The Making of a Social, Political and Economical Identity From Disenfranchised to Welfare Providers and Entrepreneurial Bourgeoisie: Contextualizing Lebanese Shi'a
A Literature Review

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Political Anthropology as a Theoretical Framework:
G. Balandier, M. Mauss, F. Barth

The term "political anthropology" was one of those sub-disciplinary categories produced by post-war "classical anthropology", and accordingly inspired by the major postwar–isms: functionalism, structuralism and Marxism. The demise of these narratives led to the momentary retreat of "political anthropology" in the early 1980s. And yet, from exactly the same moment, anthropology experienced a return to politics via post-structuralism. The shift in the social and political sciences toward an understanding of power outside and beyond state and sovereignty, replaced by a focus on representation and symbolic power, prepared the way for what may even be recognized as an "anthropological turn" in politics.[1]

Collaboration between anthropology and politics, particularly in the area of concepts and methodologies, is highly beneficial for both disciplines, though they also deal with some troubling aspects of the relationship. Through the basic methods of research that bridge both disciplines — ethnography and case study — and the use of "anthropological" concepts and sensibilities, a greater understanding of some of the most challenging political issues of the day can be achieved.

In considering how anthropologists have chosen to look at and write about politics, Joan Vincent contends that the anthropological study of politics is itself a historical process.[2] Throughout the 1980s and well into the 1990s the meanings of the "political" when talking about politics was wide enough to make it very difficult not to generalize with some of the many interfaces between anthropology and the social and political sciences.[3] At the turn of the new century, a synthesis of sorts seems to have emerged, in which selected postmodern insights have been developed within a strongly empirical framework.[4] For political anthropology, the reconceptualization of the nature of power by Michel Foucault and others (Edward Said) is requiring new modes of research and analysis.[5]

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[1] Thomassen B., "What Kind of Political Anthropology?", in: *International Political Anthropology* , Vol. 1, No. 2, 2008, p. 263-274.

[2] Vincent J. (1994), *Anthropology and Politics Visions, Traditions, and Trends.* Tucson: Arizona University Press.

[3] Thomassen B. (2008).

[4] Lewellen T. C. (2003), *Political Anthropology. An Introduction.* Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, p. 13.

[5] Ibidem.

In so many ways, contemporary "politics of" anthropology is a marriage between critical theory approaches and postmodern, "Foucaldian" emphases on power and representation, held together by the bottom-up approaches that have always defined anthropology. Much "politics of" anthropology simultaneously draws on older (Leftist) vocabularies of repression as well as resistance and newer ones that stress strategies of representation, local agency and diversity.[6]

The use of a political-anthropological theoretical framework for this research is particularly efficient as one of the main insights provided by political anthropologists was always that the "political" cannot be so neatly separated, as the political sphere intersects with social and cultural patterns and practices.[7] This is especially relevant for those societies in which a great deal of "politics" takes places via informal networks and informal institutions, sometimes underpinning or overlapping with the more objectifiable ones that political scientists concentrate on.[8] In general, these sorts of debates are mainly addressed to those societies lacking of a formal political institution or — as for the case of Lebanon — to those with a particularly weak and/or corrupted system.

Georges Balandier claimed that the foundations of political anthropology laid back at the beginning of the 1920s.[9] Bjørn Thomassen consolidates this claim referring to the work of Marcel Mauss who in the interwar period did in fact seek to establish new foundations for anthropology and sociology.[10]

This framework will consider the works of George Balandier, specifically his theories on kinship and lineages to analyze and describe the historical clanic structure of Lebanese society. In reference to the rise, establishment, and decline of *'asabiyya*, Balnadier's examination of Marxist theories according to which class-society and the state are a result of the dissolution of the primitive communities and the political emerges with the disappearance of personal blood ties will be considered. Likewise, Balandier's investigation on lineage structure and power, territorial structure and political structure — as well as the "total political enterprise", from the capitalization of wealth to the secession and genealogical legitimization — will constitute an important theoretical outline for a structured approach on the evolution of "family power" in Shiite Lebanon.

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[6] Thomassen B. (2008).
[7] Ibidem.
[8] Ibidem.
[9] Balandier G. (1967), *Anthropologie politique*. Paris: PUF.
[10] Thomassen B. (2008).

Far from conceiving of kinship and the political as mutually exclusive terms, political anthropology has revealed the complex ties that exist between the two systems and has analyzed and developed the theories of their relations on the basis of fieldwork.[11]

Additional aspects of "segmentary power", social stratification, and "feudality" and relations of dependence will possibly highlight some dimensions of traditional notables, patronage and kinship in South Lebanon, as well as H.M. Fried (1957; 1960[12]) critical inventory on lineage groups (corporate groups) as opposed to descent groups.

With a move away from the traditional forms of *'asabiyya* —and in the highlights of Vali Nasr's analysis that suggests that the south of Lebanon (a Hezbollah stronghold) is doing well economically, not just because of Hezbollah's redistribution of resources, but thanks to businessmen and a provincial Shiite middle class that is riding on their coattails — Marcel Mauss production constitutes the framework for a comparative analysis between economic and political systems and an investigation on the recent Shiite productive, "capitalist" bourgeoisie. Even though the greatest majority of literature that traces a genealogical groundwork of political and economical Amal, Hezbollah and the dispossessed Shi'a refers to the works of Che Guevara, Franz Fanon and Karl Marx, the shift proposed by Nasr requires a less structural and a more dynamic perspective. While Marcel Mauss is considered a classic, anthropologists have rarely considered the evident political dimensions of his work, let alone Mauss' political *engagement*.[13]Yet Mauss *The Gift* was just that: a *political* theory. Marcel Mauss was indeed inspired by Socialism, as the first Shiite movements in Lebanon were. Nonetheless, *The Gift* certainly does not display a utopian-socialist theory that can be reduced to a formalistic model of exchange and communication. The essay on *The Gift* was indeed only a part of Mauss' larger engagement with monetary capitalism,[14] as demonstrated by his *Écrits politiques* (1997), and gift-giving principle was not a romantic counter-principle to capitalist market economy.[15] Mauss wrote extensively on socialism, but never expressed the opinion that markets could or should be replaced with Socialist states.[16] This specific segment of the theoretical framework helps to describe the economical evolution of the Lebanese Shi'a as represented by the bourgeois

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[11] Balandier G. (1972), *Political Anthropology*. Middlesex (UK): Penguin Books Ltd, p. 50.

[12] Fried M. H. (1957), "The Classification of Corporate Descent Groups", *F. Roy. Anthr. Instit.*, Vol. 87, no.1, London; Fried M. H. (1960), "The Evolution of Social Stratification and the State", in Diamond S. (ed.), *Culture in History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[13] Thomassen B. (2008).

[14] Thomassen B. (2008)..

[15] Hart K., "Marcel Mauss: In Pursuit of the Whole. A Review Essay", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 49, Issue 02, April 2007, pp 473-485.

[16] Mauss M. (1920), "La Nation". Extrait de *l'Année sociologique*, Troisième série, 1953-1954, pp. 7 à 68. Texte reproduit in Mauss M., *Oeuvres*. 3. Cohésion sociale et division de la sociologie (pp. 573 à 625). Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969.

entrepreneurial "not-too-secular-not-too-religious" Amal, constantly ambivalent in representing itself as a mainstream party invested in the Lebanese nation, sidelining Hezbollah as a sectarian party and with its leader and Speaker of the Parliament, Nabih Berri, who has direct access to the State resources. What kind of "ethnic" entrepreneurship does Amal display? Is Amal's avoidance of a too loud religious discourse today appealing to the even larger Shiite secularist community? Shiite ethnic entrepreneurs are the main actors of this investigation, sometimes transcending the national, the transnational (Iran, Iraq, diaspora), and the religious.[17] The term "ethnic" comes from anthropologist Fredrik Barth. When one speaks of ethnicity in the media or in much of the social sciences, the attention is narrowly focused on the politization of this ground of cultural variation within certain modern state structures, i.e. ethnic conflicts, as they tend to arise today.[18] Nonetheless, "ethnic" in this framework has nothing to do with tribalism and pre-state political systems. "On the contrary, it is a response of people to a particular form of state organisation and the political opportunities it creates. Further, it is important to recognize that the dynamics whereby political mobilization to conflict on an ethnic basis takes place are not the expression of collective popular sentiments, but result from tactical moves made by political entrepreneurs."[19] This constitutes an important reference for an analysis on how and why Shiite "identity" entrepreneurs distribute resources, as they seek not only to establish the previously marginalized Shi'a as part of the Lebanese nation but also to claim their central position in it.[20] In this sense, "ethnic entrepreneurs" can be applied to a variety of economical, political, religious or civilian activists: from NGOs directors or members to representatives of Amal and Hezbollah; from diaspora Shiite entrepreneurs who established firms in Canada or Sub-Saharan Africa during the Lebanese civil war to high ranking religious figures. The reestablishment of transnational networks connecting the wealthy Shi'a diaspora in West Africa with the sending communities in Lebanon further changed the expectations of the Shi'a community towards the state. Unlike Al-Sadr, Shiites in the 1990s looked towards emigrant relatives and transnational migrant networks to address development issues; reconstruct war-torn villages and neighbourhoods; create employment opportunities and provide the capital necessary to reinvigorate life in the economic cycles of the Shi'a community often through the establishment of numerous,

[17] Shaery-Eisenlohr R. (2008), *Shi'ite Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 6.
[18] Barth, F. (1995), "Ethnicity and The Concept of Culture". Paper presented to the Conference 'Rethinking Culture', Harvard February 23, 1995; Barth F. (ed.) (1969*), Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Difference.* Boston: Little Brown.
[19] Barth F. (1995).
[20] Shaery-Eisenlohr R. (2008, p. 6.

small-scale and diversified family businesses employing immediate relatives and generating profits to support immediate family members.[21]

Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner argue that the development of nationalism is intimately bound up with the transition to a new form of economic organisation: the rise of capitalism.[22] Whereas Anderson and Gellner's assumption — subscribing to the influential account of modernization formulated by Max Weber, according to which the transition to modernity is tied to an overall weakening of the relevance of religion in social life — necessarily implies a shift towards secularization, other authors, such as Linda Colley[23], have argued that the rise of modernity did not necessarily remove religious identifications and discourse from national public spheres and from popular understandings of nationhood.[24] In the Lebanese context, this latest assumption rings even more authentic. In fact, belonging to a religious community in Lebanon is the only legitimate way of being part of the Lebanese nation.[25] That doesn't necessarily mean that identity and nationalism should automatically concern the rule of God. Nonetheless, as Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr emphasizes, Shiite modern activism is a way of defining a national public sphere that is in accordance with Shiite iconography without necessarily changing the fundamental concepts of territorial integrity and popular sovereignty.[26]

From Outcasts to Political Representatives:
The Rise of a Shiite Conscience in Lebanon

In Lebanon, two explicitly political organizations, Hezbollah and Amal, vie for representation and leadership of Lebanese Shiites while other groups — including the Mabarrat organization linked to Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, the Imam Musa Al-Sadr Foundation and, to some degree, the Shi'a Higher Council — focus on social activities, with no apparent political agendas.

The massive welfare system and philanthropic organisations related to, or owned by Hezbollah in Lebanon are often the subject of much speculation. With reference to the

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[21] Marei, F. G. (2010), "Political Shiism: From engaging the state to replacing it". *Middle East Political and Economic Institute*, May 2007.
[22] Anderson B. (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the* Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso; Gellner E. (1983), Nations and Nationalism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
[23] Colley L., "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", *Journal of British Studies*, no. 31, October 1992, pp. 309-29.
[24] Shaery-Eisenlohr R. (2008), pp .4-5.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] Ibidem.

tradition of political and social Lebanese Shi'a - historically deprived of resources, *mahrumeen* (underprivileged) and *mustadafeen* (weak) - Amal and Hezbollah were able to combine their nationalist, religious and political identity to a propensity to understand and address the social frustration unprecedented in the history of Lebanon. Thus, Hezbollah morphed from a resistance movement into a stateless government that leverages charity to meet the needs of the neglected, oppressed and marginalized Lebanese Shi'a population to maintain popular support and to continue the resistance discourse.

It is not possible, though, to analyze Hezbollah as a service provider disregarding the Shiite political subordination in post-independence Lebanon that had profound economic, social and cultural roots, and that was responsible for the urban and political mobilization starting from the 1960's with the arrival of Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon.

Although the literature about the Shi'a of Lebanon is relatively large, scholarship about Shiites in Lebanon before the second half of the twentieth century is not controversial at all; all research focuses more or less on the same subject: the impoverished and misrepresented conditions of Shiites since the creation of the Lebanese state.

Since the 9th century a.C., when Shiites established themselves in the south of Lebanon (Jabal Ameel) and in the Beqaa Valley[27], this population was identified as a poor minority whose oppression and tyranny never seemed to end. As early as the 14th century Shi'as were expelled by the Mamluks from their regions and sent to peripheral regions away from the Mamluks' central ruling areas. Even when the Mamluk dynasty fell and the Ottoman Empire was established, Lebanese Shiites found themselves in a position of defending themselves against the Sunni Ottomans[28]. Again, during the French mandate and at the announcement of Lebanon's 1943 independence, Lebanese Shi'a was still very much misrepresented and marginalized.[29]

The literature on the Shi'a began to change as Shi'a political mobilization began to move his steps. The first stirrings of change came in late 1950s and early 1960s when Shi'a started

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[27] Alagha, J. (2006), *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology: Religion ideology, political ideology, and political program.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 19.
[28] Alagha (2006), pp. 19-20.
[29] A comprehensive work on Shiism and Shiites, with a chapter on Lebanese Shi'a is Scarcia Amoretti B. (1994), *Sciiti nel mondo.* Roma: Jouvence.

to be exposed to less peripheral regions of the country, due to internal and external migration.[30]

The greatest turning point came with the arrival of imam Musa al Sadr, who mobilized the Shi'a, organized them politically, and called for a better political representation and fairer distribution of socio-economic conditions. He also worked to form an effective Shi'a civil society independent of the state.

Rosemary Sayigh's *Too many Enemies*[31] (1994) analyzes the historical and social background of the Lebanese Shi'a, its awakening with Musa al-Sadr *harakat al-mahrumeen* and the establishment of the Amal movement; Amal's implications with the Palestinian and Syrian presence in Lebanon until the end on the civil war. Sayigh's encounter is particularly effective in describing Lebanese Shiites everyday life's conditions and their alienation from Lebanese politics, their migration to the capital and the consolidation of their identity under Musa al Sadr's guidance.

Al Sadr's appearance marked the birth of political Shiism in Lebanon.[32] Grasping the political potential of social assistance as a means of outflanking the traditional elites and entering the political arena, al-Sadr underwrote a string of religious and vocational schools and a number of orphanages from funds available to him from his contacts with the religious authorities in Najaf in Iraq and Qom in Iran.[33] The Imam's role in establishing institutions important to his community's political development is well known. Chief among them was the Movement of the Dispossessed *(harakat al-mahrumeen)* founded in 1974, whose military branch *(harakat Amal)* was trained in Baalbek to resist Israeli activities in the South.[34]

A further reading that helps to outline Musa al Sadr's religious and political figure is *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* by Fouad Ajami (1987)[35]. Ajami analyzes the ideological, sociological, and historic context for the advancement of one of the most illustrious Iranian-born Lebanese Shiite mullahs in Lebanon, providing clear genealogy of the roots of Musa al Sadr and his movement. Ajami provides effective data that helps to

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[30] Norton, A. R. (1985, November), "Changing actors and leadership among the Shiites of Lebanon", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

[31] Sayigh R. (1994), *Too Many Enemies. The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

[32] Marei, F. G. (2010).

[33] Harik J. (1994), *The Public and Social Services of the Lebanese Militias*. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies. Cfr. Shapira S., 'The Imam Musa al-Sadr: Father of the Shi'i Resurgence in Lebanon' in *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 44, Fall 1987, p. 124.

[34] Harik J. (1994). Cfr. Mowles C., 'The Israeli Occupation of South Lebanon' in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, October 1986, pp. 1351-1366.

[35] Ajami F. (1987), *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*. New York: Ithaca.

understand al-Sadr's role in redefining the politics of the Lebanese Shi'a and the genesis of Amal and Hezbollah.

Before 1932, the Shiite community was institutionally underrepresented. Concentrated in the Jabal Amil region, in the south of the country, and in the Beqaa Valley, the Sh'ia had obtained a small portion of political office with the 1943 National Pact (*al-Mithaq Al Watani*). As a result of a census taken in 1932, the 1943 National Pact gave the Maronite Christians the permanent presidency of the Republic, and the Sunni Muslim the presidency of the Council of Ministers. The Shiites had to be content with the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies.

The National Pact consecrated the existence of Lebanon, rejecting those impulses that appeared to be contrary to the existence of an independent sovereign country, and marked a prominent Maronite and Sunni representation that reflected a new relationship between social forces, but it was not consistent either with the great traditions of the mountain (Druze pre-eminence with the support of Maronite) nor to those of the French mandate. However, the structure created by the National Pact was able to stand intact without major breaks until 1975, when the civil war broke out.[36]

However, al Sadr did not aim to seize power; he strived to increase Shi'a engagement in the state and advance their political rights[37]. Moreover, even though his efforts were directed towards serving the various socio-economic and political interests of the Shi'a, al Sadr called foremost for safeguarding the Lebanese republic. He claimed to support he Palestine resistance movement, but his relations with the PLO were tense and uneasy (Norton, 1987). Al Sadr was a reformer, not a revolutionary and he prophetically warned the PLO

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[36] Studies published in English on the pre-war Lebanese political history include Binder L. (ed.) (1980), *Politics in Lebanon*, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Publication; Hudson M. (1985), *The Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon*, Boulder, CO: Westview; Salibi K. (1976), *Crossroads to Civil War*, New York: Ithaca Press; Johnson J. (1987), *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840-1985*, New York: Ithaca Press; Khalaf S. (1987), *Lebanon's Predictament*, New York: Columbia University Press.; el-Khazen F. (2000), *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris; Gordon D. C. (1980), *Lebanon, The Fragmented Nation*, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Publication; Attié C. (2004), *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950s,* London and New York: The Centre for Lebanese studies, Oxford, in collaboration with I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd; Traboulsi F. (2007), *A History of Modern Lebanon*, London: Pluto Press.
Studies that refer to the war years include: Winslow C. (1996), *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, London & New York: Routledge; Abul-Husn L.(1998), *The Lebanese Conflict, Looking Inward*, Boulder: London; O'Ballance E. (1998), *Civil War in Lebanon*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan; Picard E. (1998)*, Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, New York: Holmes & Meier Pub; Khalaf S. (2002), *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, New York: Columbia University Press; Klaushhofer A. (2007), *Paradise Divided.* Oxford: Signal Books Ltd; Hanf T., *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon*, Indiana: Indiana University Press; Mackay S. (2008), *Mirror of the Arab World. Lebanon in Conflict*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co.; Fisk R. (2002), *Pity of the Nation, The Abduction of Lebanon*, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books.
[37] Hazran, Y. (2009, June). The Shiite community in Lebanon: From marginalization to ascendancy. *Middle East Brief.* Retrieved from http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB37.pdf

that it was not in its interests to establish a state within a state in Lebanon (Norton, 1987); most importantly, he called for the support of the Palestinian cause in Palestine, not in Lebanon.

Norton (1987)[38] outlines the key to the changed political reality of Lebanon as the changed position of the Shiite community from the 1960s. The conflicts in large measure stemmed from issues of social inequality, injustice and deprivation, plus interregional factors led to the revitalization and eventually to the internal split of the movement that brought to the formation of Hezbollah in 1985.

Four years after establishing the Amal movement, al Sadr mysteriously disappeared during a trip to Libya (1978). In the same year, Israel invaded the south of Lebanon with the code-named Operation Litani[39]. A year later the Iranian Revolution erupted, followed by the Israeli invasion of 1982, and Amal's new leader Nabih Berri's decision to participate in the National Salvation Committee (NSC) formed in the wake of the invasion. This resulted in a split within Amal and the end of a "natural alliance" (Norton, 1987). The NSC was formed alongside with the Maronite leader and Israeli ally Bashir Gemayel. The Islamic faction of Amal broke away and founded the party of God, Hezbollah. This brought in the biggest transformation in the history of the Shi'a of Lebanon, and initiated a stage of radical institutionalization in contrast with imam al Sadr's engagement policy with the state, paving the road to Shi'a ascendency and gradually bringing them to the centre of Lebanese politics.

The party's emergence is often perceived as the direct result of Iran's regional foreign policy needs. Norton (1987) rejects the common notion that it was the Iranian revolution that caused this once disorganized community to find itself politically. Norton argues that the activism of the Lebanese Shi'a was the result of a long process of modernization. He emphasizes the uprooting of the Shi'a from their traditional ways and shows how the civil war intensified this process, along with the outbreak of the Iranian revolution, the disappearance of Musa al Sadr in Libya in 1978 and the Israeli invasion of the south of Lebanon in the same year (Operation Litani). Undoubtedly, the success of the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, and the Lebanon war in 1982, further inflamed the Shiite revolutionary fervour and widened the gap between the radical groups, but it is vital to

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[38] Norton A. R. (1987), *Amal and the Shi'a. Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon. Houston:* University of Texas Press
[39] Operation Litani was a six-day military campaign carried out by Israel in 1978. The operation was meant as retaliatory action to a series of terror attacks on Israeli targets, emanating form Lebanon.

consider other transnational aspects to unravel an even more accurate account on the birth of the party of God.

Certainly the most vivid embodiment of Lebanese-Iranian relations — Hezbollah — continues to play a major role in the politics of the region. Nonetheless, H. E. Chehabi (2006)[40] demonstrates that Iran and Lebanon's "distant relation" has been going on for over five hundred years, involving cultural, religious and political levels. Chehabi looks beyond the formalities of inter-state foreign policy at the more complicated and influential, interactions of non-state actors in the last five hundred years. However, Relations between Lebanon and Iran have not always been friendly. Because of Lebanon's relatively democratic politics for instance, Iranian opponents to the Shah used Lebanon as a base from which to plot the regime's downfall.

After the establishment of the party of God, the Iran-Hezbollah partnership has produced large political dividends for the Lebanese party, for it permitted it to become a major patron in a country where patron-client relationship constitute the underlying exchange pattern (Harik, 2006)[41]. Funds available to Hezbollah have produced jobs for the educated unemployed in party-run or managed bureaux, clinics and hospitals; others seeking work find it in the many party-sponsored construction or clean-up units.[42] These beneficiaries, in the Lebanese tradition, reward their benefactors at the time of elections.

The increase of Amal and Hezbollah's social activities — and sometimes, where possible, in each other's domain — shows that success in the Lebanese Shi'a power struggle depends on which competitor can most widely mobilize the Shi'a population. The fundamental issue in today's economically depressed Lebanon is: what does each movement have to offer? (Harik, 2006). What does Hezbollah guarantee that Amal cannot guarantee?

Hezbollah inherited the voice of the Islamist and revolutionary movements of the 1960s, and the idea of political mobilization against social inequity that was behind Musa al Sadr's *harakat al-mahrumeen*. An analysis of the internal socio-economic and political dynamics wouldn't be sufficient though to explain the success of the organization. A number of external factors should be taken into account: The party of God represented at the beginning of the eighties the one and only successful attempt to export of the 1979 Iranian revolution. This radical social and political event, along with the project of a "Greater Israel" — as opposed to the Syrian ambitions in Lebanon — and the development of a

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[40] Chehabi H. E. (ed.) (2006), *Distant Relations. Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, London & New York: I. B. Tauris.
[41] Harik J., "Hizballah's Public and Social Services and Iran", in Chehabi H. E. (ed.) (2006), *Distant Relations. Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, London & New York: I. B. Tauris, p. 285.
[42] Ibidem.

transnational Shiite movement between Iraq and Iran in the 60s, are unavoidable focal points that can help to explain Hezbollah's political and social path.

The emergence of Hezbollah was thus "based on ideological, social, political, and economical mixture in a special Lebanese, Arab, and Islamic context"[43]. Until 1992 the party followed a radical approach having an uncompromising stance towards the Lebanese political system. After the end of the civil war, Hezbollah started working incessantly to become an integral part of the Lebanese state. When the Ta'if agreement was implemented to end the 15-year-old Lebanese civil war, Hezbollah decided to accommodate itself to the Lebanese confessional system, entering into alliances beyond sectarian lines.[44] It was also during this stage that Hezbollah began investing heavily in its social service networks and organizations, becoming an efficient service provider for a substantial group of the Shi'a population. But while the party had been calling for state reforms on one hand, on the other Hezbollah was undertaking its own reforms to its own population totally independent from the state.

Much has been written on Hezbollah's rise and ideology[45], though academic literature that examines the non-military aspect of Lebanon's Shi'a is relatively scarce. This work's intent is to concentrate on the community's vast economic, social, and educational developments; furthermore, it sheds light on the emergence of self-conscious and self-reliant Shiite middle class (more secular, compared to Hezbollah's, and traditionally affiliated with Amal) mobilized by the mission of resistance as a "methodology" (Harb and Leenders 2005)[46]. This entails unravelling the social and economic thought of contemporary Lebanese Shi'a, identifying the dissimilarities in the way this new bourgeoisie operates within Amal and Hezbollah.

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[43] Alagha, J. (2006), p. 35.
[44] Hamzeh, A. N. (1993), "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation", *Third World Quarterly, 14*(2).
Retrieved from http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/hamzeh2.html
Hamzeh, A. (2004). *In the Path of Hizbullah*. New York : Syracuse University Press.
[45] Norton A. (2007), *Hezbollah. A Short History*. Princeton (New Jersey) and Woodstock (Oxforshire): Princeton University Press; Jaber H. (1997), *Hezbollah. Born with a Vengeance*. New York: Columbia University Press; Avon D. Khatchadourian A. T. (2010), *Le Hezbollah. De la doctrine à l'action. Une histoire du "parti de Dieu"*. Paris: Seuil; Palmer Harik J (2005), *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*. London: I.B. Tauris; Azani E. (2009), *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan; Hamzai A. N. (2004), *In the Path of Hizbullah*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press; Ghorayeb A. S.(2002), *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*. London: Pluto Press; Charara W. Domont F. (2006), *Le Hezbollah : Un mouvement islamo-nationaliste*. Paris: Fayard.
[46] Harb, M. & Leenders, R. (2005), "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception", *Third World Quarterly, 26*(1), 173-197.

Clans, Clerics and Elites

Literature on Shiite clans and elite in Lebanon can be essentially divided into two major segments: the pre-civil war, which saw the dominance of the traditional clan leadership group (*zu'ama*), and the post-war Lebanon dominated by the economical/political elite.

The political development of Shi'a has never captured much scholarly attention, although in the aftermath of the Khomeinist Revolution (1979) there was a rise in the interest towards the Iranian Shi'a. In the case of Lebanon, in particular, there has been an upsurge of academic interest since the 1980s, although it has focused mainly on Hezbollah and, to a lesser extent (Augustus R. Norton), Amal.[47]

The beginning of a large-scale politicization of Lebanese Shi'a starts in the 1960s against a backdrop of continued dominance by traditional clan leadership group.[48] External influences were significantly important due mainly to the proximity of Syria. As a result of this neighborhood, a few branches of political parties that initially were formed in Syria were then established in Lebanon. Traditional political structures were so much part of the Lebanese consciousness that indigenous political groupings found it difficult to develop independently.[49] Amal, for instance, was founded by imam Musa al Sadr, a cleric Iranian by birth but of Lebanese heritage. The Islamic Da'wa party had its origins amongst the intellectual elite of the Iraqi clergy. And Hezbollah owes considerable practical and ideological allegiance to Iran and to a lesser extent to Iraq. The Lebanese Communist Party or the Ba'ath Party are offshoots of Syrian parent organization. Nonetheless, they have served as effective vehicles for advancing the Shi'a political cause in Lebanon.[50]

Before the arrival of Musa al-Sadr, clan-based leadership amongst Lebanese Shi'a was the oldest form of community political organization. It emphasized familial loyalty clientelism as the primary means of social ordering.

Rodger Shanahan (2005) focuses his study on the political development of the Shi'a from the creation of *Le Grand Liban* in 1920 until the 2000 elections, with a glimpse of Shi'a's activities before 1920. Shanahan extensively describes the role of the *zu'ama* as the established powerbrokers within Lebanon's Shi'a community, as well as the roles of clerics and political parties in developing a Shi'a political consciousness.

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[47] Shanahan R. (2005), *The Shi'a of Lebanon. Clans, Parties and Clerics*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 2.
[48] Shanahan R. (2005), p.3.
[49] Ibidem.
[50] Idem, p. 3-4.

Literature on the historical development of the Lebanese Shi'a is scarce. It mainly focuses on Hezbollah (and very little on Amal) rather than on the political activities of Shiites outside these groups; thus, there has been modest examination of Hezbollah's performance within the formal Lebanese political system.[51]

Studies of Shi'a political development can be divided into three major categories: i) general works on Lebanon's political history with a reference on Lebanese Shi'a; ii) works on Shi'a activism (Naim Qassem, 2010)[52]; iii) works mainly focusing on Hezbollah.

Primary sources are attainable in Arabic or in English and retrieved from the various documents/interviews/dispatches issued by key Shiite figures like Hasan Nasrallah or Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. A biography of what was referred as "the oracle of Hezbollah" that traces the trajectory of the enigmatic, multi-faceted, sometimes contradictory personality of Sayyid Fadlallah against a background of cultural, political and economic upheaval in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon was published in 2005 by Jamal Sankari.[53] Similarly, speeches from Hasan Nasrallah and Hezbollah's documents are available in Joseph Alagha (ed., 2011) *), Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*[54], and Nicholas Noe (ed., 2007) *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*.[55]

Shanahan work (2005) provides an update on the state of Shi'a political development and complements Norton (1987) and Ajami (1986) works that were written a few years before the end of the civil war.

Rola el-Husseini (2012)[56] provides an analysis, based mainly on fieldwork and interviews conducted between 2001 and 2006 on the evolution of the Lebanese political scene in the years after the Ta'if Agreement. Husseini's approach is focused on the examination of the "political elite":

> *[Political elite] includes a range of public and nonpublic figures, from high-ranking government officials and military officers, to leaders of professional associations and business and industry representatives, to the heads of politically influential families, and to people who are highly placed in media organizations, interest groups, and religious communities. These individuals are both influential upon and implicated within the political discourse of the nation.*

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[51] Idem, p.5

[52] Qassem N. (2010 reprint), *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*. London: Saqi Books.

[53] Sankari J. (2005), *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shiite Leader*. London: Saqi Books.

[54] Alagha J., (ed., 2011), *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, Pallas Publications.

[55] Noe N. (2007), *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London & New York: Verso.

[56] Al-Husseini R. (2012), *Pax Syriana*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Approaching politics through the lens of the elite is particularly effective in Lebanon because of the historical importance of *zu'ama*, community leaders who are perceived as intercessors for their clients or followers. In this tradition, political agency is understood to be primary about cultivating one's place within a hierarchy of personal relationships, rather than advocating for an overreaching ideology or legislative platform.

Describing the pre-war period, Samir Khalaf argued that this historical concept of personal leadership, along with an electoral system that allocated political posts according to sectarian quotas, resulted in a situation in which individual Lebanese elites were able to wield an influence extending far beyond that of their personal electoral bases. By establishing alliances with other local landlords, certain leaders were able to build extensive patronage networks and to establish long lasting family dynasties.

Regarding the pre-war period, a scholar work that examines the economic agents, institutions, incentives, competences and other forces that forged a Lebanese economic model known as the "Merchant Republic" in the aftermath of World War II is Gates' *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy.*[57] Gates identifies the broad concept of outward-orientation to describe the Lebanese economy. Dominant economic and political agents sought to develop the economy on the basis of its intermediary role, regional comparative advantage and competitive position in offshore service operations — all of which were viewed as essential to the viability of the small Lebanese state. Supporting an open and tertiary-oriented economy that serviced rapidly growing Middle East economies, these forces shaped Lebanon's economic order until 1958; and in a modified form, they influenced its political economy until 1975.

An overview of pre-war literature is functional in contextualizing properly the shift that saw the Shi'a community evolving from dispossessed community to entrepreneurial social actor. Plua, it could help to answer some questions regarding the businesses of the Shi'a after the civil war, where this entrepreneurial social class comes from (genealogy, social history), and how different the middle class Shi'a is from other communities today. Are there any economic powerful Shiite families today in Lebanon and abroad? How do they make their money? How much in the game are they? How much integrated are they?

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[57] Gates C. (1998), *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy.* London & New York: I.B. Tauris in collaboration with the Centre for Lebanese Studies.

The greatest amount of literature that analyzes the phenomenon of *zu'ama*, notables and landlords pre-civil war maintains that this clientelistic system declined at the beginning of the war, but it's more than evident that it reappeared in a different version very quickly after the end of the conflicts (during the clashes warlords prevailed). Political parties *per se* are rather weak and too much entrapped in the logics of favouritism and nepotism (with the only exception of Hezbollah), so even today aspiring elites still emerge on the political and economical scene almost exclusively through a patronage relationship with an important political leader, generally the leader of a sectarian community to whom the emerging elite belongs.[58] Lebanon's powerful families have somehow survived a civil war, foreign interventions, and the ballot box. It's a great irony: In the one Arab country where citizens could legally and peacefully rid themselves of second and third-generation leaders who rose on little but their last name, they choose not to do so. There are a lot of reasons for that, related to Lebanon's peculiar political system and its precarious domestic peace – but one key reason is the families themselves have proven incredibly politically flexible.

Sectarianism is far from being in decline. Karim Knio speaks of neo-sectarianism where "it is clear that 'old/new' cleavages that characterize Lebanese politics is omnipresent". He points out that "behind the simplistic and short-term distinction between an anti- and a pro-Syrian camp lies a clash of a multitude of different Lebanese national projects tailored around the interest of every sect respectively".[59] Fawaz Gerges, however, disagrees with the one-layered depiction of Lebanese politics.[60] He notes that "far from being sectarian-based or driven, the power struggle in Lebanon is multi-layered and complex. Sectarianism is used and abused to mask vested interests and differences".[61] Sectarianism is undoubtedly part of Lebanese politics; as part of identity politics, since 2005, it has been fused with new political labels. Traditional politics in Lebanon have always been focused on sectarian identities, and sectarianism had long been institutionalised – under the Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate and since independence. In Lebanon, authority is not centralized.[62] Authority is distributed amongst precincts defined by sectarian lines.

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[58] Al-Husseini R. (2012), pp. 215-16.

[59] Knio Karim, "Lebanon: Cedar revolution or Neo-Sectarian Partition? ", *Mediterranean Politics*, 10 (2), 2005, p. 226.

[60] Smayra D., "Lebanon's Arab Spring': Exploring Identity, Security, and Change", Discussion Paper. Durham University, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah Programme, Durham, 2013.

[61] Gerges F., "Lebanon is Staring into the Abyss. Whatever the Tribunal into the Death of Rafik Hariri Decides, it will Pour Petrol on Lebanon's Raging Fire", *The Guardian*, 31 December 2012.

[62] Smayra D. (2013).

It's been over a decade since political Islam in itself is no longer the major issue in Middle East politics. Welfare, democratization and a vivid debate on civil society are. Islamists' credibility as political actors hinge upon the concrete alternatives they present to authoritarian, corrupt or sometimes absent governments with their skewed distribution of wealth and resources. In this regard, each country in the region presents a unique configuration of Islamic forces and opinions

While civil society has a plethora of definitions, the London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society offers a useful working definition:

> *Civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, and family though in practice the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.[63]*

In addition to the LSE definition of civil society, it is appropriate in our context to define the concept of 'political society' as conceptualized by Partha Chatterjee. According to Chatterjee, political society is a domain of institutions and activities where several mediations are carried out[64]. Thus,

> *The politics of democratization must therefore be carried out not in the classical transactions between state and civil society but in the much less well defined, legally ambiguous, contextually and strategically demarcated terrain of political society.[65]*

The idea of political society is potentially radical in identifying that the populations which make up this alternative site, are neither agents of the state nor civil society. They are often excluded in the process of political participation: For the sake of survival and livelihood,

[63] "Centre for Civil Society," London School of Economics. http://www2.lse.ac.uk/CCS/home.aspx
[64] Chatterjee P. (1997), "Beyond the Nation? Or Within?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 4-11.
[65] Chatterjee P. (1998), "Community in the East", *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 7th.

they have to negotiate with both state and civil society or public sphere, domains often led and occupied by the middle-class bourgeois subjects and social élites.[66]

Chatterjee's definition of political society appears to be more persuasive and more consonant within the Middle Eastern context while 'civil society' of citizens represents more of a Western model of politics. Furthermore, in most Middle Eastern countries the communal and corporate groups within the population relate to political parties via continuous bargaining and deals and exchanging electoral support for welfare provisions directly delivered to that specific group. This is certainly the case in Lebanon, where state personnel or the ruling party strikes mutually beneficial deals with patrons, notables and chiefs representing particular interests.

A renowned civil society theoretician, John Keane, disagrees with the exclusion of the realm of the economy from that of civil society. He argues that satisfaction with the material conditions of life cannot be separated from the realm of civil society.[67] This is particularly true if we take into consideration the extremely poor economic conditions of the Lebanese Shi'a in the 60's and how the greatest majority of Shiites in those years were politically and economically unrepresented. Shiite's population growth and urban migration began in Lebanon during the 60's and culminated during the civil war in the mid-70s. This population boom placed a heavy pressure on urban (and suburban) social services.

The usage of 'political' Islamic society is most appropriate as it defines programs for social, economic and government reform, as well as attempts to form and mobilize constituencies on that basis. This political society references Islam for general ethical and legal guidance, rather than aiming for an Islamic state or deriving strict rules from sacred sources. Additionally, it combines a whole range of strategic actions adopted by subalterns as part of this much less well-defined domain of political activity. It is less ideological in differentiating between political movements organized around alternative (to both state and civil society) democratic and radical principles, and the strategic and contextually defined 'politics of the possible.' In fact, it combines them together to include a seamless domain of negotiation and survival.

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[66] Kuan-Hsing Chen (2003), "Civil Society and Min Jian: On Political Society and Popular Democracy," *Cultural Economic and Political Weekly*, July 17th (2003) Studies 17: 6.
[67] Keane J. (1998), *Civil Society, Old Images, New Visions*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Post-1992 Hezbollah has been extremely effective in trying to 'capture the state'. The vast majority of Islamist movements involve preaching and other *da'wa* (missionary) activities, alms giving, providing medical care, mosque building, publishing and generally promoting what is considered in the society to be public virtue through community action. Nonetheless, these activities engage the domain we call the political both in the sense that they are subject to restrictions imposed by the state (such as licensing), and in so much as they must often compete with state or state-supported institutions (pedagogic, confessional, medical) promoting 'Western' models of family, worship, leisure and social responsibility. The success of even a conservative project to preserve a traditional form of personal piety will depend on its ability to engage with the legal, bureaucratic, disciplinary and technological resources of modern power that shape contemporary societies.[68]

Vali Nasr's works bring a clarifying focus on political Islam in Lebanon's Shiite circles as his most influential work has been on the importance of sectarian identity in Middle East politics and the growing importance and renaissance of Shi'a politics and the intersections between Lebanon, Iran and Iraq Shiite movements.[69] His book The Rise of Islamic Capitalism focuses on the importance of a new middle class to future of the Muslim world, which presaged the role of the middle class in democratic uprisings of 2011.[70]

To contextualize the shift from political Islam to Electoral Islam: Oliver Roy at the beginning of the 90s had already predicted the failure of political Islam[71]; Gilles Kepel (2000) reached the same conclusion in his book *Jihad, the rise and fall of Islamism.*[72] Mohamed Chérif Ferjani[73] closely examined the steps that in these last couple of decades brought Islamist's parties to electoral success:

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[68] Hirsckind C. (1997), *What is Political Islam,* Merip (Middle East report), Vol:27, Winter 1997.

[69] Nasr V. (2006), *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future.* New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.

[70] Nasr V. (2009), *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism: Why the New Muslim Middle Class Is the Key to Defeating Extremism.* New York: Free Press.

[71] Roy O. (1992), *L'échec de l'islam politique.* Paris: Seiuil

[72] Kepel G. (2000), *Jihâd, expansion et déclin de l'islamisme,* Gallimard, Paris.

[73] Ferjani M. C. (1992), *Islamisme, laïcité et droits de l'Homme,* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Ferjani M. C. (1996), *Les voies de l'islam: approche laïque des faits islamiques,* CRDP de Franche Comté, Besançon.

Ferjani M. C. (2005), *Le politique et le religieux dans le champ islamique.* Paris: Fayard.

Ferjani M. C (2005)., "Islam politique aujourd'hui et christianisme politique en France avant la seconde guerre mondiale", *Cahiers de recherche*, Centre Jacques Berque, n°2, Rabat, 2005.

Ferjani M. C. (2005), "Qui a intérêt à agiter le spectre de la guerre des cultures?", dans *Paix et guerre entre les cultures, entre Europe et Méditerranée,* Actes Sud/MMSH, 2005.

Ferjani M. C. (2006), "Démocrates, pouvoir et islam politique en Tunisie", le mensuel *Attarîq Aljadîd,* n° 47, Tunis, mars 2006.

As it happens, many radical Islamic movements and parties no longer reject in the same way the way the democracy they considered for a long time to be a Western system at odds with the teachings of Islam. They no longer snub the elections to which they once preferred recourse to weapons and uprisings; uprisings that were planned deep within the community through mosques and charitable and cultural organizations to increase membership among those excluded from globalization and the chaotic modernization which has shattered Muslim societies.

Everywhere that they have been able to take part in local or national elections, radical Islamic movements and parties have presented candidates and led electoral campaigns which have revealed their capacity to mobilize supporters and their advance on the traditional parties and new democratic oppositions.[74]

The elections in Palestine and Lebanon provide quite recent illustrations of this tendency. In Palestine, after the failure of the call to boycott the presidential elections, which resulted in the election of Mahmoud Abbas in January 2005 with a participation level of 70%, Hamas, contrary to Islamic Jihad, took part in the municipal elections, in which they won the largest towns. Then, to the general surprise of everyone, including their own leaders, they achieved an absolute majority in the general election of January 2006, with 76 seats against 40 seats to their main rival, Fatah.[75]

In Lebanon, those elected under the banner of Hezbollah numbered only 12 out of 128 because of the electoral system born out of the confessional pact of 1943, with some modifications put in place by the Tâ'if agreement. However, the role played by this party in the liberation of the South against the Israeli occupation and the demonstrations that it succeeded in organising in 2005 to support Syria, as well as the negotiations carried out by other different parties, such as Christians or Muslims, with their leaders show the importance of this movement in the Lebanese political environment.[76]

Referring to the framework of this study, the analysis carried out by Ferjani raises some interesting research questions: i) To what extent are (or are not) the electoral victories of Islamic movements a confirmation of the incompatibility between Islam, on one side, and democracy and secularisation on the other?; ii) Does the participation of Islamist groups in elections result from a democratic conversion or from a sort of duplicity/adaptability of these movements?; iii) Are the conditions which gave rise to charities and welfare provision

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[74] Ferjani M. C. (2006), "Islam, Democracy and Secularisation", IEMed. (European Institute of the Mediterranean) Dossier, 2006.
[75] Ibidem.
[76] Ferjani M. C., "Islam, Democracy and Secularisation" (2006).

systems in the Western world in anyway comparable to those delivered by Islamic providers?; iv) Could Islamic charitable and developmental institutions bring to a shift towards a 'secular' welfare distribution even in a fragmented society like Lebanon?[77]

One of the most extensive works on the shifts in Hezbollah's ideology was carried out by Joseph Alagha (2006).[78] Since the early 1990s Hezbollah evolved into a mainstream political party, with a massive network of social services that benefits not only Shiite Muslim but also Sunnis and Christians. Alagha shows how Hezbollah started off as a religious movement under the constituency of the *vilayat-e-faqih* and became a political party with a specific governmental responsibility by joining the cabinet in 2005.

> *Hizbullah's political program is based upon the following constituents: oppressors and oppressed; perspectives on the Islamic state; dialogue with the Lebanese Christians; jurisprudential stipulations of parliamentary, municipal, and governmental work; socio-economic program: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil institutions; Lebanonisation and infitah ("opening up"); relations with Syria and Iran; perspective on Israel; and jihad and martyrdom.*

Alagha brings up those questions in order to investigate on the process in which Hezbollah shifted from total ideology to integration policy in the Lebanese public sphere (Lebanonisation or *infitah*). At the same time, Alagha reveals some extremely valuable questions for a study on Hezbollah's social activities: In what way did Hezbollah want to appeal to strata and sectors of the population, mainly Christians and Sunnis, it did not reach out to before? What are the political implications of including them in Hezbollah's election lists? Is it simply *Realpolitik* or pragmatism? Are there usual stable alliances and cooperation with other political parties? How does this resonate inside the party? Is Hezbollah mobilizing all its resources and capabilities to integrate in the Lebanese public sphere?[79]

Lebanon is an emblematic case for studying how politico-religious social welfare provision affects national integration in divided societies. In such contexts, mobilization of supporters outside of electoral competition may be an important means of demonstrating political influence and pressing political demands. When multiple parties and organizations

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[77] Ibidem.
[78] Alagha J. (2006), *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology.*
[79] Alagha (2006).

compete for supporters in a given community, political groups have even more incentive to cater to the welfare needs of potential core supporters.[80]

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Arab and Lebanese Context

Throughout the Middle East and much of the developing world, public social welfare infrastructures have either declined or were never developed in the first place. At the same time, social service provision by non-state actors, particularly by religious organizations, is on the rise.

Civil society in the Arab World has been shaped and constrained by a history of foreign intervention and stringent controls imposed by authoritarian and paternalistic regimes. The development of civil society has been uneven, with a much greater concentration of actors in some countries. An increasing number of CSOs are providing services across the region.[81] Very frequently, when those CSOs try to advocate for rights on behalf of vulnerable groups, they fall foul of laws curbing association and expression – many of which remain virtually unchanged from the colonial era. The 'war on terror' has further affected the growth of civil society, as the USA demands stricter supervision of CSOs' financial flows.[82]

The concept of "civil society" is a little controversial, especially when analyzed in relation to the Islamic world.
Richard Norton, one of the most influential analysts of civil society in the Middle East, defines civil society in these terms:

> *a place where a mélange of associations, clubs, guilds, syndacates, federations, unions, parties and groups come together to provide a buffer between the state and citizens.[83]*

The author emphasizes, therefore, that the term civil society refers to a collective, organized, voluntary participation, which unfolds within the context of the public space

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[80] Ferjani M. C., "Islam, Democracy and Secularisation" (2006).
[81] Rishmawi M. Morris T. (2007), "Overview of Civil Society in the Arab World", Praxis Paper No. 20, INTRAC (International NGO and Research Centre), October 2007.
[82] Rishmawi M. Morris T. (2007).
[83] Norton A. R. (1995), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 1, Brill, 1995.

between the individual and the state; in this frame, it embraces a plurality of actors, including the same non-governmental organizations.

Rishmawi and Morris have identified the main common characteristics of CSOs across the Arab region (amongst which a shared history of external domination; rapid population growth in recent decades and young populations, with consequent youth unemployment), and the main key differences (In countries like Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, earlier access to education and development of newspapers created an intelligentsia which helped spur development of civil society. By comparison, Gulf States remained closer to tribal values; The uneven distribution of wealth; The uneven distribution of CSOs).[84]

Sarah Ben Néfissa (2005)[85], Jon B. Alterman (2007)[86], Julia Pitner (2000)[87] and Sheila Carapico (2000)[88] debate on the origin, nature and efficiency of NGOs in the Middle East. In particular, Carapico and Pitner with their prospect show evidence of the main weaknesses of NGOs in the Middle East: the absence of grassroots activity, inefficiency, lack of self-reference in the sector and independent of governments and/or international donors.

Inevitably, the debate focuses on the possibility of considering Islamist groups as part of civil society. In this regard, many critics believe that this is not possible, considering the use of violence by some Islamists groups; other analysts tend to emphasize how these groups are efficient in responding to the socio-economic needs of citizens, becoming therefore an integral part of civil society. This discussion can be easily applied to the so-called "community-based organizations", i.e. those based on family ties and clan.

The discussion on civil society focuses essentially on a primary question: is there any compatibility between Islam and civil society and, consequently, between Islam and democracy?

Yahya Sadowski, analyzes two different approaches — the Orientalist and the Developmental perspectives — and considers both of them spoiled by the same basic

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[84] Ibidem.

[85] Ben Néfissa S., Abd al Fattah N., Hanafi S., Milani C. (eds.) (2005), *NGOs and Governance in the Arab World*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

[86] Alterman J. B, Von Hippel K.(2007), *Understanding Islamic Charities*, Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

[87] Pitner J. (2000), "NGOs Dilemmas", *Middle East Research and Information Project*, Spring 2000, Volume 30.

[88] Carapico S. (2000), "NGOs, INGOs, GO-NGOs and DO-NGOs, Making Sense of Non-Governmental Organizations", *Middle East Research and Information Project*, Spring 2000. Volume 30.

inaccuracies: in an essentialist and a-historical perspective, they consider Islam as an entity always equal to itself and immune to change, and ignore the impact of imperialism on Middle Eastern societies, as well as the fact that the relationship between state and society changes according to the historical and socio-political context.[89]

The Orientalist perspective sees NGOs as a simple extension of the Middle East patrimonialism and patriarchy characteristic of Islam. This vision contrasts with the idea that to NGOs must be recognized independence and historical specificity.

The developmental approach is described by Sheila Carapico. Carapico claims that it is possible to promote democratization and development by encouraging self-organization at the grassroots level and promoting the activities of NGOs at local, national and international level, considering them as agents of liberalization. This idea of development through the non-governmental sector responds to a neoliberal perspective essentially addressed to the resolution of socio-economic problems through the privatization of services.[90]

Lebanese civil society has grown in a unique environment characterised by constant political instability, a weak, unresponsive and often authoritarian state, inconsistent rule of law, chronic economic problems, a sectarian social structure and external interference in Lebanese affairs. Civil society's impact on politics is relatively limited, but its role in providing services is significant. Many Lebanese CSOs are not noted for transparency, especially those which are family-based or dominated by a powerful individual. There is a rift between the active role civil society plays in promoting democratic values and a poor record of practicing them (Rishmawi & Morris)[91].

There was a sharp increase in the number of CSOs after the end of the 1975-1990 civil war that paralyzed the Lebanese state. The re-emergence/foundation of non-sectarian associations adopting non-confessional and non-political agendas was highly significant in restoring national confidence and promoting active citizenship.

The ongoing consequences of the devastating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 – has not only destroyed hope, but also forced civil society to focus on relief and assistance to victims of the war. Many Lebanese CSOs were affected by the conflict, losing offices, assets and records. The uncoordinated response to the emergency

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[89] Sadowski Y. (1993), "The New Orientalism and The Democracy Debate", *Middle East Report*" n. 183, pp. 14-21.
[90] Carapico (2000).
[91] Praxis Paper 20: Overview 17 of Civil Society in the Arab World, INTRAC 2007

was complicated by the fact that the major Lebanese protagonist – Hezbollah – also prominently provides welfare and relief services. In Lebanon, as in Gaza, the UN and international NGOs have sought to almost completely sideline a dominant civil society actor (Rishmawi & Morris).

A consequence of NGOs taking on government role — and this is the case of Hezbollah[92] — can lead to what Wood calls a "franchise state"[93] in which each franchise can be understood as its own public service sector dominated by an NGO network, with NGOs carrying out projects with concur with their donors' or directors' ideological preferences. In this case NGOs are social organizations that may compete with the state for the loyalty of their citizens. Individual strategy vis-à-vis these organizations are influenced by material incentives, coercion, and the manipulation of symbols (Migdal, 1988)[94]. Considering that NGOs can gain social control and power via their service delivery, most notably in the context of a negligent or insolvent state, donors' or leaders' ideological preferences can be reproduced with NGO service recipients.[95]

Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac outline an exhaustive historical review on civil society in the Arab states and in Lebanon and civil society activism, particularly focusing on the major trends that characterize human rights groups and associations. Cavatorta and Durac study deals with the problematic task of defining the concept of civil society and its relationships with democracy. In particular, their focus is on the

> *Western understanding of civil society, its perceived positive role in process of democratization and its current policy making relevance in terms of democracy-promotion strategies that Western countries and international organizations pursue.[96]*

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[92] For a description of Hezbollah's social activities see: Harb M. (2010*), Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth (1985-2008): De la banlieu à la ville*. Paris: Karthala; Mervin S. (2008), *Le Hezbollah: Etat des lieux*. Paris: Sindbad; Based on two years of ethnographic research in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Deeb L. (2008), *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, articulates how an alternative modernity, and specifically an enchanted modernity, may be constructed by Shi'i Muslims who consider themselves simultaneously deeply modern, cosmopolitan, and pious.

[93] Wood G., "States without Citizens: The Problem of the Franchise State", in Hulme D. Edwards M. (eds.) (1997), *Too Close for Comfort? NGOs, States and Donors*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[94] Migdal J.S. (1988), *Strong Societies and Weak States. State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[95] Chaaban J. Seyfert K. (2012), "Faith-Based NGOs in a Multi-confessional Society. Evidence from Lebanon". Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies. August 2012.

[96] Cavatorta F. Durac V. (2011), *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World. The Dynamics of Activism*. London & New York: Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics.

Cavatorta and Durac work is particularly relevant when it comes analyzing the Lebanon case as it sets out how the nature of the political system impacts differently on civil society dynamics in semi-authoritarian or problematic contexts as opposed to established democracies. The assumptions is that some civil society actors adapt to their setting in order to perform their functions and fulfil their mandate, while others oppose authoritarian regimes without, however, being able to perform their functions.[97]

Understanding the relationship between the state and civil society organizations, including politico-religious social welfare providers, naturally requires an understanding of who or what the state is in Lebanon. There is no single state in Lebanon. Rather, each confessional group is a mini-state within a state or at least controls part of the state apparatus[98]. Lebanon's power-sharing system is founded on pacts among elites, who forge pre- and post-electoral compromises, thereby ensuring the stability of the overall system, with little opportunity for meaningful input on the part of the citizenry.[99] Even Lebanon's particular mix of electoral regimes, which combines a division of power along religious/sectarian lines with majoritarian electoral rules, does not achieve its intended goal of fostering cross-sectarian cooperation in society because elite-level alliances among political leaders from different sects undercut the need to forge meaningful linkages with citizens from other sects in many districts.[100]

In exchange for services, politico-religious providers expect political support from beneficiaries through voting, volunteering in political parties or organizations, or generating community support for political organizations and parties affiliated with service providers.[101] Specifically, the most articulated and in-depth study (with a strong theoretical framework) on social welfare and religion in the Middle East and Lebanon in particular is represented by Rana Jawad's (2009)[102] work which presents a new *anschaung* on the complex social and political dynamics shaping social welfare in the Middle East. Based on an in-depth study of the major Muslim and Christian religious welfare organisations in Lebanon (including Hezbollah), and drawing upon supplementary research conducted in other MENA countries, Jawad's persuasive argument is that religion is providing sophisticated solutions to the major social and economic problems of the Middle East

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[97] Ibidem.

[98] Cammett M. (2007), "Political Order in Plural Societies: Social Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon", Comparative Politics Workshop, Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, February 12, 2007.

[99] Cammett M., (2009), "Democracy, Lebanese Style", *Merip* (Middle East Report), August 2009.

[100] Ibidem.

[101] Cammett M. (2007).

[102] Jawad R. (2009), *Social Welfare and Religion in the Middle East*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Amal, Hezbollah and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Capitals

Even a brief analysis of Amal and Hezbollah's social institutions may show how the organization succeeded as a social welfare provider in changing the status of the underdeveloped, marginalized, and uneducated Shi'a through its vast network of various social, health, and educational institutions; plus, as service provider it gained substantial popularity among the Lebanese Shiite population (but not exclusively Shiite), in exchange of political support. But most importantly, it delved into the constituents of Hezbollah's strength at the socio-economic and educational levels that helped enhance the status of the Shi'a in Lebanon, elevating their social standing, and contributing to the establishment of a "resistance middle class society".[103] "Resistance" as a mission and a choice of life. And as such, "resistance" is understood beyond combat and includes social and political jihad as well.[104]

Studying the socio-economic aspect of Amal and Hezbollah is uncommon since researchers have mostly showed interest in the party's military and political activity. This work tries to study both aspects together, showing the points of divergence and friction between the two and analyzing the motives and rationales behind this divergence. Although Hezbollah's practices of establishing massive private social networks went against with the political thought that brought the party into existence, the party saw the Shi'a emancipation through these institutions. Consequently, these non-political networks of Hezbollah shall be considered an extension of the political ones in instituting a resistance culture and identity, and in understanding the rising of Shi'a socio-political status.

> *Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world,*

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[103] Abdel-Samad, M. & Flanigan, S. T. (2011). "Hezbollah's Social Jihad: Nonprofits as Resistance Organizations." *Middle East Policy Council.*
Retrieved from http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-eastpolicy-archives/hezbollahs-social-jihad-nonprofits-resistance-organizations
Harb, M. & Leenders, R. (2005), pp. 173-197.
[104] Ibidem..

i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices.[105]

Vali Nars in *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism*[106] introduces a critical theory that goes beyond the idea proposed by the majority of the literature that sees Hezbollah as the only service provider for (mainly) Shiites in Lebanon. Starting from Bourdieu's theory of economic capital, and developing Nasr's argument — that suggests that the south of Lebanon (a Hezbollah/Amal stronghold) is emerging economically, not just because of Hezbollah's redistribution of resources, but thanks to a consolidating businessmen and a provincial middle class — the focus will shift to one of the backbones of the work, i.e. an in-depth analysis of the Shi'a middle class. Amal has always been considered the party of a more secular (compared to Hezbollah) Shiite bourgeoisie, but the literature entirely lacks of a study on Lebanon's contemporary middle class. South Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Beqaa may seem unlikely places for business to thrive. Yet this is exactly what has been happening in the past two decades. There is something about this Shi'a enclave and it does not have to do with war but with its uncanny ability to churn out entrepreneurs who generate wealth and sustain the rising local middle class.[107]

Joseph Alagha in *Hizbullah's Identity Construction* (2011) analyzes the party of God's resource mobilization as a bridge between identity and Pierre Bourdieu's capitals. In particular, Alagha applies Ousmane Kane's interpretation of Bourdieu's notion of different typologies of capitals (Kane readjusted and applied Bourdieu's religious, political, symbolic, social, and economic capitals to the study of Islamic movements).[108]

Alagha examines Hezbollah's use of resource mobilization focusing on how Hezbollah employs different kinds of capitals in this process and the shifting balances among them.[109] A specific attention will be addressed to Hezbollah's use of social and political capital, and how the shift from the social to the political sphere was produced. Bourdieu analyzes the logic "whereby this particular kind of capital is accumulated, transmitted, and reproduced,

[105] Bourdieu, P. (1986) "The forms of capital". In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.* New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.
[106] Nasr V. (2009), *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism.* New York: Free Press.
[107] Idem, p. 54.
[108] Kane O. (2003), *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Renoval of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition.* Leiden: Brill.
[109] Alagha J. (2011), *Hizbullah's Identity Construction.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 27.

the means of understanding how it turns into economic capital and, conversely, what work is required to convert economic capital into social capital".[110]

Bourdieu's capitals are considered forms of resource mobilization. According to Kane, accumulation of capital is "a process through which social actors go in order to obtain a given sort of capital"[111], and by conversion, spending the accumulated capital to get something in return (mobilization of civil society; political/identity power and stability).

By analyzing the changing shifting balances of Hezbollah's use of mobilization of resources, and through the agencies of interviews and on-the-field-work — some research questions and statements on how and why charity becomes politics (and how and why politics relies on mobilization of resources) will be highlighted. Specifically, Pierre Bourdieu's classification and Kane/Alagha adaptation of Bourdieu's capital theory will be applied to understand if and how resources are implemented in moments of political instability, and how Hezbollah's welfare institutions react under specific circumstances of political/institutional turmoil.

Likewise, Bourdieu's theories and their further reinterpretations constitute an important framework in considering Hezbollah's shift *par excellence*. Starting in 1992, the party of God decided to move partially away from the rigid military action and radicalization agenda that had characterized the structure of the party from the beginning, and start a new chapter denoted by political accommodation. It was during this phase that the party claimed to be part of the Lebanese state. It was also during this stage that Hezbollah invested heavily in its social service networks and organizations, becoming an efficient service provider for a substantial group of the Shi'a population. But while the party was exercising political propaganda by calling for a strong state capable of undertaking reforms on the political, administrative, economic, social, and educational levels that could help all the Lebanese population[112] (Bourdieu's accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state) — at the same time Hezbollah knew that allowing an advancement of the state in that direction would seriously threaten the party's own existence.

Consequently, how did Amal and Hezbollah mobilize their resources during this important stage? And what kind of "capitals" did Amal and Hezbollah implemented in order to have an integrative role within the Lebanese polity and participate in the state's decision-making

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[110] Idem, p. 29.
[111] Kane (2003), p. 21.
[112] The party participated for the first time to the elections in 1992.

process and at the same time boosting and maintaining their popularity within the Shi'a community in Lebanon?

To what extent the Shiite middle class is affiliated with either Amal or Hezbollah? And why is it likely to support economically Amal instead of Hezbollah or viceversa? What is their geographical distribution? Is the distribution of resources just a key to domination?

Adham Saouli divides the support base of Hezbollah into the: (1) ideologically oriented, (2) business oriented and (3) sympathizers (2003)[113]. The first group includes the top party members and their families, who support the party regardless what orientation it will take. Those belonging to the second group have commercial interests or profitable gains in the areas that are under Hezbollah's control. They are affiliated with the party because their interests are safeguarded. However, the third group is the largest group, characterized by those who mainly benefit from the services of Hezbollah. People belonging to this group feel protected by the party and admire its achievements.

Admittedly that a substantial amount of cash, funds and material goods of Hezbollah's remittances comes from Iran (and also from Syria in the case of Amal), what is the motivation behind middle class "ethnic" entrepreneurs that finance their co-sectarians in Shi'a dominated areas of Lebanon?

MP Mohammad Ra'ad, head of Hezbollah's "Loyalty to the Resistance" bloc in the Lebanese parliament, claims that the main income of Hezbollah is generated through private investment and wealthy Shi'as, especially coming from those living in South America and Africa[114]. How are these "fundraising" and donations activities organized? What is the motivation behind this mobilization and financial support? What kind of activities is the Shiite bourgeoisie abroad involved in? And finally, to what extend is it possible to conceive the possibility of a financial support in a society so profoundly divided along sectarian lines without strong political commitments and affiliations?

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[113] Saouli, A. (2003). Lebanon's Hizbullah. *World Affairs, 166*(2), 71-80.
[114] Wilson, S. (2004, December 20). Lebanese Wary of a Rising Hezbollah. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12336-2004Dec19.html.

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