Lebanon- Where Demography is the core of politics and life* ’, Middle Eastern Studies, 197-205.

²⁵³ Zeinab Cherri, Pedro Acros Gonzales, Rafael Castro Delgado, ‘ *The Lebanese-Syrian crisis: impact of influx of Syrian refugees to an already weak state* ’, Risk Manag Health Care Policy, pg.156-172.

CHAPTER THREE: LEBANESE REACTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS THE SYRIAN CRISIS

“First provide them [Lebanese] with a strong and fair State, and in time they would naturally bond in a unified national identity.”²⁵⁴

These were the words of the Lebanese third president- Fouad Chehab. At the same time he was the last president who advocated for the interests of the people and the state and who today has brought to Lebanon what it needs most to survive- and that is unity. After many years, this unity has been felt only in 2019 in the time of the protests. The reason why this sentence is supposed to be here, in this chapter, is the idea that this president had. Not taking any side, but agreeing with this idea for Lebanon would be quite logical. Having a disorganized country, diverse society, great number of political parties, everything leads to inadequate reactions, approaches and attitudes. Day without a plan is a lost day and a country without a plan is a destroyed country. As well as Lebanon. As long as Lebanon is drowning in corruption and the interests of certain politicians, it will only sink deeper and deeper into crisis; and without having certain plans for resolving them, it can easily remain there.

1. Political Response: Lebanese Policy towards the Crisis

In order to solve the problems that prevail in a country related to the political situation, problems in the society, it is necessary to first understand the problem, gather the necessary data related to the issue and work on solving it. Such action can prevent further disasters that may be caused by certain issues. But as already mentioned, Lebanon has been living for years lacking to establish a logical and comprehensive policy to resolve the problems they face in the country and issues that arise in the region and affect this country in different sectors. Lebanese political structure instability can be seen through the years. It has faced numerous political vacuums, which determined its attitude towards any crisis that happened in this region. In the years between 2016 and 2020 there were various collapses of the Lebanese government. After Aoun was elected president,

²⁵⁴ Frederic C. Hof, ‘‘ Fifty years after Lebanon’s Last State-builder’’, New Lines Magazine, November, 2020. <https://newlinesmag.com/essays/fifty-years-after-lebanons-last-state-builder/>

the era of political instability began. Thus, all the governments that were established in that period experienced mostly collapses. After Aoun was elected president, he chose Hariri as prime minister. Given that Hariri represents the Sunni Muslims, it is important to note that the Lebanese Sunni Muslims were never satisfied with his rule. He resigned in 2017 while he was in Saudi Arabia. Many believe that this was influenced by Saudi Arabia. Although he resigned at the time, he withdrew after returning to Lebanon. Although he resigned, his government was considering a resignation for the next election. Which caused a political stalemate for 8 months. After that, Aoun was re-elected president, and Hariri was the prime minister. Hariri formed the government at the end of January 2019, and most of the cabinet clans were from the coalition on March 8. In October 2019, under the influence of the economic crisis and the great protest, Hariri resigned again. After Hariri resigned, Aoun this time appointed Hassan Diab as prime minister. He formed a cabinet and it was composed mostly of the parties from the March 8 coalition. But he also resigned at the end of August due to the impact of the explosion that hit Lebanon. Due to the need to resolve the issue of keeping the Minister of Finance of Lebanon in the hands of Shiite, Mustafa Adib did not even manage to form a cabinet, but resigned a month after he was elected.²⁵⁵

These examples of the political instability in Lebanon are the example of how Lebanon is not able to resolve problems or sustain plans for any internal issue. Keeping this in mind, it will be easier to understand why the Lebanese approaches towards the regional crisis are inadequate.

Going back through history, it can be seen that Syria and Lebanon have always been intertwined. Syria has always, and even today, had a great influence on the decisions made in Lebanon. Syria has always seen itself as a superior, this the reason why even when the both countries got independence after the First World War, Syria did not want to recognize Lebanon as an independent state and it continued until almost 2008; when they officially recognized them.²⁵⁶ Because of this historical connection, the influence of one country on another, and because of the Syrian interests in Lebanon such as

²⁵⁵ Carla E. Humud, Lebanon, Congressional Research Service, April 2021, pg. 6, 2021.

²⁵⁶ Nicholas Blanford, "Syria boosts diplomatic ties with Lebanon", the Christian science monitor, October, 2008. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2008/1015/p04s01-wome.html>

economically and politically, the Syrian war hit and caused Lebanon to react in a not very proper way.

Policy of no-policy is what caught up with Lebanon when it faced the Syrian crisis. Due to the historical connection with this country, it was inevitable that the event that took place in Syria would not be felt on the ground of Lebanon. In fact, in the absence of the political will and Lebanon without a specific plan relying on foreign donors had faced this crisis. Although there are certain legal documents that do not fully determine the rights of refugees who have begun to arrive in Lebanon, none of these have been implemented. This has led to even greater catastrophe, or better said to be the policy of no-policy towards the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This is not the only problem that Lebanon faces since the crisis began, but it is the problem that has brought the most uncertainty, deepened sectarian tensions and negatively affected the Lebanese economy.

What has led to the paralysis of politics in Lebanon is the situation that arose after 2005, where the country was divided into two blocks. The presence of this division was felt even more when the crisis started. Political paralysis in one country occurs due to various factors. In Lebanon, this is due to the lack of will of the politicians, who are in power at the moment, to create the same framework for issues that require order. Another reason why political paralysis occurs are conflicts between political parties, insufficient state response to the needs of the population, or even closeness to countries in the region where crises occur and which can easily spread to other countries.²⁵⁷ This also happened with the Syrian crisis, which has taken hold in this country and continues to do so. Basic services such as security, conflict resolution, crisis, is what the population expects the country to provide. Due to constant changes in factions and opinions related to the crises in the country and in the region, Lebanon has often been left without a plan in its "hand". For instance, this political struggle between the coalitions and their supporters has caused even greater instability in Lebanon, after which the people always fall out. In fact, due to Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict, and the failure of politicians to come to

²⁵⁷ Palmer, Clare and Fischer, Bob, "Just policy paralysis?", *Animal Sentience* Vol. 27, pg.3

an agreement, the cabinet grew in 2013 and this led to the creation of a 10-month political vacuum in Lebanon.²⁵⁸

According to Amer Bisat, Marcel Cassard and Ishac Diwan, there are several reasons that led to inactivity of politicians towards the crisis. They state that the confusing political situation in which they find themselves at the moment and in the past has made it difficult to make collective decisions. This might be the most important reason for the decline of Lebanon, both economically and socially.²⁵⁹ High inflation, the decline of lira and the collapse of the banking sector have made the political class actively continue to do nothing to resolve the crisis; thus, moving away from the interests of the majority. Whatever the reason, if it continues this way, there may be an even greater threat to the population, their basic needs, young and skilled people and for the politicians as well.

1.2. Lebanese Baabda Declaration

What has been generally accepted as a modern and holistic state in the world, Lebanon since its declaration of independence has never been that, instead, it has always been treated as a country that is torn apart by every meaning. What would be the reason for that are mostly Western countries that have contributed to the creation of weak states implementing their mandates, and one country that has been impacted by this is definitely Lebanon. For this reason, Lebanon didn't have an opportunity to establish itself as a holistic and institutionalized state. After declaring independence, this is where divisions within the country start. As it is already known there is a large number of groups in Lebanon and each of them act as a state within the state. After the signing of the Taif Agreement these divisions between the groups deepened even more. What has further contributed to the division within Lebanon is the creation of blocs. This happens after the murder of the prime minister Rafik Hariri, and at this time two blocs were established- 14 March and 8 March bloc. March 8 was led by Hezbollah and March 14 led by Saad Hariri and mostly Sunni groups. Both blocs play an important role in setting priorities when it comes to the potential dangers coming from inside or outside the country. With

²⁵⁸ Lina Khatib, '*Regional Spillover: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict*', Malcom h. Kerr, Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/06/09/regional-spillover-lebanon-and-syrian-conflict-pub-55829>

²⁵⁹ Amer Bisat, Marcel Cassard and Ishac Diwan, '*Lebanon's economic crisis: A tragedy in the making*', Middle East Institute, 2021.

this, unifications and unanimous decisions in Lebanon have become even more impossible. Because of these divisions, Lebanon was becoming even weaker not only when it comes to leading the country and politics, providing the basic needs of the citizens, but also it became even more vulnerable when it comes to events happening in the region. Therefore, when analyzing Lebanon's policy, whether internal or external, it is important to include external actors as well, who also have a great deal of influence on what is happening in Lebanon.

After the war broke out in Syria, the divisions in Lebanon contributed to this war and other countries also became part of Lebanon. However, there have been attempts to save Lebanon from the negative influences coming from the region. In 2012, not very long after the war in Syria started, the bloc decided to take a stand and sign the Baabda declaration. Baabda was issued by the National Dialogue Committee on 11th June 2021 and it includes 17 points concerning Lebanese safety and stability.²⁶⁰ It was signed in order to maintain peace in Lebanon and all the parties had to agree on all 17 points included. Sides of the declaration emphasized the importance of the commitment to this declaration. Here are some of the decisions that were made and directly tied to Lebanese stability and safety.

“Parties should commit to laying the foundations of stability; safeguarding public order; preventing violence and the country's descent into strife; and intensifying the search for the political means to secure those objectives.”

“All political forces and intellectuals and opinion leaders should be encouraged to avoid inflammatory political and media discourse and anything that could spark conflict, disturbances, sectarian confessional strife.”

“The Taif accords must be respected, and parties must continue to implement all of its provisions.”

²⁶⁰ General Assembly Security Council, United Nations.

*Lebanon should eschew block politics and regional and international conflicts. It should seek to avoid the negative repercussions of regional tensions and crisis in order to preserve its own paramount interest, national unity and civil peace...*²⁶¹

According to this declaration, in order to protect Lebanon from what is happening in the region, they decided for it to remain out of the crisis no matter what happens. With this, they decided to remain neutral, or as it is known, to establish the policy of neutrality. In order to protect itself from the possible consequences that the war in Syria may cause, this declaration was signed in 2012, where Lebanon sets its strategy and confirms the policy of neutrality, where not even one party will interfere in any conflict in the region. Although there were attempts, this didn't last for so long, and the reasons for this are the position of Lebanon in the region and also the deep relations it has with Syria during the long history. It was impossible for Lebanon not to feel the consequences of the war in Syria on its ground.

1.3. Lebanese Attitudes and Policies Towards Syrian Refugees

Lebanon is a country that has never managed to gain political and national unity since declaring independence, which has influenced the creation of the Lebanese fragile political, economic and social structure. A country in the Middle East, with a very bad experience when it comes to refugees, has experienced another shock with the Syrian crisis. Due to the vulnerability in which it has been for a long time, Lebanon, from 2012 until today, has not been able to make a unanimous decision when it comes to the crisis that has had a very negative impact on the entire country. The bad experience with refugees has led the Lebanese government to call Syrian refugees “displace” and not allow the creation of official refugee camps. The government's attitude towards refugees did not change significantly in the following years, even worsening in recent years, especially under the influence of the pandemic.

This section will analyze the Lebanese attitude towards Syrian refugees, or as they call them, “displaced people”. In Rabil's book “Double Tragedy”, he states that Lebanon still “carries scars” from Palestinians who came to Lebanon as refugees. Because of the negative experience Lebanon had with the Palestinian refugees, they now live in the fear

²⁶¹ General Assembly Security Council, “Baabda Declaration”.

that the same thing can happen. Under this influence, Lebanon is reacting to the Syrian refugees today, and according to Rabil and many other books and articles, Lebanon does not address Syrian refugees as “refugees” but rather “displaced people”.²⁶² The reason behind this are the “scars” that always carry the experience of loss with the other refugees. Calling the “displaced”, Lebanon hopes that Syrian refugees will one day return to their homes. Because of this desire, in Lebanon, although all the refugees live and work there, the establishment of an official camp is never allowed by the Lebanese politicians. The story ending in this direction would be the last thing that Lebanon wants.

The way states receive refugees varies from state to state and their refugee policies. Some of the countries find that they adequately host the refugees, but there are also countries that are not very hospitable. The way certain countries and governments react depends on several factors that determine their policies and responses to refugees.

According to the research, Karen Jacobsen in his work *Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes* lists four factors that influence a country's policy towards refugees, and they are:

- 1) *bureaucratic choices made by the government;*
- 2) *international relations;*
- 3) *the absorption capacity of the local host community; and*
- 4) *national security.*²⁶³

Each state has the right to determine the way in which it will respond to such crises. Some may choose not to do anything due to lack of capacity, some respond generously, and some less with great restrictions and rules.²⁶⁴ Moreover, Jacobsen believes that the acceptance of refugees largely depends on the capability of a state. This is also closely related to the desire to accept whites. Capabilities may be great, but if a country does not

²⁶² Robert Rabil, ‘*The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: The Double Tragedy of Refugees Impacted Host Communities*’, 2016., page 18)

²⁶³ Karen Jacobsen, ‘*Factor Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes*’, *The International Migration Review*, Autumn, 1996, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 355-378

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

want to accept refugees because of the stability of its country or negative historical experiences, then there is a more restrictive response to such crises.²⁶⁵

He emphasizes that there are factors on which states respond to the refugee crisis. He cites several factor that can help understand Lebanon's attitude towards the crisis.

The factors he cites are as follows:

- 1) The costs and benefits of accepting international assistance;
- 2) relations with the sending country;
- 3) political calculations about the local community's absorption capacity;
- 4) and national security considerations.²⁶⁶

As for Lebanon, it has already been shaken by refugees once, and this has made it fragile to this day. When accommodating refugees, it is important to take into account the security of the state but also the reactions of the local community. Refugees like in Lebanon interfere in the daily life of Lebanese and negatively affect their affairs. As the Lebanese interviewees mentioned, it is clear that the community is fed up with the refugees and that for this country, according to the inhabitants of Lebanon, Syrian refugees have no contribution.

1.3.1. Legal status of the refugees in Lebanon

This part refers to the position of the refugees in Lebanon, more precisely refers to their status and the way in which the politicians react towards them. Moreover, in this section the basic problems that refugees face in Lebanon will be discussed. Also, it will be supported by the facts of several refugees I had a chance to conduct the interview with.

As for the legal document that would regulate the basic right of the refugees, it is possible to mention the 1951 Convention and later the 1967 Protocol on the status of the refugees. However, although Lebanon signed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lebanon has never been a part of the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

governing the fundamental rights of refugees which the signatory countries must abide by.²⁶⁷ This is actually the answer on how Lebanon has reacted when it comes to the new influx of refugees coming from Syria. Moreover, even though Lebanon is not a part of these legal acts, there are other acts and legal documents that directly or indirectly show that Lebanon is responsible for taking care of refugees.²⁶⁸

The legal status of the refugees is not determined but their rights can be found in some legal acts and documents. Namely, although there is no document by which the Lebanese government undertakes to accept and allow refugees to be accepted and registered, there are a couple of legal documents that make life easier for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These are the following documents:

1. **The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights** – According to this, Lebanon is bound to “grant the right to asylum for any person fearing persecution and is an active and founding member of the United Nations Organizations, abiding by its covenants.”²⁶⁹
2. **Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the country, 1962.** – This legal document regulates the entry and exit of all parties, including refugees. According to Article 26, it is stated that “any foreign national who is the subject of a prosecution or a conviction by an authority that is not Lebanese for a political crime or whose life or freedom is threatened, also for political reasons, may request political asylum in Lebanon.”

It is further stated in Article 31- “when a political refugee is deported from Lebanon, he or she will not be returned to a country in which his or her life or freedom is threatened.” It is clear from these articles that refugees should enjoy the right to be in the territory of Lebanon and be registred as such.

²⁶⁷ Ferhat Pirinççi, ‘*The impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon: An evaluation on the case of Syrians in Lebanon*’, Orta Doğu, Cilt: 8, Sayı:2, pg. 21, 2014.

²⁶⁸ UNHCR, ‘*Implementation of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*’, July 7, 1989.

²⁶⁹ United Nations, ‘*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*’, 1948, Article 14, number 1. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

However, when it comes to Syrian refugees, these items are not implemented.

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3. **Lebanon – Syria Treaty of Cooperation, 1991.** – According to this treaty, people, good, the right to work and reside are allowed to move freely in both countries. This was established with certain legal rules, such as having to obtain a visa within 10 days and with all regulations they could work. However, with the increase in the number of refugees after the crisis, they began to lose this right to the extent that Lebanon has banned the registration of Syrians after 2015. ²⁷¹
4. **UNHCR – GOL Memorandum of Understanding, 2003.** This was suppressed by the UNHCR and the Government of Lebanon, and the goal was to issue temporary residence permits. ²⁷²
5. **Policy paper on Syrian displacement by the Council of Ministers, 2014.** This is a plan made by the Lebanese government to reduce the number of refugees as soon as possible. They would achieve this by banning the entry of even more refugees and supporting those who are already there to return to their countries. They did this in the ways by not allowing refugees to be registered anymore after 2015, making their lives difficult by setting some new rules. ²⁷³

According to these legal acts and documents, the Lebanese government is in some terms responsible for the people who are in the country. Even though they must act according to them, Lebanon is not taking actions regarding the refugees. Instead, the government is relying on International communities and their assistance. In Lebanon, at least when it comes to refugees, the largest role was taken by the international organization UNHCR. Since 2014, with the help of the international community but also several Lebanese NGOs, a regional response plan has been developed to help both sides.

²⁷⁰ SHERLOC, UNDOC, Order no. 319 regulating the status of foreign nationals in Lebanon, 1962, articles 26 and 31.

²⁷¹ The centre for Social Sciences Research and Action: Lebanon Support, Activity Report, 2016. <https://socialsciences-centre.org/content/lebanon-supports-2016-activity-report>

²⁷² Country operations plan. Country: Lebanon. Planning Year: 2004. Pg.4-5

²⁷³ Maria Gabriella Trovato, Nayla Al- Akl, Dana Ali, Sara Abou Fakher, ‘‘Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Protection amidst Crisis’’, AUB Interim report. Year 2020, pg.10

The LCPR - Lebanese Crisis Response Plan is managed by the United Nations Development Project and UNHCR. ²⁷⁴This plan was launched by the Lebanese government and supported by the UN, and it aims to provide funds to help both the refugees and the Lebanese people who have been harmed in all spheres of development due to the crisis. This strategic plan works to help develop sectors that include ‘‘ food security; shelter; education; water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH); livelihoods; health; social stability; and protection. ‘‘ In addition to this, they also advocate for crisis management and humanitarian assistance. The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan 2015–16 (LCRP), the first plan made to regulate and stabilize the situation caused by the Syrian crisis. It had main goals that included:

- a) To ensure humanitarian assistance and protection for the most vulnerable among the displaced from Syria and poorest Lebanese;
- b) To strengthen the capacity of national and local delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services
- c) Reinforce Lebanon’s economic, social, environmental, and institutional stability by (i) expanding economic and livelihood opportunities benefiting local economies and the most vulnerable communities: (ii) promoting confidence-building measures within and across institutions and communities to strengthen Lebanon’s capacities. This one was made in 2015, and it remains the same for 2016 as well. For example, in this figure it can be concluded for which parts of development most assistance has been provided, in order to reduce stress on both sides.²⁷⁵²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴UNHCR, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016.

²⁷⁵ Zeinab Cherri, Pedro Acros Gonzales, Rafael Castro Delgado, ‘‘ The Lebanese-Syrian crisis: impact of influx of Syrian refugees to an already weak state’’, Risk Manag Health Care Policy, pg.156-172.

²⁷⁶ UNHCR, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016.

Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitating houses and providing collective shelters • Increasing shelter options • Providing cash assistance for rent
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trucking of water in rural areas • Providing access to public water networks • Conducting awareness campaigns encouraging water preservation practices • Advocating for a sustainable water payment system
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributing food vouchers through the World Food Program • Increasing assistance per person from US\$27 to US\$31 during winter to promote caloric intake
Cash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing conditional and unconditional cash transfers, moving to ATM cards and e-vouchers • Promoting targeting to decrease negative coping mechanisms
Core relief items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental needs of susceptible refugees are predominantly being met despite confronted budget constraints • Providing a winterization package
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covering 75% of the fees charged • Providing, initially, health services at entry points • Contracting, now, GlobeMed, a profit organization, to direct insurance schemes and referral systems
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granting Syrian refugee children the right to enroll in public schools by supporting the ministry for education and higher education • Paying tuition fees • Rehabilitating schools • Implementing community-based education programs

Table 1.²⁷⁷

When it comes to the education for Syrians in Lebanon and how Lebanese government is making it more difficult for them, according to some earlier research nothing much has changed today. In fact, from interviews I did this year with an NGO worker in one of the Syrian camps, the education of Syrian children is considerably complicated. For instance, before the pandemic, Syrian children had the right to go to school only in one shift.²⁷⁸ One of the surveys from 2014 lists the necessary documents that were needed to take the exam in order to make it difficult for refugees to take the exam. These documents are:

- *Obtain their grades from the last three years from their school in Syria;*
- *Bring these records to the Syrian Ministry of Education to receive a stamp;*
- *Acquire certification from the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs;*

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Interview with Mohamed Baraj, NGO worker in Tripoli, Lebanon, January 2021.

- Visit the Lebanese embassy in Syria to get another stamp.²⁷⁹

In addition, it is stated that the price of all this is somewhere around \$ 500 - which is obviously impossible for families who escaped the war and work for basic necessities. Without the help of UNRWA, which aims to provide basic needs for these families, that include - education, health, protection and funding, and support to enroll their children in UNRWA schools, the situation of Syrians would be even worse if they relied only on help from the Lebanese government.²⁸⁰

In addition to this topic, from the key findings of the 2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon:

*“ The percentage of children aged between 5 and 17 years old who are engaged in child labor almos doubled, up from 2,6 per cent in 2019 to 4,4 per cent in 2020. Boys are more involved in child labor (6,9 per cent) than girls (1,6 per cent). ”*²⁸¹

And in the same report, Yukie Mokuo, UNICEF representative in Lebanon said that the situation of Syrian children has worsened. One example is the boy Mounir, from one of many interviews conducted, who states that because of the need to help his family, he worked on the streets of Lebanon until late.²⁸² That is the first problem, and what is worse is the way some Lebanese have treated him. “People used to call me the ‘ Syrian dog ’and other things,”²⁸³ Mounir states. Today, the situation has worsened due to the epidemic, and due to the basic needs of the family, they are unfortunately sending their children to work.

In addition, since the pandemic began, as education has shifted to online education, access to such education has become aşmost impossible for Syrian children due to the lack of materials needed to follow education. Syrian children do not have sufficient access to education, which later leads to insufficient development of children, and this is directly related to forced labor of children in order to contribute to their families. In addition, the

²⁷⁹ UNRWA, Syria Crisis Response Update, Issue no 66, 2013.

²⁸⁰ Sarah Parkinson, *‘Educational Aftershocks for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon’*, Middle East Research and Information Project, 2014.

²⁸¹ UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2020.

²⁸² The Daily Star Lebanon, *‘Lebanon witnesses rise in Syrian refugee child labor over past year’*, Mounir, 2018.

²⁸³ Ibid.

number of child marriages has increased, and some are subjected to begging, which later leads to violence in certain areas where they live. This can be counted as an impact of the Syrian crisis, but at the same time a lack of Lebanese reactions to preserve its stability.²⁸⁴

There are some plans that the Lebanese government is ready to implement in order to reduce the instability that the refugees brought to the country. According to Lebanese Support's Activity report from 2016, the policy that Lebanon will establish towards refugees is finally defined and it consists of the following:

- 1) Those in the country will be monitored and their presence will be reduced, in order to reduce conflicts and dissatisfaction of the Lebanese population due to the reduction of work for them;*
- 2) They will support and make a pressure on the Syriaans to go back to their countries;*
- 3) The number of those entering across borders will decrease.*²⁸⁵

Also, According to a RAND report on solutions for the Syrian crisis related to the hosting countries, they propose that Lebanon should:

- Offer short vocational training courses on needed skills to both Syrians and Lebanese
- Decrease restrictions on sectors where Syrians can work
- Facilitate obtaining work permits
- Increase governance capacity, including municipal, to facilitate foreign investment
- Improve matching of employees and employers²⁸⁶

There are various plans and ideas that need to be implemented in order to put the lives of refugees and the lives of Lebanese in order. The idea of Lebanon, with more or less changes, of one or another politician, always comes down to one thing - and that is that "displaced" people from Syria must return to the safe zones of their country or possibly to a third country. Lebanese officials believe that a country in crisis such as

²⁸⁴ Zeinab Cherri, Pedro Acros Gonzales, Rafael Castro Delgado, "The Lebanese-Syrian crisis: impact of influx of Syrian refugees to an already weak state", Risk Manag Health Care Policy, pg.156-172.

²⁸⁵ Lebanon Support's 2016 Activity Report, <https://socialsciences-centre.org/sites/default/files/LS-ActivityReport2016-online.pdf>

²⁸⁶ Win-Win Solutions for Syrian refugees – ant their host countries, RAND Corporation, pg. 4.

Lebanon cannot withstand the presence of so many refugees. As President Aoun says in some of his statements-

“ They are allegedly contributing to crime and environmental pollution and straining the country's decrepit infrastructure, there are ‘‘Terrorists’’ among them, and they are ‘‘freeloader’’ who want to work in Lebanon and pay no taxes and also receive humanitarian aid. ’’²⁸⁷

Another plan presented in 2017 by the General Security Directorate of Lebanon also implies the return of Syrians but the idea is based on voluntary return and safety. The program involves cooperation with the Syrian regime²⁸⁸. What is important to note is that the success of these plans also depends on the political ties that emerge in this field. Given the political division in Lebanese institutions, it is not always possible to hold negotiations on this issue as everyone has different goals. This makes it even more difficult to determine refugee status. On the other hand, the western part generally supports the plans in financial terms, but also the idea that the whites should currently continue their life and work in the territories of the Lebanese countries and the rest of the region. They are in favor of this because they do not want instability in Europe.

Related to the security of the country and as mentioned before, from the interview with Hassan²⁸⁹, it was concluded that at the beginning of the crisis, the Lebanese did not have a certain approach and that is only until the moment when Hezbollah decided to intervene. This, according to Hasan, happened in 2013 and since then the reaction of Lebanese has become clearer. From that moment in spite of all the separations, everyone decided to support their side. After Hezbollah entered Syria, the number of refugees increased significantly. With this, radicalism has increased in Lebanon. The reason for this is fear. The regime began to conquer cities that were mostly on the border with Lebanon, so everyone wanted to flee from here.

What has changed then, and can be interpreted as a reaction of Lebanon, is that at that time the Syrians entered Lebanon mostly only with ID cards - however, after the

²⁸⁷ Sam Dagher, ‘‘Death by a thousand cuts’’: Syrian refugees face dire conditions as Lebanon unravels’’, Middle East Institution, 2021.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Hassan Daezli, Tripoli, January 2021.

crisis and the increase in the number of refugees, the government decided to introduce new measures. Therefore, not long after the crisis began, Lebanon had already begun to take action as the crisis began to have a negative impact on Lebanon.

As for the current situation in Lebanon, the first thing he says is that Lebanon is in a huge economic crisis. Especially after the attempted revolution in 2019, the situation got much worse. Unemployment, the fall of the Lebanese lira, and the Coronavirus have all contributed to making life in Lebanon almost impossible, especially for Lebanese citizens.

While, for example, as Hassan states²⁹⁰ Syrians who live in camps for their basic needs receive a certain amount of money that comes from various NGOs. The money and help they receive is in dollars, and as Hassan says, unlike some citizens who barely survive - they somehow supply life and basic necessities. This provokes resentment among residents regardless of their division. Some even blame the refugees for the crisis in 2019, which cannot be said with certainty, bearing in mind that Lebanon has been in bad conditions before.

Refugees receive all assistance from NGOs. Lebanon does not take part in this, but it also does not hinder the work of NGOs. The NGO chooses one Syrian in each camp, named ''*Shawish*'' in Arabic, ''*Officer*''²⁹¹ in English, and he is responsible for everything that happens in the camp. They generally do not receive a salary but have more privileges. For example, one of the refugees we also interviewed, Waleed²⁹², managed to open a small shop to make life easier for himself in the camp. Another important piece of information is that, regardless of the fact that Lebanon does not hinder the work of NGOs but also does not participate in it, they have set a condition so that there would be no negative impact. The condition is that only Lebanese can work in NGOs.

1.4. Social Response: Lebanese Positive Attitudes towards Syrian crisis and refugees

When the literature, newspapers, documentaries, news or reports are analyzed regarding the Lebanese approach to the crisis, it can be concluded that most of them are

²⁹⁰ Interviewee.

²⁹¹ Interview with Mohamed BARRAJ, UN employee in North Lebanon Office, 2021.

²⁹² Interview with a Syrian Refugee in the Lebanese camp, Tripoli, 2021.

speeches and statements of certain politicians. So far, it is clear that none of them is neutral and that all the politicians play according to their own rules and interests. The conclusion of their policy towards the crisis and especially towards the refugees can be defined into two aims. They claim that the crisis has brought a huge negative impact on the economy, due to the refugees who are working for less wage, the social life, demography and political institutions. Another thing they claim is related to refugees and since they call them “displaced”, they are putting more pressure on them to leave the country and this way they aim to reduce the burden on the state.

However, in some articles done by civil societies in Lebanon, it can be seen a slightly different view of the whole situation. As they look at the whole crisis in a humanistic way, a positive view of the crisis appears here. According to the statement of Local civil society organizations, human rights activists and academics against discrimination and for solidarity and human rights, the crisis and refugees have contributed to the strengthening of economy- through the payment of rents and their work.

²⁹³As for example, while having an interview with a Lebanese citizen named Nourhan (a 25-year-old Lebanese citizen who works in a big supermarket in Tripoli), claimed that due to the impact of economic crisis, Lebanese are in a very bad situation. However, she pointed out here the positive influence of the Syrians. As it has been said before, the Syrians get all their assistance from the international communities. They also receive monthly cards that they can only use in the markets. The money they get is in dollars. With the lira falling, the average Lebanese salary is about 50 dollars. Nourhan claimed that Lebanese buy only basic groceries in the markets, while Syrians buy as much as possible in order to strengthen the Lebanese economy with the dollar. Market owners currently have the largest contribution from the Syrians. ²⁹⁴

Another positive approach towards the crises and what they are advocating for is given below (things they claim Lebanon should be implementing):

1. *“Upholding the fundamental values of the Lebanese Constitution, in particular respect for the principles of social justice, equality of rights and duties- and non-discrimination- and adherence to the rule of the law in Lebanon;”*

²⁹³ Daleel Madani, “ Statement by local civil socsety organizations, human rights activists and acadmecis against discrimination” Lebanon Support, 2020.

²⁹⁴ Interview with a Lebanese citizen, worker in a supermarket, January 2021.

2. *Emphasizing respect for international conventions, treaties and laws;*
3. *Preventing the normalization of hatred against refugees and non-Lebanese residents of the country;*
4. *Enhancing the contribution of the refugees to the society and economy of Lebanon in accordance with the applicable laws, while ensuring that the conditions are met for them to return to their home and achieving this through positive discourse;*
5. *Enhancing the role of the media as intermediary, including both mainstream and alternative media, by promoting and circulating positive discourse;*
6. *Establishing communities which are inclusive, open and transparent and which host a rich diversity of viewpoints, through the promotion and protection of civic space, in order to insure complete freedom of opinion and expression, access to information and the right to peaceful assembly, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights.*²⁹⁵

International communities dealing with the Syrian refugee issue, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Food Program, and according to their latest Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon report, urged that Lebanon should:

*“Expand the fee waiver for legal residency to all categories of refugees” to “allow the increase of refugees’ freedom of movement and access to documentation as well as to critical services and to justice.”*²⁹⁶

1.4.1. Syrian Elections in 2021 and Lebanese Reactions

The elections in Syria, which took place at the end of May 2021, are another event that caused Lebanon to further politicize the idea of the return of Syrians to their country. Namely, the refugees who settled in Lebanese territories due to the war in Syria and who, according to the people of Lebanon, brought only even bigger crises, chaos, economic decline, showed their support for the Syrian regime at the end of May.²⁹⁷ On election day, they headed to the embassy and shouted and sang slogans in support of Assad. In addition,

²⁹⁵ Daleel Madani, “Statement by local civil society organizations, human rights activists and academics against discrimination” Lebanon Support, 2020.

²⁹⁶ Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon report, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2020. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85002>

they carried flags and pictures of Bashar Assad. This made the Lebanese react very angrily. There was even an attack, so Members of the Christian rightwing Lebanese Forces group attacked a car full of voters and took away their flags and pictures and blocked the road leading to the embassy where they were supposed to vote.²⁹⁸ Politicians are mostly condemned by this event and according to them refugees who already love and support the regime so much should return to their country.

Here are a couple of reactions from politicians and members of political parties that are listed in newspaper articles. May Chidiac, who is a former minister said:

“They claim to be displaced and are calling on the international community to support them with fresh dollars while they are an additional burden on Lebanon’s overstretched economy! At the doors of the Syrian embassy, they are chanting for Bashar Assad. As long as you are not threatened, go back to where you came from. ”

Richard Kouyoumdjian, also a former minister, said:

“Swear allegiance to Bashar Assad in your country, not in ours. You are opportunists and you are not displaced. ”

While the other side, which includes politicians from the Hezbollah-led party, Nawar Al-Sahili, a former member of parliament, said the attacks on voters were racist. Members and workers of humanitarian organizations, as well as diplomats and ambassadors of Syria, stated that this can and must be resolved diplomatically, without violence, and that both sides should cooperate in order to calm the parties.²⁹⁹

1.4.2. Syrian Refugees Reaction on Lebanese approaches and the Idea of returning home

From the beginning of the Syrian crisis until today, the goal of the Lebanese government has always been that as the crisis diminishes, so will the refugees return home. Especially with the onset of the economic crisis in Lebanon, which has affected all sectors, the presence of refugees has been met with even more resentment. President Michel Aoun stated that refugees must leave Lebanon due to the economic crisis in which

²⁹⁸ Najia Houssari, Syrian elections cause tension and violence in Lebanon, Arab News, May 2021. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1861981/middle-east>

they find themselves. He even tried to influence EU countries and organizations, saying that if they did not in some way facilitate the departure of refugees from Lebanon, they could go to Europe via the Mediterranean due to unfavorable economic conditions. However, this outcome would not be in Europe's favor at all.³⁰⁰ Different interviews and reports can show us the way the Lebanese government treats Syrian people: *‘‘My boss makes me work more than 12 hours a day at his shop. Sometimes I complain but then he threatens to cancel my sponsorship. What can I do? I have to do whatever he says. I feel like his slave.’’*³⁰¹

From such experiences and claims from refugees and reactions and claimings from Lebanese politically important people, such as sayings of Mr. Salam in 2016, i United Nations Migrants and Refugee Summit:

‘‘We stress once again the temporary character of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and we declare that our country is not a country of permanent asylum and that it is a final homeland for the Lebanese only.’’

He also added: *‘‘United Nations (UN) should devise a detailed roadmap for the safe and honourable return of the Syrian refugees who are present in Lebanon to their country.’’*³⁰² This shows the position they have occupied since the beginning of the crisis and the burden of the crisis on a country, but at the same time shows that they won't easily cooperate and with this attitude Syrian refugees life will only become more difficult.

According to the latest UNHCR survey on ‘‘Syrian Refugees’’ Perceptions and Intentions on return to Syria’’ conducted in March 2021, most of the interviewees hope to return back to Syria. Reasons behind this are different, including the security, lack of jobs and opportunities, lack of basic needs and services; but when it comes to Lebanon they are mostly related to Lebanese low interest and hard regulations implemented towards the refugees. Below are the answers to the question ‘‘Do you plan to return back to Syria next year?’’³⁰³ Depending on the country, the answers also differ. Although most are

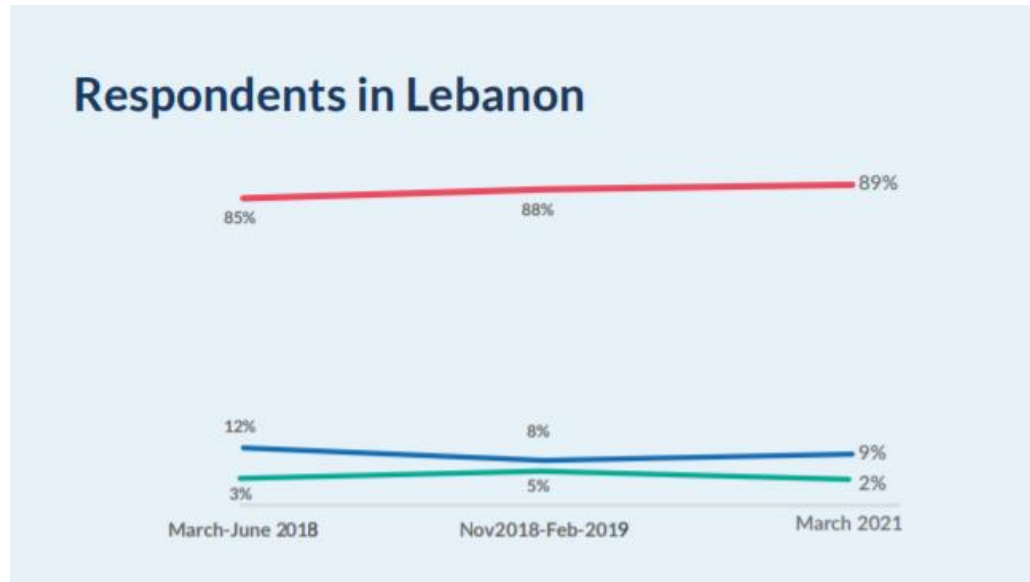
³⁰⁰ The 961, Tamara Kabboul, ‘‘200.00 Syrian Refugees Have Returned Back to Syria’’, 2019. <https://www.the961.com/200000-syrian-refugees-have-returned-back-to-syria/>

³⁰¹ Human Rights Watch, ‘‘Lebanon: Residency Rules Put Syrians at Risk’’, 2016.

³⁰² UN News, ‘‘Lebanon is not a country for a permanent asylum, prime minister tells on Summit’’, 2016.

³⁰³ UNHCR survey on ‘‘Syrian Refugees’ Perceptions and Intentions on return to Syria’’ conducted in March 2021, pg. 6.

dissatisfied with the regulation of rights regarding their stay in Lebanon, and they are concerned about a lot of factors including the most important one-security, they still decide to stay in Lebanon.



Figure

3³⁰⁴.

Red: No; Blue: Don't know; Green: Yes

2. LEBANESE ECONOMIC RESPONSE

*“Settled somewhere between defiance and determination...”*³⁰⁵

2.1. Economic Crisis And “OCTOBER REVOLUTION” Impacts And Reaction

The Lebanese citizens were settled somewhere between defiance and determination when they started protesting in 2019. As the unemployment rate rose, the fall of the Lebanese lira and finally the idea of Lebanese politicians to bring a tax on WhatsApp, were just one of the reasons and “the straw that broke the camel’s back”.³⁰⁶ Since 2019, Lebanon has been facing an extremely deep economic crisis. Due to this crisis, numerous protests were held and the people showed their dissatisfaction in all

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Anthony Elghossain, Randa Slim, Alia Moubayed, Joseph Haboush, “*Special Briefing: Lebanon one year on from the October uprising*”, 2020.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

possible ways. ³⁰⁷After the literature overview, newspapers, articles, reports and interviews, it is easy to conclude that all the dissatisfaction of the residents comes down to the inefficiency of the state to solve the basic problems. Having a state that is not able to resolve its internal issues leads us to the question how is it even able to solve the problems coming from the borders. Here issue with the refugees, women's rights, freedom of speech, health, environment are included as the biggest problems residents are facing in the last years. Adding to this the global epidemic, it is easy to conclude that the situation in Lebanon is not in a great condition at all. The Lebanese decided to stop this and regardless of religious and political affiliation, they started to protest for their better future. In this part the reasons for the crisis and how Lebanon currently recovering from it will be examined.

When we look at the crisis from this point in time after almost two years, it is clear that the crisis was imminent. Lebanon has been experiencing the same struggles for years when it comes to economy and political instability. At that time, as far as political organization was something people in Lebanon should be concerned about, the situation has got even worse and more fragile. Namely, due to the way of rule and division of power, Lebanon has always had a problem in forming a cabinet, it has always been in a political vacuum, which automatically makes it even more difficult to act properly regarding any problem in the country or outside. Between 2014 to 2016, there was a political vacuum and Lebanon was struggling to form a cabinet or even to choose a leader. This might be the most important reason that triggered the crisis in 2019. ³⁰⁸In addition, the debt of the public sector has been increasing which has impacted the economy in a very bad way. Economy of Lebanon has been in decline in the last few years and these events just made it worse. Because of all these reasons, the economic crisis was inevitable. As the sectarian system did not provide them with any answers or reactions, they decided to come out of oblivion and show incompetent leaders that there is something more important than their political positions and their interests. The motives and strategies of the protestors differed, so the reactions differed on that. Some of them succeeded, some didn't.

³⁰⁷ Bisat Amer, Marcel Cassard, Ishac Diwan, ‘ ‘ *Lebanon's economic crisis: A tragedy in the making* ’ ’, Middle East Institute, 2021.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

As they didn't find an answer for months that would solve the problems they faced, a large number began to give up and accepted that this battle was in vain. On the other hand, a large number have continued to protest and are still expressing their dissatisfaction even two years since the protests started. This economic collapse can only lead to major conflicts and violence, which has happened in numerous protests. Sectarian divisions in Lebanon are by no means helping to solve this problem, because political representatives, due to their indecision, are deepening this crisis even more. Furthermore, this state is losing both its young population and their abilities due to lack of jobs and their departures to other countries. With this it can be concluded that the crisis has devastated the economy, shaken the Lebanese political structure even more and left a large number of residents on the survival ladder.

2.2. Covid-19 and Beirut Explosion – Impacts and Reactions of the Residents, Politicians and Syrians

During the protests and crisis, Lebanon was unexpectedly hit by another major disaster. The Port explosion that happened in August has dragged the country into even deeper deprivation. Beside that, the global pandemic that hit the whole world was one more factor that contributed to increasing the bad situation in Lebanon. According to Kareem Chehayeb and the interviews he had with Lebanese residents, it can be clearly concluded that even before these two catastrophes that hit Lebanon, the economic situation was dire. The people were in a very bad situation to the point that they even had to sell their furniture to buy basics and accept any help. Later, with the pandemic and the Beirut explosion, this situation worsened. Although the government claimed to provide humanitarian aid, nothing has been seen of their help up to today. Windows were broken, buildings destroyed, jobs lost and all the chaos they faced was put in order only with the help of NGOs, residents and the Lebanese army. A few months later, it was still unclear where the ‘nonstop shipments of humanitarian aid and a pledged quarter-billion-euro aid package were being used.’³⁰⁹

The corrupt sectarian system that Lebanon led to decreasing in every field, also led to this explosion that brought a large number of victims, wounded and homeless. As

³⁰⁹ Kareem Chehayeb, *‘For Lebanon There's one road out of Hell’*, Newlines Magazine, 2020. <https://newlinesmag.com/argument/for-lebanon-theres-one-road-out-of-hell/>

mentioned before, a large number of buildings and houses were destroyed and the consequences for the capital of Lebanon can be seen even today, almost a year after the explosion. At that time, the first assumption for Lebanese residents, who have long been used to terrorist attacks and bombings, believed that the reason of the explosion hides behind this. However, further investigation has proven that the explosion was caused “by fire that ignited 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate warehoused at the port since 2013.”³¹⁰ Although the explosion may not have been planned, the idea that this amount of ammonium nitrate is found in the most important part of Lebanon is questionable. In fact, it has been argued for years that this material should be moved to a safer place. Disagreements and constant conflicts in the political system have never allowed to find an appropriate solution; the end was fatal for many.

2.2.1. Structural problems in Lebanon and reasons behind the Explosion

On August 4, 2020, this horrific event occurred and what it will show later is that in fact that was the result of political improper leadership. All the problems and the solution when it comes to Lebanon should be sought only by the political structure, which is only getting worse from year to year. Just a few weeks after the explosion the analysis on this topic began in order to find out what was really behind this unfortunate event that caused great damage and took many lives. After all these events mentioned in the first part of the research, it is clear that any loss in Lebanon is caused by the inactivity and mismanagement of the political elites of this country. We could also see the historical part and also the events that happened later today. One of the analyzes that also took place after the blast and tried to show what actually happened there, who is behind this, what are the short and long-term consequences is the analysis of SETA, where Lebanese citizens state the reasons for all of the above mentioned.

As an example, here we have Sami Atallah – Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), where he states that the problem should be sought only in the political structure of Lebanon. He cites numerous omissions that not only in 2020 but years ago accumulated

³¹⁰ Mohamad Bazzi, “*The corrupt political class that broke Lebanon- A decaying Sectarian system kindled Beirut’s port blast*”, Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/lebanon/2020-08-14/corrupt-political-class-broke-lebanon>

and eventually led to such an event. As the most important part of these analyzes and something that can be used as the highlight of what and why is happening in Lebanon is the Lebanese political incompetence and wrong leading.³¹¹ Everything that has been happening in Lebanon since the 1990s, including recent crisis, problems, the economy and protest have led to some kind of an outcome according to him. In the panel, all of the participants agreed that the main problem is in the political structure as the first thing and another one is that all the roots for these actions actually have deeper roots. Sami also shared his opinion on how the system works. The system is paralyzed the moment political elites start to spend “under the report” and for this reason are forced to borrow money at high interest rates from the other sides so they can cover for their actions. To cover the differences in overspending by the political elites in Lebanon, they use various methods, such as not paying the taxes or setting up projects at very high prices then borrowing money and some money borrowed at high interest rates. The economic system has been working on this principle for years and as such has never brought anything good to the citizens.³¹² These shortcomings in the economy actually led to protests in October 2019. People throw them on the streets to fight the system as such and what they have managed to achieve is a change of the government. Although the government was not based on elites, it was largely led by that elite. He says that the government of Hassan Diab has done a couple of good things for this country. Above all this government has shown exactly how much is the economic hole in this country and the amount was about 83 billion dollars. This loss is the people’s fault “system led by sectarian parties that have killed the economy, bankrupted the government and wasted public money.”³¹³ The plan proposed by Hassan Diab’s government, in which is stated that the private are the only hope for Lebanon to recover, later met with the outrage because other in the government believed this was not case and solution and that would only led Lebanon to even greater losses.³¹⁴ Although politicians seem to be trying get Lebanon out of collapse, their great

³¹¹ Domestic and Regional Implications of Beirut Explosion, Sami Atallah – Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), SETA Vakfi, Web-panel, 19. 08. 2020.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ National Bloc, “Government sets loss at 83 billion dollars without blame on political leadership”, april 10, 2020. https://en.nationalbloc.org/government_sets_loss_at_83_billion_dollars_without_blame_on_political_leadership

³¹⁴ Lauren Holtmeler, “Banking sector is the ‘only hope for Lebanon’, says head of the bank association”, Arabian Business. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/industries/banking-finance/467778-banking-sector-is-only-hope-for-lebanon-says-head-of-bank-association>

desire to be in power and long-standing habits by which the system works, make them encounter persistence when these reforms begin to affect their personal economic and financial interests. The way forward seems impossible after this because political elites still give priority to their interests, they want to control and preserve that privilege. In conclusion, they want the state that fits them economically and politically.

2.2.2. Impacts of the explosion on refugees and country's humanitarian response towards refugees and citizens

As for the Syrians, it also had huge negative impacts, since they are the vulnerable groups and they are not getting any help from the Lebanese government, they even make their jobs more difficult to accomplish, this was a disaster for them. The number of injured and dead also includes Syrian refugees. This explosion and its consequences will have a negative impact on societies that have been living in struggles since they inhabited Lebanon for a long time. After the explosion of the Beirut port, a large number of people were damaged in every sense. However, when it comes to refugees who are already vulnerable, they will face even more damages. For example, due to the explosion of the most important point of Beirut, "the World Food Program (WFP) has warned of a cutoff in basic food supplies." ³¹⁵This means that even the small amounts of food they received as refugees, this will further cause stress and instability.

Another reason for greater concern among refugees is the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a UNHCR report, the negative impact of the pandemic on refugees living in Lebanon has been shown. Namely, after being interviewed it was concluded that "26 percent were unable to purchase medication by week 12 of the crisis, 61 percent lost employment, 74 percent were unable to pay rent, and 77 percent had difficulty buying food." ³¹⁶The reason for this is the excessive fall of the Lebanese lira, which has led a large number of refugees to be unable to provide themselves with basic food and necessities for survival. In addition, refugees in Lebanon, since they do not have an official place of residence, also do not have access to health care. However, due to the extremely dire consequences that COVID-19 could cause, they decided to conclude an

³¹⁵ Peyvand Khorsandi, United Nations World Food Programme, World Food Programme to scale up in Lebanon as blast destroys Beirut's port, 2020 <https://www.wfp.org/stories/world-food-programme-scale-lebanon-blast-destroys-beirut-port>

³¹⁶ UNHCR, Covid-19 update report, pg.1-6.

agreement between UNRWA and UNHCR with Beirut's Rafik Hariri University Hospital, where they concluded that refugees could be treated by coronavirus.³¹⁷ This shows actually that the plan to help refugees already exists in Lebanon, even in such situations where the economic crisis prevails and other factors affect the lives. But what is important to highlight is that the aid they get is mainly from civil societies, NGO's, and their work is allowed and transparent and this is an ideal opportunity to strengthen their role in Lebanon. The Covid pandemic has contributed to a large number of refugees being left with nothing and almost homeless. It is important to note that Lebanon is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and is therefore obliged to *"The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."*³¹⁸

However, most Lebanese municipalities introduced more rigorous restrictive measures for Syrian refugees during the period, in addition to the country-wide curfew. However, the move, according to Nadia Hardman, a refugee rights researcher, meant nothing because increased refugee rates would not reduce the spread of the virus.³¹⁹ The Governance of Lebanon did not help much in resolving this, because they themselves are in crises from which they will hardly ever get out. In addition, assistance has been provided by some international aid organizations such as UNRWA and UNHCR, also including Habitat for Humanity, which are working to make it possible to find suitable houses in which Syrians can be accommodated. In addition to them, there is also the Shelter Working Group – "a coordination group that helps increase, improve and provide shelter to refugees and vulnerable persons."³²⁰

When it comes to humanitarian aid after the explosion for both the Lebanese citizens and refugees, journalist Mey al Sayegh expresses her opinion on this topic. She mentions that in 2019 Lebanon was 137 on the corruption perception index of 180 countries. Here she starts also with the political structure and system and their incompetence to lead the country. With this kind of political set-up, all the help that comes

³¹⁷ UNHCR, Lebanon: UNHCR and Ministry of Public Health: new hospital expansions ready to receive hundreds of additional COVID-19 patients

³¹⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Twenty- Second session, committee on economic, social and cultural rights, 2000.

³¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Refugees at Risk in Covid-19 Response", 2020.

³²⁰ The Borgen Project, "Homlessness in Lebanon".
http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article_14.html

to the people of Lebanon is in fact rarely distributed to the people. Most of this assistance remains within the political system and they distribute it according to their own rules. One example that proves this is the request of the Lebanese people to the French president who came to visit after this terrible explosion. The request was to all aid go directly into the hands of the people instead of donations being made to the state. It is clear that the aid sent would only benefit the interests of the ruling political elite. She believes that the aid provided for Lebanon after the explosion should be divided into three phases and another thing important is that all the aid provided to the state should be within the coordination of the United Nations.

The first phase of the humanitarian response she mentions took place immediately after the explosion and it is an automatic response with the help of civil societies led by the Lebanese force army, as they are named as the official body responsible to respond in this situation. The second phase she cites is the reconstruction of the entire city and the part where the explosion happened. Such an endeavor requires a large sum of money and it will be necessary to involve both the public and the private sectors in order to be able to rebuild the parts that were damaged. The third phase is the one in which the existing socio-economic situation in Lebanon should be taken into account. Considering this situation and the Covid-19 which has hit this country really hard, it is clear that at this stage it takes as much as the international community to react as much as the Lebanese state. The international community and donors are ready to help those who were affected in this explosion as well as those who were affected by the Covid-19, but also what has to be done in order to have it fair distributed is that the Lebanese state must be part of this response. The only way this can happen is by setting up new strategic plans, laws and regulations. Why is this important for the Lebanese state to take such a step is because Lebanon in this situation needs sustainable solutions rather than temporary ones.³²¹

The other thing that is mentioned is mismanagement when it comes to Lebanese politicians. Due to this poor management for years, the situation with the refugees is not the brightest as well. She cites an example of how the solutions provided to solve the refugee problems were mostly temporary and it turned out to be a bad idea, because today, after the explosion and also after the economical situation in which Lebanon is, people were left without the basic services. The idea is to take measures that will include civil

³²¹ SETA Web-Panel: Beirut Explosion: Mey al Sayegh.

society to represent people affected by these events. Because only in this way, when they all are at the table, it would be possible for this country to recover and not become a failed state. Another thing emphasized is the importance of monitoring of these humanitarian projects and responses. All international donors who are ready to help Lebanon should, with the help of the UN civil societies, have the right to monitor their donations. This is of great importance because as already known, Lebanon is a country known for its corruption and personal political interests.

In the same panel, one of the analysts also emphasizes the importance of humanitarian aid. Nasser Yassin and his opinion describe in the most realistic way the picture of Lebanon in which he finds himself today. When it comes to the explosion, he describes it with only one word- crime. This event was the last straw after all the crises that have befallen Lebanon. Another important thing to note is what happened in October and the explosion are not only the result of what was happening in this country in the recent years. The crisis of governing is what can describe the situation here. Nasser, as already mentioned before connects this problem to the post-war period.³²² So to conclude, everything happening today actually lies in history. And when it comes to humanitarian and regional response, after the visit of the French president, the changes he promised are essentially nothing new from what the people haven't already been asking for. However, implementing is what matters here and nothing seems to be. Lebanese politicians know how to turn regional aid and support in their favor without the people benefiting from it. What is important now is that the people notice this time and go against it to the end. Only in this way they can get what they deserve. Lebanon needs a completely new political reconstruction and regional support for this to happen. But in any ways what matters at the end are the interests of the other side as well. So if there is France willing to help, there must always be something behind this desire. For instance, the French, will probably ask to directly or indirectly manage the port. And the other regional assistance that comes must be assured that it goes to the right hands.

³²² SETA, Web-panel: Beirut explosion, Nasser Yassin.

CONCLUSION

Lebanon is a country that, due to its geographical position, has always been attractive to great powers. Never in peace, always in chaos, this country has managed to survive to this day with all its losses. In general, researches always show the chaotic history of Lebanon and the crises that have befallen it. When a comprehensive research is done, it can be concluded that the ground of this country has always been unstable due to various internal and external factors. Although the political system is based on power-sharing between 18 ethnic groups and religious groups, one group has always been superior and had a greater right to decide. This is what is considered in the numerous literature to be the most important factor that has negatively influenced all the decisions that Lebanon has made over the years regarding issues occurring on the ground or coming from the region of countries.

For these two countries that primarily share 365 km of borders, history, have incredibly crossed ties, it has been clear since the beginning of the crisis that it will have a huge impact on Lebanon. From the beginning there was a fear that this neighbor could destabilize even more, which over the coming years has affected all aspects of Lebanon, but during this period there were still hopes that Lebanon would not be affected by the crisis to the extent that. As the crisis has worsened the impacts became more transparent and could be felt on the ground. The Syrian crisis has affected not only the countries of the region but also the wider circle. However, for countries that are politically, economically and socially stronger, this crisis could not impact them too much. But when we look at the impacts it has left on Lebanon and on countries that are weaker, it is possible to conclude that the negative impacts are huge.

When it comes to the Syrian crisis, what stands out most in the literature is the spillover that this crisis brought to Lebanon. There is a word in this study on this topic, the negative impact on all segments in Lebanon, but what is especially emphasized are the reactions that Lebanon had regarding the Syrian crisis. It is important to understand the impact of the crisis, but even more important is the way in which Lebanon has dealt with it. The Lebanese have been fighting for years against each other or against politicians who have an important position on the political scene. The country is constantly in the brackets, protests, but after a certain period the intensity decreases and

the reactions become invisible. This is something that should not happen. Regardless of the lack of reactions from politicians, it is important for Lebanese people not to get used to uncertainty, to corruption, to the high number of unemployment. It is important for them to know that their goal is not impossible and that it is feasible. Because of the explosion that hit them and thus made lives even more difficult for many citizens, it made people forget for a moment what they have started fighting for. It is important to act all the time in order to improve the situation.

Taking into account all the disasters that have befallen Lebanon in the recent years and made the former so called ‘‘Paris of the Middle East’’ barely stand on its feet, it is difficult to make a plan or idea that would help Lebanon to recover. However, starting with the most important factor that has the greatest negative impact on Lebanon- the political situation and disorganisation, would be the great step taken towards a better future for Lebanon and Lebanese people. They need responsibility, justice and the will to work for the community. Someone who would put own interests aside and work on the interests of the state and the people.

A country that has struggled with instability for years and is considered vulnerable, whose development since 2005 has only gone downhill and a country that has been in constant conflict since its independence, a country with a negative refugee experience has faced another similar crisis. On the one hand, if all these reasons are taken into account, Lebanon's inefficiency in responding to this crisis and preserving its state, but also helping the other, seems impossible. All the plans that were implemented or at least tried to be implemented, are mostly unsuccessful and to this day, due to the inefficiency of the government, the crisis has failed to suppress its negative effects on Lebanon.

It can easily be said that Lebanon was influenced by almost all of the factors mentioned above. As a country that is not economically strong enough and that can barely provide for its population, accepting more refugees and providing assistance without the support of the international community is unthinkable. Another thing, the long and intertwined history, and Syria's belief that it is superior to Lebanon, has led to the division of political parties when it comes to supporting the Syrian regime. The next thing that influenced Lebanon not to respond adequately to the crisis was the population revolt itself. Due to the presence of Syrians, concerns have been raised about jobs, security, the

declining economy, their cultural attitudes, terrorism and radicalism - and caused the population to be insecure and content in their country.

When we compare Lebanon and other countries in the region and their approach to the crisis, it can be concluded that Lebanon does not have a clearly understandable approach to the crisis. This can also be seen as a result of the dysfunctional and chaotic situation in Lebanon in terms of institutions and the general political situation. On the one hand, they have decided to ban the setting up of refugee camps, as previously stated, not all camps in Lebanon are registered as legal. Another thing that leads refugees to illegal actions are the laws that the government has adopted and they refer to the work of refugees in Lebanon. All these movements undertaken on the issue of refugees, in fact, determine their life in Lebanon. With this we can see that the chaotic situation in which the Lebanese government finds itself most of the time greatly affects the lives of refugees, but also the lives of residents.

Lebanon has always been able to manage crisis and conflicts through these years and sometimes even though it seems impossible, all that is needed is a plan to sustain this vulnerable country. In order to run a country, it is necessary for the politicians that are already in certain positions, or for those who are yet to come, to always put aside their interests and put the citizen's desires as first. With the October Revolution in 2019, whose intensity declined due to the global pandemic, people actually showed that they are ready to close their eyes to differences and reduce sectarian tensions in order to create a better life for a better tomorrow. All the conflicts and complications that are happening in Lebanon actually come from within. From the inactivity and inadequate responses of the politicians and disorder in the political structure. What is needed is a party that will set a clear goal and the necessary working mechanisms to make the right and proper decisions for the country as Lebanon is.

APPENDIX

1. Interview questions English Version

1. Did the Syrian crisis increase the fragile political structure of Lebanon?
2. The Lebanese state could not follow a healthy approach in the Syrian crisis because the institutional structure was not implemented properly.
3. Did Hezbollah's role in the country become stronger after the crisis?
4. Did the Syrian war bring the new economic, social, political and security pressures to an overstretched Lebanese system?
5. Has the increasing sectarian provocation and conflict environment caused by the spreading effects of the war in Syria caused terrorist operations in Lebanon?
6. Urban vs. rural responses?
7. Did Lebanese institutions allow Syrians in Lebanon to access essential services and enjoy fundamental rights (right to work)?
8. What were Lebanese reactions before the crisis— beginning of the crisis and now?
9. What did the State of Lebanon do? And the consequences of these reactions.
10. Has Syria started to be seen as a political threat by some groups?
11. What is the approach of Durzes, Maronites, Sunni Muslims and Shittes towards the Syrian?
12. Is Syria an economic burden to Lebanon?
13. Has it caused the socio-economic and social division within the country to diverge and how?
14. Did the Lebanese community see the arrival of Syria as a threat?/ How is Lebanon affected?
15. Does the arrival of refugees create insecurity in the country?
16. When Syrians arrived, did the balance between sects deteriorate and has hostility between groups increased?
17. When changes in demographics happened, has it caused some societies to lose their privileges?

2. Interview Questions Arabic Version

1. هل ساعدت الأزمة السورية على إضعاف البنية السياسية الضعيفة أصلاً في لبنان؟

2. طبيعة البنية السياسية في لبنان كانت سبباً في فشل الدولة اللبنانية في التعامل مع الأزمة السورية، صح أم خطأ؟
3. دور حزب الله في لبنان أصبح أكبر بعد بدء الثورة السورية وتدخله فيها لمصلحة النظام. صح أم خطأ؟
4. الثورة السورية زادت العبء على الدولة اللبنانية اقتصادياً، اجتماعياً، سياسياً وأمنياً، صح أم خطأ
5. الثورة السورية أدت إلى تفاقم الاختلافات والانقسامات الطائفية في لبنان، وأدت أيضاً إلى ازدياد الهجمات الارهابية في لبنان
6. ردة فعل السكان اللبنانيين تجاه الثورة وازمة اللاجئين في المدن والأماكن النائية
7. هل أعطت الحكومة اللبنانية اللاجئين السوريين جميع حقوقهم وأمنت لهم جميع الخدمات والمتطلبات اللازمة للسكن والإقامة
8. العلاقات بين لبنان وسوريا قبل الحرب وبعدها، دور حزب الله في هذه العلاقات وردة فعل الحزب مع اندلاع الثورة
9. ردة فعل الدولة اللبنانية تجاه الثورة السورية منذ بدايتها، تفاقمها والوضع الحالي؟ ما هي عواقب ردة الفعل هذه؟
10. بعض المجموعات والاحزاب في لبنان يرون أن السوريين يشكلون تهديداً على لبنان وأمنه، صح أم خطأ
11. رأي المذاهب وموقفهم من الثورة السورية
12. هل يشكل اللاجئون حملاً ثقيلاً على الاقتصاد اللبناني؟
13. هل أدت الثورة وأزمة اللاجئين إلى تفاقم الانقسام الاجتماعي والاقتصادي داخل لبنان؟
14. هل أدت أعداد اللاجئين في لبنان على تغيير ديمغرافي في لبنان؟ وهل أثر ذلك على صلاحيات وحقوق أي فئة أو طائفة في لبنان؟

3. Figures and Tables

1. Map of Lebanon
2. Impacts on Lebanese Demography
3. Assistance provided to Syrian refugees, according to LCRP.
4. Surveys conducted with the Syrian refugees on the topic of Returning back home

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