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List of Acronyms

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations
LCP: Lebanese Communist Party
LNM: Lebanese National Movement
OSS: Overthrow the Sectarian System
PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization
PM: Prime Minister
PSP: Progressive Socialist Party
SSNP: Syrian Social Nationalist Party
UAR: United Arab Republic
Introduction

Identities have become one of the key causes for instability in several regions of the world today. This can be attributed to the strengthening of secondary identities at the expense of national ones; however, different factors come into play that either keep these identities at bay or cause them to resurface. Political representation, economic conditions, cultural freedoms, and foreign interventions lie at the core of whether communal identities are strengthened at the expense of national ones.

The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East are an accurate reflection of the destructive impact that any imbalance in the above mentioned conditions can cause. The descent of hopeful uprisings into civil wars in the Arab World reflects both the deep rooted societal divisions and the failure of development of a national identity, along with other internal and external factors which are not directly relevant to this study.

These divisions, whether ethnic, sectarian, or tribal, have led to an increased discourse among some analysts and policy makers for using the political system of Lebanon as a model, in what has been termed as the possible “Lebanization” of Syria, Iraq, and Libya (Nagle, 2017, 1-2).

On the surface, the Lebanese sectarian system may appear as one which includes all the different communities in a power-sharing structure; however, there are many opposing voices which lay a core part of the blame of Lebanon’s constant instability on that same system.

In a country that has been gripped for decades with a culture of sectarianism, secular-minded individuals continue to attempt to change both the society and the system in spite of previous failures. Building on the momentum of the Arab Spring and public resentment of the status quo, new secular movements are emerging at a time of high local and regional sectarian divides. These movements find historical basis for their mobilization and have currently ranged from reformist civil society demands to outright protests.

Because sectarianism has taken center stage of political, military, and public rhetoric, the vast majority of research has gone towards studying and analyzing that aspect of the Middle East and Lebanon. The agitation of Lebanese anti-sectarian movements in the past decade has gone largely unnoticed. Perhaps the impact of such movements has been deemed minimal when taken from a national or regional geopolitical perspective; however, their increased influence should be taken into account and studied in more depth. Since these movements are not novel and have
been previously seen in post-independence Lebanon, an analysis of the circumstances that fuel popular support is much needed. A comparison of previous circumstances to current ones will determine the commonalities and differences between them and whether a similar trajectory will take place. As a result, this paper will attempt to answer the following research question:

**Research Question**

What are the underlying reasons behind support for anti-confessionalism in Lebanon?

**Structure of the Paper**

The literature review will cover three interlinked bodies which move from the broadest aspect covered in the study, identities, before gradually narrowing down to the Lebanese sectarian system and anti-confessional movements. This will be followed by the methodology which explains the case and time periods chosen as well as the methods applied.

The analysis will span four sections which are divided into three sub-sections covering the first time period, second time period, and concluding remarks.

The ideology section will show how anti-confessional support have always been present in Lebanon but never strong enough to challenge the system until the 1958 crisis leading up to the 1975 civil war. This will then move to the current state of this support as manifested in the 2011 and 2015 protests before concluding with some observations and comparisons between the two periods.

The political marginalization section will focus on the overall Muslim discontent from their share of power in the confessional system and how this fuelled support for two opposing demands: anti-confessionalism or increased power within the existing confessional system. This will then cover the two main cases of marginalization since the end of the war, Christians and Sunnis. Unlike the previous period, this generally led to increased sectarianism; however, some anti-systemic support has manifested itself but was not properly incorporated into organized movements. Comparisons and concluding observations will finish off this section by providing an assessment of the possible link between this factor and anti-confessionalism.

The socioeconomic section will focus on the overlapping geographic and sectarian disparities in terms of income and wealth distribution as well as living standards. The same phenomenon is observed in both time periods, albeit amid increasing poverty levels in all regions. Comparisons will also be drawn between the ability of leftist parties to absorb disenfranchised citizens into
their ranks and the failure of current anti-confessional movements in doing so. Both periods also witnessed competition over these citizens’ support between anti-confessional and emerging sectarian movements. Similar to the previous section, this will also provide an assessment of whether a direct link exists between poor socioeconomic conditions and anti-confessional support.

The final section will cover regional powers and their importance in influencing political changes in Lebanon, especially those related to anti-confessionalism. The importance of Nasser’s Egypt and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the first time period will be tackled before assessing the prospects of regional anti-confessional support amid the ongoing Saudi Arabia-Iran/Sunni-Shia divide in the Middle East.
Literature Review

Identities

Two opposing theoretical views regarding identity are studied by Stuart Hall. The first assumes that a group of people with shared ancestry hold a collective culture which provides a stable framework of reference. The second states that cultural identity does have its roots in history but is constantly changing with developments that occur (Hall, 1989, 223-227).

A third view is presented by Benedict Anderson who defined nations, and subsequently identities, as imagined political communities. They are imagined because most members of a nation will never meet each other yet, in their mind, possess a sense of community. A form of horizontal comradeship develops regardless of the exploitation and inequalities that are present within them. Anderson continues to argue that nations and identities are limited because one cannot encompass the entire human race (Anderson B. , 1983, 5-7).

Building on Anderson’s reasoning, Anthony Marx bases his research on the scientific proof that race distinction has no real biological basis. The fact that they did not shows that identities are socially constructed, and Marx argues that ruling elites in the state play a key role in strengthening political identities. By doing so, these identities bind people together and prevent internal conflict; however, institutionalized acts of exclusion targeting a specific group will lead to the consolidation of a secondary identity at the expense of that of the state (Marx, 1997, 3-6).

The last argument is prevalent in the Middle East through the form of religious identities. This type of identity is expressed in Michael Hoffman and Elizabeth Nugent’s research which states that religion can mold a sense of belonging in a manner similar to nationalism. These identities can be used as tool of mobilization for politico-economic interests. Such activism is influenced by various factors such as financial resources, communication networks, experienced leadership, and gathered participants (Hoffman & Nugent, 2017, 873-875). Additional contributing factors are tackled by a variety of authors such as provision of social services by religious organizations (Hoefler, Canetti, & Eiran, 2016, 501-502) and revival of “ancient hatreds” between sectarian communities (Kaufman, 2001, 3-12). While religious identity is not exclusively linked to theological goals, it can spawn demands of redefining the state according to a set of religious beliefs (Hoffman & Nugent, 2017, 873-875).
Thomas Ahbe and Renate Hofer specify that a person may have a coherent plurality of identities such as the convergence of national and religious ones (Murken & Namini, 2006, 294-295). Coupled with the factors states above, this convergence can lead to strong belonging to distinct sectarian communities with competing narratives regarding the cultural and social order of the country (Kilp, 2011, 210-215; Hoefler, Canetti, & Eiran, 2016, 501-502). Subsequently, according to Peter van der Veer and Miller et al., subnational group consciousness may lead one to believe that their group’s interests are at absolute odds with the other groups, and doubts are cast over their allegiance to the nation. As a result, the probability of political or military mobilization against the state or other sectarian groups is heightened (Miller et al, 1981; Veer, 2002, 95-96).

These methods of mobilization are examined by Mary Kaldor who linked current conflicts to identity clashes rather than geopolitical or ideological disparities. Claims for power are being made based on the belonging to a particular identity, be it national, tribal, linguistic, or religious. Unlike the politics of ideas that tend to be more inclusive, this rising type of identity politics is exclusive and leans towards disintegration (Kaldor, 2012, 7-9).

While previous authors focused on identification within a specific group, Meghan Burke moved beyond these group boundaries by acknowledging the presence of “colorblind” ideals that reflect the cross-communal beliefs of individuals and can have a positive effect on race relations. Burke stresses however on the necessity of transforming such diversity rhetoric to meaningful inclusive policies that challenge the racialized social system (Burke, 2017, 859).

Because of the exclusive nature of identity politics, Camilla Orjuela divided them into two types: one of domination that aims to impose a certain language, policy, culture, and religion as well as maintain superior access to state resources. The second type is of resistance where marginalized groups seek participation in power-sharing. In both cases, mobilization of people occurs along national, religious, and ethnic lines either through democratic participation, collective action, or armed conflicts (Orjuela, 2014, 754-764).

Three theories aim to explain inter-group relations in such cases. James Liu compared between realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory. Realistic group conflict theory stipulates that intergroup conflicts are caused by competition over resources, within group solidarity is proportional to intergroup hostility, and the behavior of people is determined by the structure of
the situation rather than interpersonal relations. On the other hand, social identity theory stipulates that the awareness of belonging to one group different than the other will lead to favoring the in-group against the out-group. This stems from the desire to have one’s own group in a superior position to the other in the established social order. This approach heightens the prospects of conflict but sees that the development of an overarching inclusive identity can help in maintaining peace (Liu, 2011, 3-7). Social dominance theory is added by Levin et al who indicate that, unlike the classical Marxist argument that places class as the main cause of conflict; social groups are hierarchically organized a conflict might arise between members of a dominant group seeking to maintain the status quo and members of a low status groups seeking to change it (Levin et al, 1998, 376-377).

**Lebanese Sectarian System**

The term “confessionalism”, usually used interchangeably with “sectarianism”, can indicate three different meanings: religious bigotry, actions promoting sectarian rather than national interests, and more generally, “a set of traditional, constitutional, and electoral practices which aim at the distribution of parliamentary seats, government, and civil service positions in accordance with the numerical ratio of the various sects in the Lebanese population”. This provides each sect with “a share of the political pie” and a governmental position to defend their interests (Suleiman, 1967, 110-111). Because of the confessional nature of government and society, most political parties are largely sectarian in membership and leadership (Suleiman, 1967, 125).

The different schools of thought regarding sectarianism in Lebanon were identified by Max Weiss. The first claims that sects are organic features of Lebanese culture and society which were later incorporated into the political system of confessional representation. This would grant the “inherent rights” of the sectarian communities and theoretically defuse tensions through recognition, accommodation, and moderation of sectarian differences. The second claims that political sectarianism has no basis in historical reality as it was an invented tradition imposed on the Levantine populations through a collaboration between local elites and foreign powers to ferment divisions and conflict. In spite of the different explanation of the roots of sectarianism, both views overlap in dealing with the issue from a normative perspective. This led to the emergence of alternative schools of thought such as a Marxist view of class, modernization
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theory stating that the population has to progress beyond sectarian affiliations which are an impediment to national unity and development, and sociological perspectives (Weiss, 2009, 142-146).

As indicated by Dina Matar and Farah Dakhllallah, relations between the different sects which varied throughout history between relatively peaceful coexistence and warfare have led to the development of two discourses: one praising Lebanon as a cultural bridge between different religions and another critical of the sectarian system as a reason for continuous conflict (Matar & Dakhllallah, 2006, 22).

Many interpretations about sectarianism have been expressed due to the core place it holds in Lebanese political life. Some of these definitions are outlined as follows: Ziad Abu Rish attributes sectarianism to be the result of modern developments such as imperialism and capitalism rather than primordial identities, a form of politics where sects are at the core of communal identifications and through them political claims over the state are made, and an overarching framework that is represented in the daily life of the population. Its institutionalization linked citizenship to the practice of sectarianism and made anti-sectarian mobilization more difficult (Abu-Rish, 2017); the different sects in Lebanon are perceived by Daniel Zorub as imagined communities competing over the same state whereby each community has a vision, not only for itself, but for Lebanon as a whole. This is coupled with the failure of the state in developing an inclusive national identity (Zorub, 2013, 94-96); Fouad Khoury defined a sect as a “geographically compact group which generally maintains the necessary instruments of social control outside the sphere of influence of the central authority”. The leaders of the sect are concerned primarily with maximizing the prerogatives of the sect as such, even when in conflict with state interests (Cobban, 1985, 15); both John Nagle and Samir Ofeish stressed that sectarian identifications portrayed by elites as primordial ones aim, through hegemonic compliance, to naturalize the sectarian system, add legitimacy to their authority, and preserve their interests (Ofeish, 1999, 100; Nagle, 2017, 3); Fayez Sayigh does not dwell on the history that shaped the present state of Lebanese sectarianism but rather on the residing of sectarianism in the popular consciousness of the majority of the population which is the “greatest danger”. If this factor was not present, then sectarian institutions, which are a reflection of society, would not have developed (Sayigh, 1947, 7-12); and finally, Weiss argues that sectarianism should not be seen as something deeply ingrained in Lebanese society and culture.
which cannot be changed since it is malleable and adaptive just like any other political, cultural, or social phenomenon (Weiss, 2009, 142).

A study conducted by Nagle touched upon another key element of the Lebanese political system, consociational democracy which guarantees political representation for the different sects. Proponents say that peace will be upheld if each group feels democratically represented and argue that cooperation and compromise between elites will soften sectarian divisions. Others contend that it aggravates the problem it was supposed to treat by separating people into different groups rather than building a shared civic identity (Nagle, 2017, 1-5; Mollica & Dingley, 2015, 407). Tracing the implementation of the consociational system in Lebanon, Camille Habib states that consociationalism should be a temporary rather than permanent measure, and history has shown that consociational arrangements have failed to achieve peace. They usually occur after a period of crisis and reflect the superiority of one sect over the others. Prominent examples include Maronite dominance over the National Pact of 1943, Sunni dominance over the Taef Agreement of 1989, and Shia dominance over the Doha Agreement of 2008 (Habib, 2009, 65).

Regardless of its success or failure in maintaining stability, Finlay and Nagle point to a glaring representation problem within such system. The privilege provided to certain segments eventually “closes down the space for other ways of being political”, and this is applies in Lebanon’s case to the non-sectarian population that is marginalized and disempowered (Nagle, 2017, 1-5).

The roots of the current sectarian system are traced back by Hannah Stewart, Anja Peleikis, and Ussama Makdissi to the mid-19th century. Prior to that period, Anja Peleikis states that religion was not the main factor in determining difference and sameness during that period. While different religious groups coexisted and interacted in daily life, social boundaries were drawn based on social status between elite families on one hand and common villagers on the other. Territorial demarcations based on religious adherence were absent. As a result, the key element of differentiation was socioeconomic status rather than religion. Stewart and Makdissi point to the 1860 civil war between Christians and Druze in Mount Lebanon as the turning point that led to the institutionalization of sectarianism. The clashes were the culmination of the convergence of interests of local elites wanting to control a peasant revolt, European colonial powers vying for influence in the region, and the waning Ottoman Empire in exploiting these divisions (Stewart, 2012, 159-160; Peleikis, 2001, 400-404; Makdissi, 1996, 23-25).
Because Lebanese confessional identities cannot be considered as a deep-rooted social reality but rather as an ongoing reproduction (Peleikis, 2001, 400), the continuity of this system in its essence until today has been comprehensively studied. The French Mandate further consolidated confessional politics through the discourse and practice of confessionalism in public life such as personal status, administration, education, parliamentary representation, and governmental power (Peleikis, 2001, 404). While acknowledging the key impact that the civil war had on exacerbating sectarian divisions (Abu-Rish, 2017), the current political and sectarian elites have been able to reproduce the culture of sectarianism through a variety of tactics such as: cooptation of labor unions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and media channels thus negating their role as agents of change; alliances with the country’s economic elites; extensive clientalist networks (Clark & Salloukh, 2013, 744); significant control over educational curricula (Baytiyeh, 2017, 547-548); formation of sectarian dominated governmental bodies specializing in development (Salti & Chaaban, 2010, 651-652); diffusion of lower and middle class reform demands by redirecting mobilization to an inter-sectarian competition over resources; and clamping down on challenges to the sectarian system by labeling them as a “threat to national unity” (Ofeish, 1999, 100).

Anti-Sectarian Movements in Post-Independence Lebanon

To avoid any discrepancies regarding the use of the term “leftist”, reference will be made to the explanation provided by Sune Haugbolle regarding its political meaning in Lebanon, a country gripped by social boundaries delineated by sects. Haugbolle states that although anti-sectarianism was not always at the center of the ideology, it has become so today due to the civil war and increased sectarian identification. As a result, a leftist has come to be known as someone who challenges the existing social boundaries and holds secularism, social justice, and anti-imperialism as core concepts (Haugbolle, 2013, 427-430).

The existence of social, ideological, and cultural counter-histories is pointed to by Haugbolle who argues that secular movements can build on them to challenge the sectarian historiographies and stereotypes about Lebanon (Haugbolle, 2013, 431). Some examples are student mobilization before and during the war, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), and the daily defiance of many Lebanese of the sectarian framework through symbolic struggles, activism, and cultural production (Haugbolle, 2013, 437).
Further elaboration on the examples mentioned is detailed by a variety of authors. The internal discussions regarding secularism during the 1970s and early 1980s were detailed by David Grafton who outlined the different views of Christian and Muslim parties and religious institutions (Grafton, 2012, 40-47; Salem, 1979, 453). Another type of secular activism was examined by Betty Anderson who studied the student movement in the American University of Beirut which took shape after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It was based on leftist ideals, highly supportive of the Palestinian resistance, and hostile against the sectarian Lebanese government (Anderson, 2008, 262-263).

On the political and paramilitary scene, from the 1950s onwards, empowered by the rise of Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser and his calls for Arab nationalism, Lebanon witnessed the rise of secular parties such as the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) (Grafton, 2012, 39). Two major attempts were made by these parties to radically change the political system in Lebanon: during the 1958 crisis and the first two years of the civil war in 1975. According to historical reviews conducted by Fawaz Traboulsi and Hussein Yacoub, the first attempt, backed by Nasser’s Egypt, was through an armed rebellion against pro-Western President Camille Chamoun which initially called for the abolishment of political sectarianism as one of its goals but ended in a compromise (Traboulsi, 2007, 128-137). The second attempt was led by the LNM, a loose coalition of mainly leftist and Arab nationalist parties allied with the PLO, and occurred after the outbreak of the civil war. One of the main points of the transitional program called for by the LNM was the abolishing of the political sectarian system; however, as the war progressed, the original anti-sectarian demands were diluted (Traboulsi, 2007, 189-214; Yacoub, 2014, 86-88).

The domination of sectarian parties over the post-war ruling system, coupled with a lack of public interest in leftist demands, sidelined the anti-sectarian rhetoric from the political arena for two decades. Yaacoub points to the failed attempts for reviving leftist ideas through university clubs and CSOs during the 1990s, along with internal divisions in an already weak LCP between traditional and reformist wings. Other secular parties such as such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and the Arab Baath Socialist Party were represented by a few seats in parliament, but their challenge to the confessional system was negligent as they are allied with the main sectarian parties. As a result of these divides, both of the leftist camps aligned with coalitions largely formed along sectarian lines and failed to present a real political project.
(Yacoub, 2014, 90-100); however, a change appears to have started taking shape since 2010 with increasing public resentment and a possible identity shift among a segment of the younger generation.

As reflected in Daniel Meier and Marwan Kreidy’s studies, a couple of examples are: the anti-sectarian movement which built on the momentum of the Arab Spring to mobilize 20,000 protesters in 2011 (Meier, 2015, 181-184); and the wave of contentious politics that swept Beirut for several months in 2015 as a result of garbage mismanagement which, coupled with a secular undertone of the organizers, escalated to anti-sectarian demands (Kraidy, 2016, 19-20). In a confirmation of Martin Beck’s argument, the direct link between corruption, clientalism, and the institutionalization of sectarianism led to secular opposition movements associating combating corruption with deep political reforms and even a radical change of the whole system. Beck argues that this might lead to divisions within the opposition camp between radicals unwilling to collaborate with any party from the establishment and reformists who argue that antagonizing the whole political class will drastically reduce the possibilities of success (Beck, 2015, 2-6).
**Research Design**

The objective of this study is to conduct a comparative qualitative analysis of the same country during two different time periods. The crucial case selection approach was adopted to determine the case study for two key reasons: its focus on analytic utility and centrality of the case to the broader body of theory (Gerring, 2001, 219). Because it is a critical exemplification of identities and confessionalism, the overarching case chosen is Lebanon. In addition, the within-case method will be used to employ a series of exploratory hypotheses (Gerring, 2001, 132-134, 231) regarding four factors: **ideology, political marginalization, socioeconomic conditions, and regional powers**.

The time periods were selected based on their suitability and immediate relevance to the research question. The first time period will span from 1943, the year in which Lebanon became independent, until 1976, the second year of the Lebanese Civil War in which the military attempt to forcefully abolish the confessional system failed. Key events relating to anti-confessionalism occurred during this timeframe such as the rise of President Abdel Nasser in Egypt with his Arab Nationalism rhetoric, 1958 crisis, and start of the 1975 Lebanon Civil War... The second time period will span from 2005, the year in which Syrian occupation of Lebanon ended, until today. Key events relating to anti-confessionalism during this timeframe include student activism, demonstrations, and new social movements. The gap between the two time periods will not be covered because of the relative absence of influential and mass mobilizing anti-confessional activities. This is coupled with the assumption that having a time gap between both periods will help in assessing the degree of change, if any, in the reasons.

While the field of International Relations is an inclusive yet divisive one with divergent methodological methods ranging from empirical to interpretive (Lamont, 2015, 16-17), the analysis section will follow the hermeneutic tradition of social sciences (Pijl, 2009, 88) in an effort to understand the reasons which could increase support for anti-confessionalism in a highly sectarian society such as the Lebanese one. To do this, one must understand the impact of ideas, norms, identities, and culture on national and international politics. Due to the difficulty in reaching unequivocal conclusions when studying a complex phenomenon in a highly complex context (Pijl, 2009, 89; Lamont, 2015, 20) – like that of Lebanon, this method aims to deeply understand the circumstances and needs of society as well as social and power structures present...
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during the time periods studied (Pijl, 2009, 91; Lamont, 2015, 19-20). This interpretation will be based on and derive conclusions according to both the world of ideas and normative system in which social groups are motivated to act (Pijl, 2009, 111).

The choice of the four factors is justified as follows:

Since ideology has been one of the key mobilizers of the mass public throughout history, it is one of the four factors chosen to be studied. The reflection of Arab nationalism and leftist politics during the first timeframe and anti-confessionalism in the second timeframe will be studied based on demonstrations, slogans raised, support for certain parties, and electoral programs. This will determine the manner through which ideology is propagated, whether on a grassroots level or elite driven, and whether it is at the core of anti-confessional support.

The second and third factors, political marginalization and socioeconomic conditions, will attempt to understand the reasons behind the overwhelmingly Muslim support for anti-confessionalism during the first timeframe and the current more cross-confessional nature of this support. The former will rely on the Muslim share of power in the state while the latter will rely on the Christian share of power in the state. Furthermore, both will be studied based on demands raised by the public and prominent figures, unequal distribution of wealth, underdevelopment, clientalist networks, and corruption. This will determine whether ideological beliefs are exacerbated and influenced by other domestic factors that are susceptible to change with time and government policy. It will also determine whether the failure of “establishment parties” will lead to a radical rejection of the political system as a whole. Finally, it will attempt to understand why such factors can sometimes lead to anti-confessionalism but also to sectarian extremism.

The fourth and final factor, regional powers, will be studied through the political and military influence of President Abdel Nasser and PLO during the first timeframe and the sectarian conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the second timeframe. The former was more supportive of anti-confessionalism while the latter is not. This will determine whether anti-confessionalism in Lebanon is influenced, either negatively or positively, by developments and balances of power in the Arab region as a whole.

The comparative analysis of each of the above stated factors throughout both selected time periods will provide an idea of the impact of each on anti-confessional support; however, as will be seen in later stages of the research, each factor on its own may not necessarily have an impact on anti-confessionalism, but a combination of the selected factors together could.
The vast majority of the needed data and resources are accessible through secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journals and books as well as some primary sources such as newspaper articles. The combination of primary and secondary sources will compare and contrast between the different information so that a more complete outlook is provided. This will be coupled with the inclusion of studies focusing on socioeconomic conditions as well as a few surveys that can provide an added value to the analysis. Limitations of surveys targeting university students must be acknowledged due to doubts over their representability and generalization of opinions of higher educated segments of the population, but the numbers do give an estimate of the public mood especially amid scarcity of polling data on such issues. In addition, the use of electoral results as an indicator of public sentiment will also be used in a limited manner because of gerrymandered electoral laws, bribery, mid-level turnouts, and complex alliances. The multitude of factors influencing voter decisions are not clear-cut and cannot be completely relied upon as a reflection of anti-confessional support.

It is worth noting that social movements which were cross-confessional in nature such as trade unions and labor protests will not be taken into consideration because of the nature of their demands. Members of these movements could coincide on social demands but disagree on political and ideological stances (Traboulsi, 1997, 140). As a result, for a movement or party to be included in the study, clear anti-confessional demands must be stated. Furthermore, the focus will limited to major national protest movements or political parties as time constraints and the word limit prevent the inclusion of all anti-confessional actions done for example in CSOs and university campuses. Moreover, due to the inability to conduct questionnaires covering representative samples, this will not be pursued in this research.
Analysis

Ideology
First Time Period
Throughout this time period, it will become increasingly noticeable that an ideological division was predominantly present along confessional lines. To understand this vertical schism, one must look at its historical basis which can be traced back to the decades preceding the formation of Greater Lebanon in 1920. Among Christians, Maronites were mostly Lebanese nationalists (Salibi, 1988, 27-29; Barakat, 1977, 28) while Greek Orthodox had significant support for Greater Syria or Arab nationalism in its secular form (Gordon, 1980, 145; Khalifah, 2001, 9). Among Muslims, Sunnis were mainly Arab nationalists who saw Lebanon as a hurdle to a greater Arab nation (Mackey, 1989, 70; Salem, 1979, 447-449) while Shias and Druze supported the idea of it equating all Arabs regardless of religion but were suspicious of Sunni dominance (Salibi, 1988, 51-52). Thus, they opted for leftist rather than Arab nationalist parties (Hanf, 1993, 132-133; Cobban, 1985, 215-216).

An exemplification of this ideological clash was seen early on during the mandate period as a tense relationship ensued between Maronites on one hand and the Arab nationalist movement and most Muslim politicians on the other. In spite of the latter questioning the legitimacy of the Lebanese state and boycotting public administration for around 15 years, regional circumstances eventually led to a compromise. This led to a shift in focus towards an Arab nationalism that rises above confessionalism and particularities of local politics in the hopes of leading to a wider Arab unity framework (El-Solh, 2004, 7-9, 201-207; Hudson, 1985, 38-42). The subsequent 1943 National Pact was a loose and shaky alliance between Lebanese nationalism and Arab nationalism (El-Solh, 2004, 288). While both leading figures of the pact, Beshara el-Khoury and Riad el-Soleh, saw the Pact as a temporary prelude to secularism, it’s confessional nature became an integral part of the Lebanese political process (Khalifah, 2001, 10).

The ideas of Arab nationalism became increasingly popular among Muslims as showcased in the election of majority Arab nationalist figures in 1943 parliamentary elections in all areas except Mount Lebanon (Namani, 2015, 56-57; El-Solh, 2004, 201-203). This coincided with methods of mobilization against the confessional system through new parties such as the SSNP, LCP, and Baath Party which are based on secular ideologies (Namani, 2015, 40-41; Hanf, 1993, 70, 77-
78). Their influence attracted limited but very militant and organized support. It is important to note that some Arab nationalist parties, such as Al Najjadah, perceived Arab nationalism from a Muslim, rather than secular, point of view (Suleiman, 1967, 204; Hudson, 1985, 176).

With the rise of Nasser in Egypt, Arab nationalism gained support in the entire Middle Eastern region, including Lebanon where he amassed uncontested support among the Muslim and Arab nationalist constituency, one that overshadowed the leadership of traditional Muslim leaders and gave him tremendous influence over them (Mackey, 1989, 120-121; Salibi, 1976, 18; Winslow, 1996, 105). Other than constant demonstrations of support, one indication was the crossing of 60,000 to 350,000 Lebanese into Syria to celebrate the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in the presence of Nasser (Namani, 2015, 96-97; Mackey, 1989, 123; Gordon, 1980, 53). With rebels estimated to number around 10,000 men, Arab nationalists in Lebanon militarily attempted to change the status quo maintained by the National Pact (Namani, 2015, 75, 102-103; Hanf, 1993, 117); however, not all those who participated can be considered ideologically against the confessional system since many were followers of feudal leaders and mobilized for the Arab identity of Lebanon. The compromise of the 1958 crisis which reinforced the confessional division of power highlighted the gap between traditional Muslim leaders and more radical figures who wanted to push for secular reforms (Namani, 2015, 120-121). As will be explored in the coming paragraphs, this divergence in goals will reflect on public support during the years leading to the 1975 civil war.

The 1960s witnessed the gradual rise of both right and left-wing radical groups from outside the political establishment (Hudson, 1985, 168-169). Leftists and secular Arab nationalists were among those challenging the confessional system. While their influence was clearly felt through agitation in university campuses, street protests, and refugee camps, they were not strong enough for their secular demands to be realistically taken into consideration (Hanf, 1993, 134; Gordon, 1980, 170; Mackey, 1989, 70; Salibi, 1988, 188). In addition, this popular support did not translate into parliamentary representation as the political establishment was able to limit their formal presence within the system through governmental pressure, gerrymandering, extensive funding in electoral campaigns, and nature of the confessional system (El-Solh, 2004, 326; Khalifah, 2001, 77; Salame, 1994, 99).
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With the formation of the LNM, they emerged since the late 1960s as powerful players thus signaling a move from the periphery of Lebanese politics to the mainstream (El-Solh, 2004, 330; Mackey, 1989, 144; Salibi, 1976, 82-83). One of the LNM’s Five Demands during the 1975-1976 war was abolishing the confessional system (Winslow, 1996, 189) while a declaration by the PSP headed by Jumblatt in 1976 called for the complete abolition of the confessional system and secularization of the state. While the declaration gained the support of leftist parties, some Christian parties, and the Islamic Association of Makassed Graduates whose members include influential Sunni figures; clear objections were raised by Sunni and Shia religious figures who feared the growing momentum of the secular left (Hanf, 1993, 134-137).

Following its formation, the LNM’s support base mostly expanded into Sunni, Shia, and Greek Orthodox communities while making smaller gains among educated Maronites. The combination of Arab nationalist and leftist parties made the movement a highly appealing and powerful force (Salibi, 1976, 13, 77; Kliot, 1987, 65). Their mobilization ability reached its highest point on the eve of the 1975 civil war (Najem, 2012, 17; Salamey & Payne, 2008, 461; Barakat, 1977, 193). An estimate claims that, in 1975, the left could rely on approximately 300,000 supporters in demonstrations, 20,000 of whom can participate in warfare (Saab, 1975). Whilst the numbers could be exaggerated, it does provide a general idea of the public mood at the time.

One example of the growing influence is the inability of any Sunni figure to be appointed Prime Minister (PM) in 1975 without the approval of LNM’s leader, Kamal Jumblatt, due to his tremendous sway over the Muslim public (Cobban, 1985, 117, 127). Another indication is leftist candidates receiving an increasing number of votes in elections (Gordon, 1980, 137).

Based on student surveys conducted in the early 1970s, most Muslims identified as leftists and pan-Arabist while most Christians identified as conservatives or reformists and prioritized Lebanon (Barakat, 1977, 60-69). Another study conducted in 1973 shows that 60% of university students supported leftist parties (Hanf, 1993, 126).

Based on what has been stated above, one can see the buildup of anti-confessional support within large segments of the Muslim and Druze population and smaller segments of the Christian population, mainly Greek Orthodox. This could be linked to the initial identity formations which coincided with the declaration of the state of Greater Lebanon as expressed in the beginning of this section. The spread of Arab nationalism among Sunnis and leftist ideals among Shias laid the groundwork for the eventual shift in focus towards reforming the confessional system.
Key non-leftist allies of the LNM were traditional Sunni leaders, Karami in Tripoli and Salam in Beirut. Partly due to their individual interests lying within the survival of the confessional system, they worked for the survival of the National Pact; however, pressured by Arab nationalist and leftist sentiments among their supporters, they were forced to ally with the LNM in spite of having deep reservations on key demands raised (Salame, 1994, 99-100; Cobban, 1985, 104-107; Salibi, 1976, 54-55, 82-83). Examples of efforts to counter the appeal of the LNM’s radical demands among Sunnis include the rejection of secularism (Hanf, 1993, 134-137), co-sponsoring with the Mufti of the Republic a demand for bigger share for Muslims in the state (Salibi, 1976, 77-78; Gordon, 1980, 83), and agreement to a reform program in 1976 formalizing confessional distribution and dividing parliamentary seats equally between Christians and Muslims (Namani, 2015, 154-155; Hanf, 1993, 209-210).

This bypassed the anti-confessional demands of the LNM and failed to stop the erosion of their popularity as the public shifted towards the LNM’s sphere of influence and ideology (Mackey, 1989, 71-75; Gordon, 1980, 162). In what is termed as “confessionalization of anti-confessional demands”, the mobilization of supporters behind calls for “political secularization” was a political ploy employed by some to dismantle Maronite dominance over the state and replace it with another (Salibi, 1988, 194-197; Hanf, 1993, 139).

While the ideological parties in the LNM had intentions for abolishing the confessional system, others saw it as a sectarian opportunity. It is easier to determine the intentions of leaders in retrospect; however, assessing the degree of anti-confessionalism among the public is more difficult. The loss of influence of traditional Muslim leaders in spite of calling for sectarian gains for their respective communities in favor of an outspoken secular alliance is a major indication of the ideology prevalent at the time among the supportive population.

**Second Time Period**

Considered to be one of the most important anti-sectarian mobilizations in post-war Lebanon, a campaign called Overthrow the Sectarian System (OSS) was launched in 2011 following the wave of uprisings in Arab countries (Bahlawan, 2014, 28). The campaign was not a spur of the moment but rather the result of a build-up of activists’ revival of the anti-sectarian cause in previous years. Protests culminated in a 20,000 attended demonstration before internal divisions weakened the movement (Bahlawan, 2014, 38, 43; Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 76; Hermez, 2011, 527). While older activists among the leadership resembled those of the 1960s
and 1970s, Beirut based middle-class educated men, the newer generation of activists is more socially connected and belongs to lower economic classes (Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 76-77).

The second major protest movement occurred a few years later in 2015 following a garbage management crisis. In spite of different ideological backgrounds, activists were united in their criticism of the sectarian system and linked it to ineffective governance. The leadership of both major groups was urbanized political activists and civil society experts from different sects. While the geographic location of major protests in the capital is a factor, the fact that the major driving force behind the movement was the population of Beirut reflects the higher tendency for cross-confessional demands among urbanized populations. This does not mean that protests exclusively occurred in the capital as evidenced by their geographical spread where they also occurred in Chouf, Metn, Akkar, and the Bekaa. The lowest agitation occurred in the Shia inhabited South, but noteworthy mobilization did occur (Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 77-81). This could be attributed to the existing social services network provided by Hezbollah to its constituents; however, cuts in funding to these services caused by the involvement in the Syrian war may have increased discontent among its support base (Corbeil, 2016). While tens of thousands participated in the protests, not all who did voiced their opposition to the sectarian system as some considered that a mistake (Dot-Pouillard, 2015; Kerbage, 2017, 30).

In both movements, internal disagreements emerged. Divergent views in the OSS campaign were regarding leadership, specificity of the demands, the use of the term secularism due to the negative connotation it might carry for some people, position regarding the ruling parties, Syrian uprising (Hermez, 2011, 529-532), and economic vision for the country. This was reflected in the adoption of broad slogans which accommodate everyone, but one activist stated that exactly these stances led to the failure in adopting an actual plan that rallies supporters for challenging the system. Furthermore, the involvement of traditional parties such as the SSNP and LCP which are secular but engage in alliances with key sectarian parties damaged the credibility of the movement. Another activist stated that many youth leading the protests are honest in their intentions but labeled the SSNP and LCP as remnants of fascist parties that do not genuinely contribute towards the advancement of a real democratic Lebanon (Bray-Collins, 2016, 312-316).
Similar disagreements occurred in the 2015 protests coordination meetings as well especially regarding the extent in which demands must reach. Some groups limited their calls to the garbage crisis, others to government resignation, and some pushed for the overthrow of the sectarian system in itself (Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 78-88). In a recurring situation as 2011, organizers of the protests confined their statements to non-controversial issues to maximize public support (Kerbage, 2017, 18).

In a manner similar to the use of anti-confessional demands in the 1970s by some Muslim leaders for confessional goals, activists in the OSS campaign stated that partisans loyal to the Shia party Amal infiltrated the movement in an attempt to co-opt it and quash demands crucial to secularism such as civil marriage and electoral reform. This was accompanied by media loyal to Amal promoting sectarian reform. In a deja-vu from previous decades, the anti-sectarian movement was “sectarianized” thus damaging its credibility among the public and discouraging many (Bray-Collins, 2016, 304-305). An activist summed it up by stating “the problem is that many are asking for the abolishment of sectarianism to fulfill their sectarian plans” (Bray-Collins, 2016, 319).

Based on a survey conducted by The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in 2016, 70% of respondents privately supported abolishing the confessional system and reducing influence of sectarian parties, but the level of support drops to 50% if the stance is made public. Such drop reflects that support for political reforms is present but is coupled with fears of social repercussions from family, political parties, and religious leaders. Lowest percentages were registered among Christians (Paler, Marshall, & Atallah, 2018, 4-7). The results appear to be somewhat inflated since another survey conducted by the same center before the 2018 parliamentary elections showed that sectarian identity was the main influencer of voters’ choice (Cammett, Kruszewska, & Atallah, 2018).

Both campaigns indicated the presence of “counter-publics” that push for a non-confessional system and a possible shift in consciousness among a segment of Lebanese youth (Bahlawan, 2014, 44-45; Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 74; Bray-Collins, 2016, 309); however, their message has not yet reverberated with the masses or had any tangible impact on the political scene (Fakhoury, 2014, 514). Though a remarkable observation to point out is the increased
frequency of such movements, twice within a few years compared to a relative lull lasting decades.

**Concluding Remarks**

During the first time period, right-wing Christian parties received support from some Muslim leaders and groups whereas leftist parties had support from a segment of Christians; however, this does not negate the fact that each side had a disproportionate number of members from the same religion (Barakat, 1977, 187-188; Jabra & Jabra, 2001, 78). In spite of the anti-confessional goals, the conflict increasingly took a confessional divide and sectarian atrocities were committed (Namani, 2015, 154). The inability of the LNM to seriously gather support within the Christian community, especially the Maronite one, severely impacted the anti-confessional demands called for by the left. In comparison to the currently emerging anti-sectarian movements, while there is no accurate manner of determining the sectarian belonging of participants in protests, a dominant sect does not stand out which reflects a more diversified public support.

A second noteworthy observation is the overwhelming presence of Sunnis in Arab nationalist parties and Shias in leftist parties. Arab nationalism was not able to move beyond its Sunni membership as minorities did not feel represented within it even though it called for rising above communal differences. In addition, two types of Arab nationalism were seen: one that is anti-confessional and secular but also one that equated the ideology with Sunni Islam. Despite the anti-confessional rhetoric used, clear favorability can be seen in the parties chosen by different sect members.

A third comparison to make is the presence of a strong and charismatic leader. In Lebanon, the importance of a leader to followers is crucial as they could be simply followers of the person rather than the ideology called for. For instance, in the case of Jumblatt, his followers might be loyalists who just see him as their traditional feudal leader (Gordon, 1980, 143). The significance of his leadership of the LNM was immensely felt following his assassination. His absence revealed the internal weaknesses of the Lebanese left which were eventually overrun by emerging sectarian forces (El-Solh, 2004, 338; Cobban, 1985, 155; Mackey, 1989, 168). Regardless of whether accusations about his personal sectarian vendetta against Maronites (Namani, 2015, 157; Hanf, 1993, 216-217) and his deep frustrations about his inability as a
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Druze to hold important positions of power within the confessional power sharing system (Mackey, 1989, 65; Winslow, 1996, 172) are true or not, he was the main public figure leading the charge against the confessional system. Looking at the internal divisions that current anti-sectarian movements suffer from and the divisions of the left in the 1960s and 1970s without Jumblatt leading the LNM, the absence of such a leader has huge effects on the political relevance of these movements.

A fourth notable similarity is the infiltration of sectarian parties into the OSS campaign to dilute secular demands and “sectarianize anti-sectarian demands” in a manner comparable to the stance adopted by traditional Muslim leaders through their alliance with the LNM in which they rejected complete secularization and used anti-confessionalism as a cover for a larger Muslim share in the political system at the expense of the Maronites. Furthermore, the same scenario of Christian fears about Muslim dominance in case of removal of the sectarian system is being seen today but on a wider level to include Druze and Sunni from Shia dominance. As a result, strong public demand for reforming the sectarian political system is lacking since not all communities believe in such change.

A fifth observation is that the spread of anti-confessional ideas in the first time period occurred through both grassroots and elite propagation since the groundwork was already there with the Arab nationalist and leftist ideologies among considerable segments of the population but did not become influential until one of the elites, mainly Kamal Jumblatt, called for the ideals. The second time period, until now, has been limited to grassroots mobilization. Whether its popular spread requires support from an established elite remains to be seen.

To sum up, the influence of secular political parties was never strong in and by itself, and it grew even weaker in the more sectarianized post-war system (Makdisi, 2004, 165; Hanf, 1993, 75). The current situation of anti-sectarian movements is similar, if not somewhat weaker, than that of the left during the 1950s and 1960s before the formation of the LNM, capable of occasionally mounting a minor disruption to the system from outside parliament but not enough to push for the adoption of their demands. It is important to note that the previous rise of the left was inextricably linked to both Jumblatt and the military presence of the PLO which will be tackled in the last section of the analysis.
Political Marginalization
First Time Period
The Christian and Muslim communities, “the two wings of the nation”, represented the first vertical division in Lebanese society. While Christians, and specifically Maronites, enjoyed political supremacy through the mandate system installed by France and then through the National Pact (Salame, 1994, 89), several sectarian groups were not satisfied with their position in the power sharing system. Sunnis were dissatisfied with the limited political power they had which they saw as a diminished stature of the PM while Shias, in spite of being allocated the position of the Speaker of Parliament, voiced complaints of injustice and underrepresentation (Salem, 1979, 447-449; Salibi, 1988, 182; Saleh, 2015, 134). The political process was virtually dominated by Maronites first and Sunnis second, the two core communities of the National Pact (Mackey, 1989, 75; Daher, 2016, 12).

The two major Muslim communities in Lebanon increasingly saw the political system as being disproportionately advantageous in the Maronites’ favor whose slim numerical majority at the time of the 1932 census faded away in later years (Makdisi, 2004, 6; Hudson, 1985, 21-22). Based on the 1932 census, the seat allocation in parliament was based on a ratio of 6 Christian deputies to five Muslim deputies (Fakhoury, 2011, 3; Salamey & Payne, 2008, 454-455). Population increase among Muslims was higher than that among Christians (Hudson, 1985, 88). While fertility rates among rural Christians and Muslims were almost the same, educated urban Muslims had a rate of 5.56 compared to 3.44 for Christians and uneducated urban Muslims had a rate of 7.35 compared to 4.14 for Christians (Davis, 1956, 54-80; Yaukey, 1961, 79-81).

This dissatisfaction was not unfounded. The 1943 constitution granted the President a wide array of powers compared to those of the PM such as the vetoing of bills, issuing urgent legislation in case parliament does not act over a 40 day period, appointment and dismissal of ministers, including the PM, and dissolution of parliament in agreement with the cabinet; however, in practice, the President and PM mostly ruled in conjunction to avoid political crises. In spite of Presidents gradually stopping arbitrarily dismissing the PM, this does not mean that these powers were not used (Hanf, 1993, 91; Gordon, 1980, 103). For example, when PM Rashid Karami voiced support for joining the Arab defense agreements involving Nasser’s Egypt, he was dismissed from his post by the Western-oriented President Chamoun (Namani, 2015, 84-85;
Hudson, 1985, 116). Another instance was the occasional appointment of a weak and irrepresentative PM which angered Sunnis and made them question their share of power in the political system (Hanf, 1993, 91; Barakat, 1977, 193). Such actions fermented a Muslim feeling that the Maronite President held unquestioned political and economic power over them.

Other key and influential governmental posts such as the Commander of the Army, Director of Military Intelligence, Director of State Security, Governor of the Central Bank, and Chairman of the State Council were all reserved for the Maronites which was seen by Muslims as unjustified privilege (Hanf, 1993, 95; Salame, 1994, 89). During the 1950s and 1960s, Muslim politicians claimed that the army is a Maronite one since a significant majority of its officers were Christian as well as the commander in spite of lower ranks being majority Muslim (Kliot, 1987, 66).

Another issue of contention was the considerable majority of Christians occupying higher ranking civil service posts. In a system based on patronage, the provision of benefits is associated with power; hence, the disproportion became a major topic. This was partly due to the Muslim boycott of the Lebanese state following its formation in 1920; however, President Chehab, with his reforms package, instituted a new rule of strict parity between Christian and Muslim appointees in an effort to halt the disequilibrium (Hanf, 1993, 93-95). Until 1974, very few Shia held a position of state official (Daher, 2016, 12-13).

Based on student surveys from three universities conducted in the early 1970s and corroborated by another student survey conducted in 1977 from six universities, Muslims expressed higher degrees of political alienation than their Christian counterparts with Shias having the highest degree followed by Druze and Sunnis. The lowest degree of alienation was expressed by the Maronites while Orthodox and Catholics expressed moderate alienation (Barakat, 1977, 125-128; Nasr & Palmer, 1977, 506-510). In addition, the higher the social class among Muslims, the lower the level of alienation. What is noteworthy is that a positive correlation was found between alienation and support for secularism as those alienated were three times more likely to support secularism than those non-alienated (Barakat, 1977, 125-128).

An incident during Chamoun’s term reflected the opinion of the Muslim population. This was captured in the “Muslim Lebanon Today” pamphlet which, in a mixture of reality and exaggeration, alleged that Christians no longer constituted a numerical majority, all powers are virtually concentrated within the hands of the President, the functions of the Speaker of Parliament and PM are symbolic, Christian areas of the country receive preference at the expense
of Muslim areas, Muslims are underrepresented in civil service, and Christians are in full control of the army, security, and judiciary. In spite of being prohibited, the contents received fertile ground among the Muslim population, especially the Sunni lower-middle class (Hanf, 1993, 115-117; Hudson, 1985, 90).

These complaints about the lack of power in the confessional system escalated among considerable segments of the Muslim public to a form of opposition willing to oppose the system in itself (Winslow, 1996, 102). Shias, now the largest sectarian community in Lebanon, were divided between those demanding a great share of power in the system and those calling for its abolition. On the other hand, Druze, led by Jumblatt, allied with secular parties to demand moving away from political sectarianism (Hanf, 1993, 92).

Second Time Period
This section will cover the two main sectarian groups which perceive themselves to be politically marginalized, Sunnis and Christians. In spite of the time period focusing on 2005 until current time, this will cover the roots of these feelings starting in the 1990s leading until now.

Following the defeat and exile of General Michel Aoun which brought an end to the war as well as the imprisonment of Samir Geagea, the vast majority of Christians were marginalized from the political process until the end of Syrian occupation in 2005 (Makdisi, 2004, 120-121; Najem, 2012, 73; Salamey & Payne, 2008, 452). This continued until recent years with campaigns by major Christian parties for the “regaining of Christian rights” in the state thus playing on the public perception of marginalization since 1990.

Christians in general, and specifically Maronites, harbored discontent since the end of the civil war and the adoption of the Taif Agreement (Khalifah, 2001, 7) which transferred substantial powers from the Maronite Presidency to the cabinet headed by a Sunni PM (Rigby, 2000, 176; Salame, 1994, 104). Similar to the practical rejection of reforms towards secularism in the first time period studied and proposals of federalism during the civil war, the clear majority of Christians continue to base their political demands in a sectarian viewpoint. Seeing themselves as the defeated side in the war settlement because of the diminished powers of the Maronite President, they mobilized and continue to do so for the amendment of the perceived sectarian imbalance (Khalifah, 2001, 133, 143).
Following the decline of power of traditional Sunni leaders in the early 1970s and the subsequent defeats of Sunni militias during the civil war, Rafic Hariri, a rich businessman with strong ties to Saudi Arabia, emerged as the leading figure among the Sunni community since the 1990s until his assassination in 2005. While he was able to impose himself as the main leader of the Sunnis to the extent of “Harirism” being synonymous with “Sunnism”, his assassination and absence of a strong and charismatic heir led to a form of vacuum within the community. Compounded by the outbreak of the Syrian uprising and consecutive perceived political losses against the rising influence of Hezbollah, radical religious trends appeared among the Sunni community in Tripoli and Sidon. An inflamed sectarian rhetoric coupled with poor socioeconomic conditions and disenfranchisement led to sectarian affiliation becoming one of the key slogans of mobilization for citizens who believe they have been abandoned by the state and weakness of main parties (Di Peri & Meier, 2017, 39-44).

The feeling of Sunni disenchantment led to a rise in support for Salafist groups such as their emphasis on “defending Sunni villages from Assad and Hezbollah” and the “uncompromising military opposition” to Hezbollah (Lefevre, 2018, 9). This remains limited to vocal support as the vast majority of Sunnis do not espouse Salafist ideologies as a poll in 2010 showed that only 9.2% would support Salafist religious principles (Lefevre, 2018, 18).

The consequent growth in influence of Salafist groups was not because of the ideological appeal, but rather the provision of a platform for contesting the sociopolitical marginalization detailed above. Support for these groups remains linked to urban grievances, identities, and networks. While some are ideologically driven, most of them were radicalized in Lebanese prisons or through armed combat in Syria (Lefevre, 2018, 4-5).

**Concluding Remarks**

Based on both time periods, marginalized members of society either tend to belong to a more extreme sectarian ideology or adopt an anti-confessional and anti-systemic one. While drastically different in views regarding the political system, both aim for greater inclusion in the political process.

Looking at the first time period, marginalized members of society, who did not have a traditional leader to turn to, found refuge within the left (Hanf, 1993, 412). Specifically, some Sunnis relied on Arab Nationalism in its secular form while others used it as a cover for sectarian purposes.
The same applies for Shias who were divided between those who swelled the ranks of leftist parties and others who joined the more sectarian movement of Shia cleric Musa Sadr. Comparing to the second period, political marginalization has led in a much higher frequency to increased sectarianism as seen with both Sunnis and Christians. While it can be safely assumed that many of those who participated in the 2011 and 2015 protests do have a feeling of marginalization, the balance does remain in favor of increased sectarianism, partly because of the absence of well-structured and well-funded anti-sectarian movements; both applicable conditions to Salafist groups and entrenched Christian political parties. In addition, the former provided a hardline foe to Hezbollah which appealed to many Sunnis while Christians maintained support for the latter because of the persecution of their leaders and continuing Syrian occupation until 2005 thus providing a sense of purpose.

To sum up, there is no clear trend showcasing a sole link between political marginalization and support for anti-confessionalism as examples from both time periods show that it could go either way, perhaps depending on the ideology of the strongest available alternative. Thus, this lays a bigger importance on ideological beliefs but does not negate the fact that political marginalization is one of many contributing factors which drive citizens one way or the other.
Socioeconomic Factors
First Time Period

Whereas Mount Lebanon and Beirut had good administration, education, and infrastructure during the Ottoman Empire, the North, South, and Bekaa were neglected provinces. This continued in post-independence Lebanon and thus, the newly formed Lebanese state represented the center-periphery model in terms of socioeconomic disparities (Hanf, 1993, 66). Since independence and up to 1973, the annual growth rate for the Lebanese economy, in real terms, ranged approximately between 6 and 7.5%; however, this did not remedy the strikingly uneven development among different regions, wide differences in income distribution, and socioeconomic inequities (Makdisi, 2004, 23-24; Gaspard, 2004, 70-72). Even though the lower class of the population declined from around 78% in the early 1950s till around 50% in the early 1960s and remaining so till the early 1970s, income inequalities were predominant in certain regions. For instance, the middle class was more prevalent in Beirut and Mount Lebanon than in the South, Bekaa, and the North (Makdisi, 2004, 22-25; Hanf, 1993, 99-100). Because of the geographic concentration of different religious communities in certain regions, uneven development went hand in hand with sectarian imbalances of power. Thus, Muslim regions in post-independence Lebanon were underdeveloped compared to Christian regions (Barakat, 1977, 36; Suleiman, 1967, 26-27; Hudson, 1985, 24, 70).

Significant differences can be found in living standards, development, and social services. For example, in the early 1960s, only 5% of Mount Lebanon and Beirut were considered underdeveloped whereas 46% of the North, 30% of the South, and 35% of the Bekaa were in the two lowest categories of development (Hudson, 1985, 64-66). The clear neglect of rural areas can be seen in terms of education, health, and housing. One indication is that by 1970, the ratio of doctors to population was 5.6 times higher in Beirut than the North and 10.7 times higher than the South. This is coupled with very poor health facilities that are limited in scope compared to Beirut. Another indication is the substantial difference in the level of household facilities as 83% of apartments in Beirut had bathrooms compared to 52% in the North, 46% in the South, and 43% in the Bekaa (Makdisi, 2004, 25-27). A third indication is the per capita income which was $803 in Beirut compared to $151 in the South. By 1975, the gap widened even more (Mackey, 1989, 13; Gordon, 1980, 136; Khalifah, 2001, 15). In total, the income earned by Christians was 16% higher than Druze and 58% higher than Shias (Gordon, 1980, 136). A fourth indication,
based on data from 1959, is the percentage of students to province population in which the North, Bekaa, and South were below the national average (Hudson, 1985, 77). Even rising attendance to public schools (Hanf, 1993, 95, 99) could not counter the higher quality of education provided by mostly Christian private schools in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. This reflected the better socioeconomic conditions enabling the payment of private tuition fees (Barakat, 1977, 43; Hudson, 1985, 75-77) and maintained the educational superiority of Christians (Kliot, 1987, 58-59).

In spite of the presence of capital within higher classes of different sects with similar interests in maintaining the laissez-faire policies, Maronites dominated the economic system (Mackey, 1989, 13; Gordon, 1980, 110) as upper class divisions were 65% Christian and 35% Muslim (Naser, 2003, 151; Barakat, 1977, 41). For instance, Christians outnumbered Muslims in commerce, industry, trade, and services by a 5 to 1 margin (Sayegh, 1967, 98). Estimations for 1973 point to Christians controlling 71% of banks, 75% of trading companies, and 67% of factories (Traboulsi, 1997, 96).

In a breakdown among the sects, Muslims made up 75% of the working class (Traboulsi, 1997, 96). Around 1960, the overwhelming majority of agricultural workers were Muslims, mostly Shia, while the majority of the urban working class in manual jobs, construction, and services were Sunnis. The middle class of clerks, civil servants, traders, and small manufacturers were majority Christian (Makdisi, 2004, 22-25; Hanf, 1993, 99-100; Kliot, 1987, 69).

In an effort to remedy these disparities, socioeconomic reforms were implemented by President Chehab (Suleiman, 1967, 56; Winslow, 1996, 128-134), but their long-term impact was met by obstacles from the embedded political establishment. For instance, traditional Sunni and Shia leaders, belonging to the upper class, resisted development projects in the North and South because it would weaken their political and economic hold over their constituents (Hudson, 1985, 75, 318; Winslow, 1996, 128-134). Christians also saw such measures as a threat since the state would be improving the conditions of another group thus increasing their power (Hudson, 1985, 93; Rigby, 2000, 173). By 1970, even after the structural policies adopted by the government, confessional disparities did diminish but remained as 67% of Christians belonged to the middle class compared to 56% Muslims and 29% of Christians belonged to the working class compared to 42% Muslims (Hanf, 1993, 105-107).
Based on the inequalities stated above, most Christians had middle-upper class interests while most Muslims had working class interests (Hanf, 1993, 100). In spite of there being both poor Christians and Muslims, Christians were fewer in number and even few of those had the same deprived living conditions as Muslim poor (Mackey, 1989, 14; Khalifah, 2001, 15). Christians from lower social class acknowledged the limitations of the political system but showed no willingness to change it (Barakat, 1977, 32). This could be rooted in belonging to a larger community perceived as more powerful through which upward social mobility can be achieved. The opposite applies to Muslims, even those who belong to higher social classes. This is why upper class Muslims exhibited more radical tendencies than lower class Christians (Barakat, 1977, 74-75) as 27% of lower class Christian students compared to 35% of upper class Muslims consider themselves leftist (Barakat, 1977, 106-109).

Between 1960 and 1975, heavy rural movement occurred as urban residents rose from 25% in 1950 to 65% of the national population in 1975. A large part did not find work as employment opportunities were not equivalent to the influx, and even those who did, did not have an adequate standard of living (Naser, 1978, 10; Naser, 2003, 148). The poor socioeconomic conditions in poverty belts surrounding Mount Lebanon and Beirut which were inhabited by predominantly Shia migrants led to intermingling and solidarity with Palestinian refugees sharing similar conditions in their camps (Barakat, 1977, 190; Khalifah, 2001, 15; Rigby, 2000, 173). These conditions fostered discontent and made inhabitants an easy target for mobilization by different actors in the buildup to the civil war (Naser, 1978, 12; Baumann, 2016, 20-21). The Shia cleric Musa Sadr portrayed the conflict as part of the struggle to obtain rights for the “dispossessed” Shia community from the state while leftists portrayed the conflict as a non-sectarian class struggle with programs centered on political and economic reforms (Namani, 2015, 149-151; Salem, 1979, 447-449; Mackey, 1989, 79). Looking at the LCP’s membership numbers in 1975, Shia constituted 50%, Greek Orthodox 30%, and Sunnis and Druze 15-20% (Saleh, 2015, 144-146).

Traditional Muslim leaders also attempted to use these disparities to push for a claim on power in spite of being part of the successive governments which neglected underdeveloped regions’ development to uncontrolled capitalist policies (Salibi, 1988, 190; Traboulsi, 2007, 180). Looking at the mapping of the 1958 crisis, and in spite of the presence of other factors, the
regions controlled by insurgents were poor whereas those controlled by loyalists were more developed (Hudson, 1985, 110; Kliot, 1987, 70).

In spite of the disparities in socioeconomic development not being unique to Lebanon, corrective governmental decisions were not properly taken. While reducing these inequalities may not have prevented the outbreak of the civil war, it did exacerbate tensions as it carried a sectarian dimension (Makdisi, 2004, 28).

**Second Time Period**

Due to the lengthy civil war between 1975 and 1990, socioeconomic conditions deteriorated in all areas such as health, education, housing, income distribution, poverty, unemployment, and living conditions. In spite of infrastructural developments and improvement in social conditions in some areas following the corrective measures adopted by post-war governments, the same socioeconomic differences between regions remained (Makdisi, 2004, 148-150).

Since the end of the civil war, economic growth has registered an average of 4.4% until 2012; however, job creation has been insufficient as 17,000 jobs are needed every year but only 3,000-4,000 are being created. Along with poverty rates at around 30% (Atallah, 2012, 52), highly skewed income distribution, concentration of political and economic power within the hands of unaccountable few, difficult living conditions, and absence of a social safety net for the majority of the population (Makdisi, 2004, 148-150, 158), high levels of frustration have developed among the youth.

The post-civil war period witnessed a growing influence of the Sunni community bolstered by foreign ties to the Gulf at the expense of Christians; however, both remain very influential in banking, trade, and real estate sectors (Daher, 2016, 73-74). This was coupled with a noticeable increase in Shia upper class specifically active in real estate and trade but still not as influential in the banking sector (Daher, 2016, 80-84).

Similar to the divisions in the pre-war period, data from the early 2010s indicates the concentration of most Shia in the Northern Bekaa, Southern Beirut, and South, most Sunnis in Beirut and the North, and most Christians in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Zahle. The previously stated elite dominance has not extended to the remaining sections of the same communities as poverty has increased in several key Sunni and Christian inhabited areas (Daher, 2016, 74-75).
Studies have shown that disparities are clear between the North, South, and Bekaa on one hand and Mount Lebanon and Beirut on the other (Kukrety & Al Jamal, 2016, 7). The highest income is present in Beirut and Mount Lebanon at $1,312 while the lowest is in Nabatieh at $791 and the South at $1,007. The North is close to the national average of $1,160 (CCSD, 2017, 20).

A study conducted in 2007 considers the upper line of poverty to be $4/day and the lower line $2.4/day. Based on these indicators, 28% of the population is considered poor and 8% extremely poor (UNDP, 2008, 13-15). A more recent study between 2013 and 2015 puts the numbers at 33.6% and 15.2% respectively (CCSD, 2017, 20). While poverty rates have increased in all regions since 2005, Beirut at 30.2% and Mount Lebanon at 27.8% remain below the national average whereas the North at 34.8%, South at 41.6%, and Bekaa at 35.1% are above (Lalthy, Abu-Ismail, & Hamdan, 2008, 10; CCSD, 2017, 21). This reflects in the per capita consumption as Beirut is 1.5 times the national average, the North 0.75 times, and the South and Bekaa are below the national average (UNDP, 2008, 13-15). As an indication of the deteriorating public services, citizen dissatisfaction increased from 29.8% in 2004 to 49% in 2015 (CCSD, 2017, 22-23).

While public spending has witnessed an unprecedented increase since 1990, this was not reflected in the socioeconomic development that was expected. This increase was attributed to the use of public funds for nepotism, patronage, and clientalism by political elites. These networks have kept the population, particularly lower classes, dependent on ruling sectarian elites (Baumann, 2016, 119; Atallah, 2012, 53). A study of public expenditure per region, sectarian composition of these regions, and rates of poverty between 1996 and 2005 indicates that funds are allocated based on the size of sectarian groups regardless of developmental needs (Salti & Chaaban, 2010, 650-651).

In a reflection of overlapping sectarian and geographic disparities, the Sunni North, mainly Tripoli and Akkar, have much higher rates of poverty than the Christian North, mainly Koura, Zgharta, Batroun, and Bsharre (UNDP, 2008, 20). These poor socioeconomic conditions have manifested themselves in some Sunni support for Salafist groups especially in Tripoli where poverty impacts 57% of the population coupled with insecurity, marginalization, deteriorating infrastructure, and inadequate public schools. State functions have been filled by Islamic charities and Salafist associations thus earning the respect of many citizens. Through this
grassroots approach, a degree of public support developed to Salafist groups in a manner similar to that of leftist parties in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the influential figures on the ground belonging to a Salafist group stated that he allows actions prohibited in doctrinal Salafism. This indicates the absence of strong ideological support but rather local circumstances influencing political decisions (Lefevre, 2018, 5-7); however, a segment of those driven to Salafist groups by socioeconomic conditions were eventually radicalized through their experiences in Syria or prisons (Lefevre, 2018, 8-10).

While the previous example shows the link between poor socioeconomic conditions and more extreme forms of sectarianism, a contrasting experience is provided through the participants of the 2011 and 2015 protests. For instance, demands of the 2011 OSS did not only focus on opposition to the sectarian system but also on a variety of socioeconomic demands (Hermez, 2011, 529). Fast forward 4 years, worsening conditions and garbage mismanagement accumulated into the 2015 protest movement (Abi Yaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017, 79). In the latter, non-peaceful protesters, mostly Shia from impoverished backgrounds, were alienated by a core segment of organizing activists who labeled them as “infiltrators”. This led to an absence of urban poor who felt unjustly targeted as well as the absence of the working class due to politically controlled labor unions (Hassan, 2017, 24-26; Kerbage, 2017, 13-14). This experience echoes with countries affected by the Arab Spring wave such as Egypt where liberal organizers could not carry their message to the working classes (Taub, 2016). A clear division of class demands was seen through the demands of protesters expressed on television channels. While middle class participants mainly cared about the garbage crisis, those from lower-middle to lower class had socioeconomic demands stated earlier (Kerbage, 2017, 23). Despite the eventual failure of the protests, the short-lived initial participation of lower classes reflected the growing gap between them and sectarian parties claiming to represent their interests (Mazzucotelli, 2017, 56; Nakhal, 2015; Dot-Pouillard, 2015).

**Concluding Remarks**

As stated previously, the first time period was marred by imbalances in regional development and income distribution. The relative overlap of geography with sectarian belonging exacerbated the tensions between Christians and Muslims as the latter saw the former as the main beneficiary of the socioeconomic system in place.
Among such conditions and disparities, it was expected that the left, strengthened by its alliance with the PLO, would be able to recruit significant numbers of followers from lower classes which mostly belonged to the Muslim population, specifically Shia, the most deprived of all communities (Gordon, 1980, 137; Khalifah, 2001, 15; Rigby, 2000, 173). This correlation is corroborated by student surveys conducted in the early 1970s in Beirut which indicated that the lower the social class the more likely the student will have progressive ideas (Barakat, 1977, 60-69).

Moving to the second time period, wealth inequalities have increased, and in spite of Shia areas witnessing some development compared to the pre-war era, the levels of poverty have increased in all areas even though Beirut and Mount Lebanon retain the highest living standards. In spite of that, Christians are no longer seen by Sunnis and Shias as socioeconomically superior to the same extent as the first time period which could be attributed to the decrease in Christian political power in the post-war system.

While deprived conditions are still present, if not even exacerbated, anti-sectarian movements have not had the same appeal as before. They have so far struggled in making a case to the people about how the abolishing of the sectarian system would improve their socioeconomic conditions and basic needs (Bray-Collins, 2016, 322). Poverty in Sunni areas fed support to Salafist groups whereas Shias are mostly mobilized behind religious parties such as Hezbollah. In spite of public voicing of socioeconomic demands in protests in 2011 and 2015, anti-sectarian movements have failed in accommodating disenfranchised citizens into their ranks, transforming their discontent into clear demands, and proving themselves as a viable alternative.

One must acknowledge that the inability of anti-sectarian movements to attract the lower classes is partly due to internal weaknesses but also cannot negate the high degree of difficulty in mobilizing against sectarian leaders and their patronage networks (Bray-Collins, 2016, 322). Amid the absence of efficient and well-functioning state provision of social, health, and education services, philanthropy is highly political as it links citizens, mostly from lower and middle classes, in patronage networks to ruling sectarian elites. Similar methods are used in exhausting state resources to build clientelist networks through overstaffing, channeling benefits, and employment in the public sector and state-owned enterprises (Baumann, 2016, 46-47, 82-83; Nelson, 2013, 354; Hermez, 2011, 532; Atallah, 2012, 53). As a result, anti-sectarian support is
higher among those who are not dependent on sectarian elites (Salamey & Payne, 2008, 462). This is reflected in the decrease in opposition to the sectarian system when publically disclosed among lower income groups at a higher rate than upper income ones. In spite of support for systematic reform being highest among lower status groups, they are also the most vulnerable due to connections within sectarian patronage and clientalist networks (Paler, Marshall, & Atallah, 2018, 4-7).

To sum up, leftist and anti-sectarian movements, since 1976, have failed in separating the loyalty of the working class from sectarian leaders and clientalist networks. Socioeconomic conditions do provide an entry point for such movements to build on the failure of establishment sectarian parties in providing basic state services, but they have not yet been able to do so. Mobilization has remained limited to occasional protests without moving beyond that towards party politics. Even though clientalist networks are a hurdle to mobilizing lower social classes, the willingness displayed by the most impoverished to participate in mass protests reflects the presence of such possibility once a serious alternative presents itself. Similar to political marginalization, citizens either join anti-systemic movements or more radical sectarian groups. A direct correlation is not present between socioeconomic conditions and anti-confessionalism, but these conditions were among the highest priorities of Arab Spring uprisings, thus these sentiments can reach the point of becoming anti-systemic if properly cultivated.
Regional Powers
First Time Period

Following independence from the French mandate in 1943, each sectarian community built deep political and economic ties to regional and international powers (Namani, 2015, 51). Two key regional powers are of direct relevance to anti-confessionalism in this time period: Egypt led by Abdel Nasser and the PLO based in Lebanon.

An indication of Nasser’s direct influence was the almost obligatory visit that Lebanese Muslim political leaders had to do to Egypt to earn his blessings (Gordon, 1980, 51). Fuelled by the controversial 1957 elections, President Chamoun’s adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine, Arab nationalists empowered by the merger of Egypt and Syria into the UAR, and Chamoun’s attempt of amending the constitution to stay in power, Arab nationalists, backed politically and armed by Nasser, attempted to overthrow Chamoun thus leading to the 1958 crisis (Namani, 2015, 94-103; Suleiman, 1967b, 113; Hanf, 1993, 111-117). While many of the insurgents in 1958 would have preferred radical change in the political system and the merger of Lebanon into the UAR, many traditional Muslim leaders aimed for a bigger share in the confessional system they deemed as dominated by Christians (Winslow, 1996, 138). As clearly indicated by the events which occurred, a regional power was directly involved in the attempted change of the status quo and the prevailing political system in Lebanon.

A similar reoccurrence would take place 17 years later, albeit in a much more violent manner and much clearer anti-confessional goals. As Nasser’s influence declined following the 1967 defeat, Arab nationalists in Lebanon gradually shifted their support to the PLO which began launching attacks against Israel and was seen as a continuation of Arabist policies (El-Solh, 2004, 322-323; Winslow, 1996, 150). Initial calls for providing sanctuary to the PLO would eventually lead to an alliance with leftist and Arab nationalist parties (Namani, 2015, 119; Mackey, 1989, 144). The PLO was a crucial ally to the LNM as it possessed arms and conducted training for members (Hanf, 1993, 78, 127; Hudson, 1985, 183-186; Khalifah, 2001, 72-73). Its power also provided the left with an unprecedented ability to grow their influence and push for their long-standing demands (Gordon, 1980, 67; Barakat, 1977, 194).

In a recurring scene as in 1958, the largely Muslim support for Nasser’s Arab nationalism shifted to support the PLO whereas mostly Maronites opposed both the merger with UAR and allowance
of PLO activities respectively (Hanf, 1993, 112). While Maronite militias aimed at dismantling the PLO in Lebanon under the pretext of sovereignty and to prevent it from altering the confessional status quo, leftist militias allied with the PLO aimed at dismantling the confessional system (Namani, 2015, 147-149).

It is worth noting that the alliance of the PLO also extended to traditional Muslim leaders who wanted to strengthen their stance against the Christian establishment. They also had different goals than the LNM since their aim was altering the sectarian power-sharing system by granting more powers to Muslim communities (Makdisi, 2004, 12-13; Mackey, 1989, 143, 149; Salibi, 1976, 35; Traboulsi, 2007, 175). As a result, the presence of a foreign armed power on Lebanese soil was exploited by both traditional and radical leaders, each aiming for a completely different vision than the other. Furthermore, the LNM would not have had the chance to expand its support base and mount a serious challenge to the confessional system if it wasn’t for both the popular support for the PLO and their direct military presence.

Aside from the PLO, key regional and international powers involved in Lebanon did not support the LNM’s demand for abolishing the confessional system (Traboulsi, 1997, 160). The Syrian regime openly intervened in 1976 to stop the offensive of the LNM and prevent their victory against the Christian-dominated Lebanese Front (Winslow, 1996, 201). The regional envisionment of a solution to the civil war within the bounds of the National Pact as exemplified by the meeting between Jumblatt and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad during which the former rejected the compromise offered since it maintained the confessional system and merely enhanced Sunni power within it (Namani, 2015, 157-160; Hanf, 1993, 213-216; Cobban, 1985, 134-136; Barakat, 1977, 198).

Second Time Period
A new “Arab Cold War” is ongoing in the region between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan on one side and Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah on the other. This coincides with rising sectarianism in the Middle East as the conflict is portrayed as a Sunni-Shia one, albeit reality is different (Baumann, 2016, 174). The regional confrontation between Saudi Arabia, heavily influenced by Sunni Wahhabist ideology, and Iran, directly ruled by Shia clerics, has magnified the sectarian rhetoric between Salafists and Hariri on one hand and Hezbollah on the other (Baumann, 2016, 178; Fakhoury, 2014, 516).
The rise in Lebanese Sunni-Shia tensions began in 2005 with the assassination of Rafic Hariri which was initially blamed on the Assad regime and then on Hezbollah (Nelson, 2013, 352). This has been greatly exacerbated by the brief yet impactful occupation of Sunni inhabited areas of Beirut by Hezbollah in May 2008 following a government decision affecting its communication networks. This is coupled with the neighboring Syrian war which is portrayed as a largely Sunni rebellion against a minority Alawite regime backed by the Shia Hezbollah (Nelson, 2013, 363; Salamey & Payne, 2008, 458). This extends to Hezbollah’s dominance on Lebanese internal politics thus magnifying sectarian tensions (Abdo, 2017, 94).

Funding is also crucial for the continued influence of a political movement, and more often than not, it is provided by regional backers. Relevant examples are from Saudi Arabia to both Hariri and Salafists (Abdo, 2017, 95) whereas Hezbollah has direct organizational, ideological, and funding ties to Iran (Abdo, 2017, 104).

Amid this ongoing geopolitical struggle under the guise of sectarianism (Abdo, 2017, 146), the absence of regional and international support for an anti-sectarian alternative makes change very difficult as history has shown that foreign powers play a crucial role in internal disputes and developments in Lebanon (Atallah, 2011, 5).

**Concluding Remarks**

Whereas the first time period witnessed regional players providing both direct and indirect support for abolishing the confessional system on two main occasions, first in 1958 by Nasser and then in 1975 by the PLO, it also witnessed the prevention of such development from taking place as previously highlighted in Syria’s role in 1976. Disregarding the presence of regional counter-powers, as in any political case, regional backing was crucial in the mounting of any serious challenge against the status quo of the confessional system. The power of leftist parties would never have reached its popular and military momentum leading up to 1975 if it wasn’t for the PLO. The second time period however reflects a complete absence of any regional backing for anti-sectarian movements amid increasing sectarian polarization between Saudi Arabia and Iran which is projecting itself onto Sunni and Shia relations in several countries in the Middle East, including Lebanon.

One thing is for certain, historical developments in Lebanon cannot occur in a regional vacuum. The broader currents within the Middle East will always have an impact on domestic policy.
(Cobban, 1985, 226; Salame, 1994, 106-110). While domestic factors studied in previous sections such as political marginalization and socioeconomic conditions have some similarities between both time periods, albeit the results are quite different, current regional powers are heavily if not completely tilted towards sectarian rhetoric mobilization thus leaving anti-sectarian movements devoid of any influential foreign support or umbrella to rely on. It could be argued that the absence of such support could also be related to the absence of organized and viable anti-sectarian movements to actually support. As politics is related to interests, one must show their value to a foreign power to solicit their support rather than the other way around.
Conclusion

Sectarianism, regardless of its roots, has proven to be deeply embedded in Lebanese behavior and mentality. The further entrenchment established throughout the civil war and post-war period reflects the difficulty of breaking away from it, both culturally and politically. Religious communities remain the building blocks of the political system, and abolishing the confessional system requires gradual breaks from previous modes of behavior and governance (Makdisi, 2004, 167; Salibi, 1988, 194).

In spite of the largely Christian-Muslim divide which arised over the issue of abolishing the confessional system, previously marginal leftist parties were empowered in the late 1960s and 1970s and led the charge for political change. In spite of the failure of the attempt and confessional intentions of some of those involved, it did reflect the importance of a strong leader, cross-confessional membership, well-structured organization ready to incorporate disenfranchised citizens, and possibility of mobilizing the public behind anti-confessional goals. These key aspects were somehow absent in the more recent 2011 and 2015 protests which were short-lived and dwindled down. Both experiences however should take into consideration the importance of other key domestic and regional factors which lay the groundwork and make the public receptive to such ideologies within a highly sectarian society.

Two domestic factors dealt with in this study were political marginalization and socioeconomic demands. The former was highly present among the Muslim population in the first time period and among Christians and Sunnis in the second while the latter disproportionately affected Muslim regions, specifically Shia ones, in the first time period and regional disparities continued into the second period as well. Both factors make targets more susceptible as seen with the appeal of leftist groups in the 1960s and 1970s to the populations who suffered from poor living conditions and found political refuge within the left demanding political and economic reforms. In spite of similar conditions present in the second period, the previous appeal was not replicated among anti-confessional movements. Even though lower classes initially participated in new protests, they were not properly integrated and even alienated by organizers. While marginalization provides fertile ground for grassroots movements to develop and disrupt the status quo, experiences from both time periods reflected the possibility of citizens being driven
into completely opposite ideological directions which could be related to the viability, organization, and service networks of the proposed alternative.

The final factor taken into consideration touched upon regional interventions that, judging by Lebanon’s history, play an integral part in any major change that might take place. Key powers in the first time period pushed for anti-confessional agendas such as the PLO but were also countered by other powers such as Syria preventing such change from taking place. The second time period however lacks regional support for anti-confessional movements amid a confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has adopted a sectarian rhetoric.

As a final word, anti-systemic ideology cannot mobilize the public on a mass scale without linking the proposed anti-confessional reforms to the needs of the people, exemplified by political marginalization and poor socioeconomic conditions. Both these factors plant the seeds of discontent and the seeking of a viable alternative. Thus, anti-confessional movements have to possess good organization, leadership, and clear encompassing demands to be able to attract and provide refuge for those disenfranchised. Very similar conditions to those present in the 1960s are present now and in the past years, but the internal weaknesses of anti-confessional movements led to a failure in materializing similar support as before. Despite always being on the margins, anti-confessional movements had the chance to challenge the system whenever proper internal structures for movements were built, domestic factors fermented dissatisfaction, and regional backing was present. The latter may not be necessary to at least gain noticeable support whereas the former ones are. While these conditions also open the door for more radical sectarian groups as well since the initial attraction may be due to network of services, proper organization, and momentum rather than pure ideology, the goal of these movements is to cultivate this sentiment into an anti-confessional one capable of change.
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