Gendered Citizenship and the Sectarian Public Sphere
Women and Civic Space in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

Modern Lebanon's political sectarian system is the result of many years of external forces molding the territory and its sociopolitical structures to align with international interests. Civic spaces in Lebanon, and women's activity within these spaces, is dictated by sectarian dynamics within its politics and society. This paper explores the evolution of the Lebanese state and sectarianized experiences of citizenship in relation to the external forces that shaped the "Lebanese System" in place today.

Beginning in the late Ottoman and French Mandate periods, it identifies the key players in state formation both under colonial rule and later, as a sovereign state, a failing state in civil war, a post-conflict society. Finally, it frames Lebanon as a case study in 21st-century Middle East politics. It argues that the sectarian sociopolitical structure and gendered social and legal understandings of citizenship preclude any unified experience of public life across the Lebanese system, and thus prevents women from engaging fully in both Lebanese civic life and of their position as citizens in the global system.

It is crucial to understand the ways in which gendered, sectarian civic spaces have formed and continue to evolve as it is within these spaces where civil societies develop. This study identifies points of entry to civic life for women within the major Lebanese sects, as well as barriers to complete participation. It supports the consideration of gendered modes of civic participation within the larger framework of transnational politics, particularly in relation to Lebanon's continued strategic importance to regional and international actors.

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PREFACE

In scholarship and practice of development, statebuilding, and human rights, it has become fashionable to throw together buzzwords like "gender," "civil society," and "democracy." While this study explores these very subjects, my hope is that it will bring light to the fundamental challenges contained within such concepts.

Issues of women's rights must not be ignored in our pursuit of a better world, but we must also recognize that they are not isolated problems. Rather, these issues stem from complex histories of colonialism, conflict, and international interests. It is only through an understanding of these catalysts that women's advocates across the world can find solidarity and common ground.

This work is dedicated to the women who demand a position in public life, to those who unapologetically participate in the movement toward a better world. In Lebanon and beyond, it is these women whose voices are transforming the role of gender in their communities and abroad.

> *"Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of **equality in all spheres of society**, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of **equality, development and peace**."*
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> *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*
> *September 15, 1995*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of democracy and citizen engagement in the Middle East, Lebanon's is one of the most complex and fascinating cases. As one of the three "democratic founding regimes"[1] of the decolonization period and one of the few democratic governments in the region today, the country is seen as "the most Westernized Arab nation"[2] and an encouraging (if fragile) model of progress toward liberal democracy in the region. This reputation is upheld in most studies of the country's civil society, and Lebanon is considered "one of the most enabling legal and regulatory environments for civil society in the entire Arab world"[3] as well as one of the leading states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for women's civic participation. However, while "[w]omen have historically been very active in civil society [and] have led some of the charity and humanitarian activities for a long time… the general stereotype is that women prevail in the social sphere while men prevail in other organizations, which are economic or political in nature."[4] Indeed, women's participation in civil society and civic activity is limited by the gendered spheres of Lebanese society.

This discrepancy can best be understood when we separately examine civil society, public life and civic space. It is therefore important to understand the ways in which civic spaces have been constructed within Lebanon itself throughout its complex history and within its sectarian political structures. How did Lebanon's colonial history and early state formation influence the

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[1] Michele Penner Angrist, "The Making of Middle East Politics," in *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2013).
[2] Hayfaa Tlaiss and Saleema Kauser, "The Impact of Gender, Family and Work on the Career Advancement of Lebanese Women Managers," in *Gender Management: An International Journal* 26, no. 1 (2011), 10.
[3] "NGO Monitor: Lebanon," International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, June 20, 2015.
[4] Khaled Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society* (Beirut: International Management and Training Institute for CIVICUS, 2006). PDF.

development of the political sectarian structures in existence today? What role does sectarianism play in shaping "private" and "public" life? Finally, in what ways are experiences of civic space in Lebanon gendered, and how do women in Lebanon navigate these spaces?

Political sectarianism in Lebanon, which forms much of the foundation of its current political and cultural existence, is not organic; rather, it emerged as the result of colonial statecraft and geopolitical interests of international actors and has perpetuated itself due to elite power-sharing structures cultivated by these external influences. The fragmentation of Lebanese society that has become encoded in Lebanese life due to political sectarianism especially hinders women's participation in civic life and prevents a universal experience of citizenship and national identity. In Lebanon, navigating civic life is a delicate process in which sectarian cleavages institutionalized at the national level dictate the legal, political, and social structures within individual communities. These divides preclude any unified experience of public/private spheres across the Lebanese system.

Sectarian identity is evident in all aspects of Lebanese society, integrating the personal into the political and vice versa in a pluralism that "is basically primordial, i.e. traditional, where cohesive family allegiances and confessional groups are mobilized to participate politically as autonomous groups in defense and maintenance of their distinct social and political identities."[5] As Maya Mikdashi observes, "in the logic of the Lebanese state, a sect is both a historical

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[5] Kamal E. Abouchedid, "Correlates of Religious Affiliation, Religiosity and Gender Role Attitudes Among Lebanese Christian and Muslim College Students," *Equal Opportunities International* 26 no. 3 (2007): 196.

(oriented toward a private past) and a political (oriented toward a common future) identity."[6] Thus, sectarian identity is directly intertwined with political identity in the Lebanese state.

Lebanon as a Case Study in Non-Secular Civic Spaces

While primarily a country study, this is ultimately an examination of the ways in which international interests impact statebuilding and civic participation. Although Lebanon's particular sectarianization of sociopolitical structures is unique to that country, it is not the only non-secular state in the global system or the MENA region. Nor is it the only country to be profoundly impacted by colonial statecraft and postcolonial statebuilding. Thus, understanding the ways in which Lebanon's civic spaces have formed, and the means by which Lebanese citizens navigate these spaces, allows us to better comprehend civil societies and civic life in other post-colonial multiconfessional states.

It is within such a framework that more comprehensive studies can be conducted in the area of gender, civil society and state formation. While it is tempting to merge the three in the name of inclusivity, it is important to recognize that they are interwoven in complex and differing ways. In the example of Lebanon, it becomes clear that these aspects of society and civic life are mutually dependent rather than autonomous entities. By understanding the ways in which gendered sociopolitical structures and civil society influence each other outside of a Eurocentric liberal-democratic framework, we can begin to work toward more nuanced approaches to civic engagement at both the grassroots and transnational levels.

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[6] Maya Mikdashi, "Sex and Sectarianism: The Legal Architecture of Lebanese Citizenship," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 2 (2014): 283.

Notes on Research and Methodology

This study examines the sectarian sociopolitical frameworks that dictate the gendering of civic spaces in Lebanon. It does not attempt to generalize the variety of everyday lived experiences of Lebanese women, nor does it presume to argue for or against the merit of any one sectarian or secular approach to civic activity or public life. Rather, it assumes a multidisciplinary approach in an effort to avoid reliance on a singular lens of analysis, instead considering spaces available to organic movements within their relevant sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

As a case study, this research focuses primarily on literature and reports pertaining to gender, civil society and civic life in country-specific and regional contexts. The research draws from literature by international as well as Lebanese scholars and evaluators, and includes academic literature, NGO reports, interview transcripts, and news sources. This approach allows for a more inclusive review of the intricate systems and histories outlined in the study. However, the scope of this research is relatively limited, as it relies on secondary qualitative studies to conduct an analysis of a deeply complicated topic. The limits in both length and research capabilities make a complete study of the many facets of this topic unfeasible. Thus, while the following paper strives to convey the nuances of this debate, it is still influenced by the relatively Western-biased worldviews of the researcher.

Summary of Contents

This paper begins by developing a foundation for the study of civic participation and gendered space outside of a Western liberal-secular framework. It then presents the historical background for this study, tracing the consolidation of a sectarian elite and the construction of a Maronite hegemony during the French Mandate period (1920-1943) and post-independence state

formation (1943-1975). The following sections look more closely at the interplay between gender, sectarianism and transnational influence in Lebanon's more recent history and the present-day context. First, this paper examines the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1989) within the context of a sectarian proxy war. It outlines the multiple international patrons of the various militias and the ways in which these external interests influenced experiences of war. It also comments on the gendered aspects of the sectarian conflict.

It will then utilize this background information in the case study, which expands on the consequences of the war by exploring civic life in the immediate postwar period (1990-2005), and the significant role of Syria and other international players in shaping sectarian citizenship in the post-conflict state. The study goes on to outline the gendered and sectarianized sociopolitical frameworks of Lebanon in the post-Cedar Revolution 21st century (2005-present). It examines in more detail the social and legal status of women in Lebanon, and the gendered modes of civic participation which continue to prevent a unified experience of citizenship or solidarity. This section also examines the present crisis of political sectarianism in Lebanon and its implications for the future of sectarian citizenship in the country.

The extent to which women can participate in civic life depends on the parameters of the civic spaces available to them, and the barriers and points of entry contained within these frameworks. In the case of Lebanon, mapping the development of civic spaces requires an understanding of both internal and external influences on the sociopolitical structures of the country. These spaces did not form in a vacuum. Rather, they resulted from competing spheres of influence which shaped the Lebanese system as it exists today. Because of these influences, Lebanese identity coalesced around sectarian structures which cultivated differing social, cultural, and legal norms. The complex process of identity formation that occurred throughout the 20th

century led to the creation both of fragmented modes of citizenship and of sect-based structures

of patriarchy, which continually produce gendered relationships with the state.

II. THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

This study attempts to approach questions of gender and civic life in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary manner, employing theory in certain areas to form a foundation for analysis. It is important to note that one objective of this paper is to navigate the theories and terminology outlined below in a way that recognizes, and endeavors to operate outside of, the Eurocentric liberal-secular context in which most studies of civil society and civic engagement are based. It recognizes each of these entities as facets of broader structures, and thus demonstrates the ways in which they are interdependent.

Navigating Civil Society

Because this study is focused on the development of civic spaces and the ways in which women navigate within them, the term "civil society" will largely be used in the context of "associational life," or the concrete manifestation of a civic consciousness through collective action and association. However, to ascribe only this attribute to the definition and study of civil society would be an over-simplification of the term to the point of futility. Civic space is a collective sphere influenced by all facets of civil society; thus, the idea of a civil society should be approached in its entirety, taking into account the range of discourses around the subject as well as the specific frameworks within which it will be analyzed.

Discourses of Civil Society

It is tempting to hold up civil society and civic engagement as the miracle solution to social and political instability, intrastate conflict, and economic insecurity. Indeed, Paul W.T. Kingston observes that "in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the belief in the democratic potential of civil society has reached new heights, spawning all sorts of national and

international development programs aimed at its 'strengthening' and 'deepening'."[1] However, civil societies are intertwined with the social, political, and cultural realities in which they must operate; as Michael Edwards warns, civil society aid should not be invoked as the "silver bullet" to eradicate inequality, secure world peace, or accomplish any of the number of ideals generally attributed to a "perfect" world order.[2] To put it more bluntly: "blackmailing civil society actors with dollar signs is not an intelligent way to promote the rule of law, transparency, good governance, accountability and the acceptance of the principle of a peaceful succession of political power in which an independent civil society should be the main engine of the process."[3]

Yet civil society cannot be written off as a self-sustaining inevitability which is impervious to external actors both within and outside of the state. This sector fulfills an important role in human societies, as "collective action in search of the good society is a universal part of human experience, though manifested in a million different ways across time, space and culture."[4] Civic spaces, then, are a necessary component of human society, as they provide a platform from which civil society actors can pursue this "good society." They are by no means independent forces within these spaces.

As Sheila Carapico argues, "civil society is not a constant, unchanging cultural attribute, but rather a variable that changes shape and scope according to political and economic

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[1] Paul W.T. Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism: Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 7.
[2] Michael Edwards, *Civil Society,* 3rd edition (Cambridge; Malden: Polity Press 2014).
[3] Noureddine Jebnoun, "Civil Society in Arab Lands: By Ballot or by Bullet?" *Jadaliyya*, February 20, 2011.
[4] Edwards, *Civil Society,* 1.

circumstances."[5] Civil society – and with it, civic space – evolves to accommodate the sociopolitical realities of a given place and time. Not only does civil society adapt to accommodate these realities, but perceptions of its purpose and value to society as a whole will also vary across political orientations, value systems, and historical contexts.[6] Thus, a civil society in a proto-democratic Middle East country in 2015 will operate differently and fulfill different roles than that of a Western European country in 1999.

While the concept of "civil society" as it is understood today is relatively new (having arisen from waves of post–Cold War optimism in the 1990s)[7], civil society itself, as well as the scholarship surrounding it, have long been elements of human societies. In his "History of Civil Society Ideas," John Ehrenberg notes that the idea of a pluralistic civic space "constituted by the life of noble action" can be traced back as far as Aristotle.[8] As Western political society developed, so did conceptualizations of this aspect of civic life and the relationship between states, markets and citizens. Civil society as it is understood and studied today is thus the product of a long evolution of Western political philosophy, duly focused on the development of civil society within a Western context. While Ehrenberg does not dispute the development of civil society outside of this framework, his analysis does not address alternate understandings of civil society and civic spaces.

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[5] Sheila Carapico, "Civil Society," in *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East,* ed. Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2013), 100.
[6] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 2.
[7] Thomas Carothers and Saskia Brechenmacher, "The Civil Society Flashpoint," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* March 6, 2014.
[8] John Ehrenberg, "A History of Civil Society Ideas," in *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* ed. Michael Edwards (2011): *Oxford Handbooks Online.*

Perhaps, then, it is more useful to leverage Edwards' three-part definition of civil society: as associational life, as the good society, and as the public sphere. This allows for more open interpretation and nuanced analysis of the term. First, it allows for an understanding of civil society as "a *part* of society that is distinct from states and markets,"[9] that is, as associational life. This is the concept of civil society as voluntary, consensual involvement in groups, organizations, and associations. Although associations are not considered part of the state or market, they are not necessarily independent actors; indeed, argues Kingston, associational life is tied to the evolution of political economy and social frameworks within a state.[10]

As Kingston demonstrates in his analysis of class structure and civil society in Lebanon, fragmentation within social structures poses a challenge to Edwards' association of civil society with the "good society" as the use of the term "as shorthand for the kind of society in which we want to live."[11] In this definition, subjective indicators such as norms and values must be established to determine who is "in" and "out" of this society. In states with uneven or fractured social development, such a subjectivity leads to the fragmentation of civic spheres. Edwards does caution against idealization alone, arguing that "visions of the good society that rest on voluntary action alone will always be built on shifting sands,"[12] and that interaction across institutions including family, government, firms and civil society is necessary for stability. However, cross-sector interaction alone cannot mitigate the effects of social, economic, or cultural divides within

[9] Edwards, Civil *Society*, 19.
[10] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 9-11.
[11] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 44.
[12] Ibid, 56.

a state structure. As Marie-Claude Thomas observes, "subgroups are formed when culture is located outside the popular comprehension; hence, an intellectual difference of opinion is created between classes that are not always entirely caught up."[13] The "good society," much like associational life, is subject to these intellectual conflicts within and among social groups.

In its third and final role, the public sphere, "civil society becomes the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration."[14] Edwards argues that such a public forum is a necessary aspect of civic participation and conducive to more open societies. However, automatically restricting civil society and civic space to the public realm limits what can and cannot be considered "civic action." The concept of the "public sphere" will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter, as it relates most directly to the intersection of gender and civic space.

Civil Society in Context: The Middle East and Lebanon

The theories and findings of civil society scholars, though helpful in developing a framework for study, are largely based on observations and interpretations of civil society in established Western liberal democracies. Thus, they cannot be transferred directly into study of post-colonial developing states or regions. In the context of the Middle East, Edwards notes the need to be wary of generalized statements about civil society in the region, as "the reality of associational life

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[13] Marie-Claude Thomas, Women in Lebanon: Living with Christianity, Islam and Multiculturalism (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 204.
[14] Edwards, *Civil Society,* 67.

in non-western culture is one of 'mix-and-match' because they have been subject to so many

external influences in both the colonial and postcolonial eras."[15]

Sheila Carapico expands on this notion, arguing that not only is civil society dynamic, but

it is also not inherently liberal, progressive, or even democratic.[16] That is to say that democracy is

not a requirement for civic spaces, thus opening up the study of civil society and civic

engagement to nondemocratic or protodemocratic frameworks. However, this requires a

definitional restructuring of civic space to include areas traditionally discarded as non-political

(i.e. contained within the "private sphere"), such as social services, as well as digital and

transnational civic arenas. Carapico argues that the rich culture of Abrahamic faith-based civic

activity and philanthropic traditions of the Middle East, as well as the new spaces created by

decolonization and the emergence of market economies in the region allowed for the expansion

of these spaces despite the rise of nondemocratic governments in the latter half of the 20th

century.[17] Nevertheless, observes Eberhard Kienle, "authoritarian rule and strong non-voluntary

forms of social organization [in the region] continue to impose significant limits on independent

associational life and the strength of public spheres."[18] While the processes of statebuilding in the

mid- to late-20th century may have opened new avenues for civic participation, ultimately this

aspect of society continues to be impacted by the legacies of colonial political technologies and

early state formation.

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[15] Ibid, 33
[16] Carapico, "Civil Society."
[17] Ibid.
[18] Eberhard Kienle, "Civil Society in the Middle East," In *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* ed. Michael Edwards (2011): *Oxford Handbooks Online*.

Indeed, civil society in the Middle East cannot be considered in a binary of state and nonstate actors. In postcolonial states, civil society is inextricably linked with state formation, particularly within new democracies and protodemocratic frameworks. In this political climate, "interest groups and other civic associations allow citizens to monitor government actions, articulate and aggregate interests, and exert political influence… [while] norms of governance have not been well established and power can be easily abused."[19] Because of the ongoing colonial legacies and the sociopolitical structures that shape these states, it is often difficult to distinguish civil society from other sectors. It is "an open-ended and disaggregated concept whose coherence and autonomy are highly compromised by the interpretations of the market and the state."[20]

Just as the potential for a civil society to exist within a nondemocratic framework must be considered, so must the idea of a nonsecular civil society be examined. Particularly in the context of Lebanon, it is difficult to analyze any aspect of civil society and associational life without considering organizations that "have represented the concerns of nonvoluntary 'imagined communities' based on language or religion rather than citizenship."[21] The enigma of the nonsecular civic space is a major component of civic discourse in the sectarian state, and presents a significant challenge to the development of cross-sectarian civic spaces. As Donald E. Miller observes, although civil societies can be enriched by "vibrant institutional religion [that] engages

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[19] Mark Tessler and Eleanor Gao: "Democracy and the Political Culture Orientation of Ordinary Citizens: A Typology for the Arab World and Perhaps Beyond," in *Public Opinion in the Middle East: Survey Research and the Political Orientations of Ordinary Citizens*, ed. Mark Tessler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 169.
[20] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism.
[21] Kienle, "Middle East," 3

'the spirit' at both the organizational and individual levels," this same institution "has the potential to inflict great harm, especially if it becomes an instrument of the state or an uncritical advocate for sectarian or corporate interests." [22] It is this through the lens of this delicate balance between religious identity, citizenship and civil society that Lebanese society and politics can be studied.

Parameters of Sectarianism and Secularism

Much like the term "civil society," both "consociationalism" (or "sectarianism") and "secularism" are broad terms which must be persistently redefined and contextualized; this study will refer to these terms exclusively in the context of the Lebanese state. However, since "sectarian politics take multiple forms, operate at multiple levels of a political system, and, as a result, have multiple histories,"[23] even this restriction requires clarification of historical, cultural and geographic frameworks.

Consociationalism and Political Sectarianism

Suad Joseph argues that "sectarianism is about how 'differences' are constructed; because people can believe they are very different when they are not, the task of the scholar is to describe what differences do exist, how they emerged, and why people believe they are different."[24] Thus, the task of framing political sectarianism for study must take into account not only the perceived divisions within a society, but also the ways in which citizens and institutions interact within and across supposed communal boundaries. With sectarianism rooted in communal identity, this

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[22] Donald E. Miller, "Civil Society and Religion," In *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* edited by Michael Edwards (2011): *Oxford Handbooks Online*.
[23] Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 23
[24] Suad Joseph, "Pensee 2: Sectarianism as Imagined Sociological Concept and as Imagined Social Formation," *Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 no. 4 (2008). 553-554.

structure will differ depending on the identity groups contained within it. It is for this reason that this study defines not only the concept of consociationalism and sectarianism, but also the structure of political sectarianism within the specific context of the Lebanese state.

Sectarianism in its most fundamental definition is a specific kind of consociationalism, a form of government in which "national identity… is deeply contested and political allegiance is fragmented along communal lines rather than being embedded in a single centralized national authority;"[25] Kingston defines consociationalism as "regime types that revolve around the formal sharing of political power between different religious (and… perhaps also ethnic) communities."[26] A consociational government arises from a "highly pluralist"[27] society which comprises several minorities as a means by which to guarantee political representation of all groups and to prevent any one group from seizing power over the state.

Consociationalism and sectarianism are not necessarily organic structures. Salamey and Tabar argue that consociationalism is *presented* as "a means to establish a democracy that works to preserve the autonomy of groups, while maintaining a sense of a collective nationhood;"[28] yet it is also a structure that has historically served the political interests of imperial powers and political elites.[29] Kingston further argues that "sectarianism has been 'constructed' and 'produced' by various socioeconomic and political factors (and, hence, also can be 'unmade');"[30] Salloukh et.

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[25] Salamey, *Politics & Government,* 7
[26] Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 22.
[27] "Consociationalism," in *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, ed. Craig Calhoun (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89.
[28] Imad Salamey and Paul Tabar, "Democratic Transition and Sectarian Populism: The Case of Lebanon," in *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5 no. 4 (2012): 500.
[29] Maya Mikdashi. "What is Political Sectarianism?" *Jadaliyya* March 25, 2011.
[30] Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 22.

al, while agreeing with this premise, argue that the Lebanese sectarian political economy is cyclical in that it "sustains a stubborn institutional and clientelist complex, enables the sectarian/political elite to reproduce sectarian identities and institutional dynamics, and exposes the country to external manipulations, geopolitical contests, and perpetual crisis."[31] Sectarianism, then, is the institutionalization of constructed communal identities which can then be manipulated and reproduced both internally and externally. It is not merely the natural or expected outcome of a pluralistic, multiconfessional society.

A study of sectarianism, although employing religious identity and custom, must be decoupled from the study of individuals' relationship with and practice of spirituality. Joseph's observation that "the slippery slope between sect as social organization and religion as theology continues to lead to analytical slippages between the deployment of 'sectarianism' and 'religion' as conceptual tools"[32] demonstrates the importance of this distinction. It is for this purpose that the term "political sectarianism" may be introduced to distinguish the sectarian framework of Lebanon as "a political technology that claims to represent, channel, and thus transcend the sectarian prison that Lebanese citizens are… enclosed within."[33] In other words, employing *political* sectarianism as an analytical tool allows us to examine state-established sectarian classification from individual religious (or non-religious) identity.

Finally, it is important to note that sectarianism, while a driving force behind politics and society in Lebanon, is not the only contributor to violence and social tensions in the country.[34]

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[31] Bassel F. Salloukh et. al, *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 2-3.
[32] Joseph, "Sectarianism as Imagined," 2.
[33] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[34] Ibid.

To ascribe all conflicts and challenges to "sectarian tensions" is to overlook a complex history of intercommunal relations as well as both national and international power structures. Sectarianism is not a blanket explanation for the complex and fragile social structures of the country, but rather one of many catalysts.

Secularism

Secularism in this study refers not to the absence of a religious identity, but rather the reconciliation of these identities under a unified, rather than sectarian fragmented, political structure. That is, religion may still exist as a fundamental aspect of public life in a secular political system. It is simply not the primary defining feature of structures of law and governance. This is in contrast to normative Western understandings of "secularism," which "[do] not quite translate into better understanding of the dynamics of secularism as a political project in the Middle East, and the complexities and contradictions of lived secularity there."[35] Maia Carter Hallward notes that "Western IR scholars often take the 'secular' (often seen through Western Protestant lenses) for granted; rarely do we consider how the boundaries of the 'secular' are defined and deployed in scholarship and policy."[36]

Thus, much like sectarianism, secularism must be analyzed within relevant cultural and sociopolitical contexts. First, it must be noted that secularism is a political doctrine,[37] and therefore carries with it implications of political structures and institutions. Secularism cannot

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[35] Stacey Gutkowski, "It's Not All About Islam: Misreading Secular Politics in the Middle East," *Open Democracy,* April 25, 2015.
[36] Maia Carter Hallward, "Situating the 'Secular': Negotiating the Boundary between Religion and Politics," *International Political Sociology* 2 (2008): 1.
[37] Akeel Bilgrami, "Secularism: Its Context and Content," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 45 no. 1 (2008): 26.

exist independently of the state. Further, while political secularism does offer an alternative to sectarianism, it is not the ultimate solution to the challenges presented by sectarian political structures. As Mikdashi notes, "you can have a secular state that is sexist, hyper capitalist, racist, xenophobic, patriarchal, oppressive and repressive of public opinion."[38] Even within the context of political sectarian structures such as that of Lebanon, civil (secular) laws can be equally, if not "more wide reaching,"[39] than religious legal codes.

Theories of Gender and Civic Space

The final framework to be incorporated into this study is feminist and gender theory. Particularly relevant is scholarship in this field that considers feminist consciousness outside of the hegemonic Western context. While this study does not directly contribute to this discourse, it does attempt to examine women's relationship to civic space in the specific context of Lebanon. Thus, the analysis presented employs elements of gender theory as a means of navigating complex sociopolitical systems and cultural norms in order to "not fall into polarizations that place feminism on the side of the West."[40]

Agency, Empowerment and Liberation

In her essay "How Not to Study Gender in the Middle East," Maya Mikdashi summarizes the need for a framework that exceeds Western assumptions as such: "liberal feminism's assumptions as to what constitutes 'feminist politics' or 'feminist causes' are at best flawed. At worst they are

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[38] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[39] Maya Mikdashi, "How Not to Study Gender in the Middle East," *Jadaliyya*, March 31, 2012.
[40] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104 no. 3 (2002): 788.

exercises in epistemological hegemony and the violent remaking of the world according to secular and neoliberal rights frameworks."[41] In order to best avoid making such assumptions, it is necessary to explore different understandings of key terms often employed in the study of women's status across the world.

It is tempting to describe and apply the term "agency" within this hegemonic paradigm; indeed, this has often been the case in discourses of women's rights even in reference to non-western societies. However, if agency is to be understood as personal freedom, then understandings of agency must be open to interpretation depending on social, cultural and even individual circumstances.[42] In other words, "it is crucial to detach the notions of agency from the goals of progressive politics."[43] Suad Joseph goes even further in critiquing notions of agency, suggesting the addition of "intentionality" to discourses of oppression as this "invites a probe into before and during actions."[44]

Considerations of agency and the discourse surrounding it are crucial in defining the ways in which women negotiate their position in public and political realms. It is a concept that provides a framework for studying differing perceptions and means of civic life across cultural boundaries. However, Abu-Lughod cautions against falling back on pure cultural relativism – that is, attributing practices perceived as oppressive or unjust to "just the culture" – to account for

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[41] Mikdashi, "How Not to Study Gender."
[42] Abu-Lughod, "Muslim Women," 786.
[43] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject: Some Reflections on the Islamic Revival in Egypt," *Temenos* 42 no. 1 (2006): 42.
[44] Suad Joseph, "Thinking Intentionality: Arab Women's Subjectivity and its Discontents," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8 no. 2 (2012): 2.

these differences. She notes that many of these practices, including the dominance of social

conservatism and even violent extremism, are not the results of isolated social development. It is

colonial statecraft, not isolated cultural evolution (or stagnation), that facilitated intercommunal

conflict and conservative ideologies in the region.[45] It is through such approaches that Western

actors, no matter how well-intentioned, risk adopting missions of "empowerment" which in

reality merely change the type of inequality women experience. This is exemplified in a global

survey of women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) published in 2015, in which Ruth

Phillips concluded that "there is a lively engagement with feminisms within women's NGOs…

and the feminist objectives of the NGOs are at odds with what can be seen as the dominant

policy framework of empowerment as a means to gender equality."[46]

Many scholars of Middle East women's studies argue that the dissonance between

perceived needs and functional applications of development efforts is reminiscent of "colonial

feminism" and the practice of "[utilizing] the 'question of women' to legitimize foreign

intervention, occupation and influences… through the rhetoric of progress, development,

economic growth and neoliberalism."[47] Indeed, much of the rhetoric of "liberation" leveraged by

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[45] Abu-Lughod, "Muslim Women."
[46] Ruth Phillips, "How 'Empowerment' May Miss its Mark: Gender Equality Policies and How They Are Understood in Women's NGOs," in *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 26, no. 4 (2015): 1141.
[47] Diane Singerman, "Gender and Politics," in *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East,* ed. Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2013), 171.

Western actors of the 21ˢᵗ century reflects this fabrication of "otherness" through a perceived oppression of women.[48]

Public-Private Spheres and Civic Space

In exploring intersections of gender, citizenship and civic life, particularly within the context of Lebanon, we must also recognize conceptualizations of the public and private as both distinctive and overlapping entities. As Edwards notes, "all societies possess a range of [public spheres] at different levels."[49] Equally important is the existence of a private sphere, as "the public realm cannot be fully understood in the absence of the private sphere, and, similarly, the meaning of the original [social] contract is misinterpreted without both mutually dependent halves of the story."[50] This study will examine the interactions that occur both within and among these spheres.

In its most basic definition, the public sphere is understood as the male-gendered, predominantly political sphere of a society. For example, a World Bank report on gender equality in the MENA region argues that "the public sphere is the sphere of power, influence, and patronage and, as such, has been traditionally reserved for men," and that "a call for gender equality is effectively a 'transgression' of women into this space and a claim to share power and

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[48] Abu-Lughod unpacks this argument by demonstrating the ways in which discourses of "liberation," particularly in relation to "oppressed" Muslim women in countries such as Afghanistan, serve as a 21ˢᵗ-century extension of this colonial discourse. See Abu-Lughod, "Muslim Women," 784.

[49] Edwards, *Civil Society,* 69.

[50] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition,* ed. Rick Willford and Robert L. Miller (New York: Routledge, 1999), 24.

control."[51] Lina Khatib expands upon this definition, arguing that "because politics is identified with a male public sphere, democracy itself becomes associated with men."[52]

Although both the public and private spheres contain specific, highly gendered attributes, they are not clearly delineated aspects of society. Two central points should be considered here. First, as will be demonstrated in later chapters, citizenship and civic life are shaped by the interaction of what is perceived as the "public" and the "private." That is to say, as Edwards observes, "one cannot ignore private interests or identities in order to make a public… nor can groups that have been historically isolated and marginalized be expected to enter the public sphere on equal terms."[53]

Second, because of the fluidity of the public and private, there is also a gray area between the political and the non-political. Indeed, Joseph argues that "the imagined binary between public and private conflates multiple domains of social activity in such a way as to gloss gender issues, particularly by glossing the impact of systems of gendered domination across social fields."[54] The polarization of the public-private removes what is considered "private" from the political realm entirely,[55] despite the frequent overlap of the two. Due to this ambiguity in what is and is not "public" or "political," strictly defining what is and is not civic space becomes a difficult task. This study will focus largely on the ways in which women function as citizens

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[51] World Bank, Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004): 14.
[52] Lena Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 no. 3 (2008): 442.
[53] Edwards, *Civil Society,* 81.
[54] Suad Joseph, "The Public/Private: The Imagined Boundary in the Imagined Nation/State/Community: The Lebanese Case," *The Feminist Review* no. 57 (1997): 76.
[55] Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship, and Political Agency," 443.

within the public/private frameworks of their own societies, but this too remains open to interpretation.

Because of these ambiguities, this study will primarily use the term "civic space" to include what is perceived to be public as well as private. While it is necessary to make the distinction between what is *seen* as public (i.e. male) space and private (i.e. female) space, it is difficult to discuss these distinctions in practical terms, as they stem from a constructed binary which, in reality, is often blurred. In the following chapters, "public sphere" and "private sphere" will refer to the social and cultural constructions of the public-private, while "civic space" leaves open the possibility of a convergence of the two. With this, it becomes possible to argue that women can enter civic spaces through what is often perceived to be the private (such as domestic spaces and motherhood).

Summary

In a study which encompasses both sectarian politics and gender, the key terms and concepts which drive the research and analysis cannot be approached from a single angle. Indeed, it is the complex nature of these ideas that necessitates such a project. Widening these definitions creates a space for further interpretation of civil society, gender, and identity theories within new social, cultural, and political contexts.

Therefore, the following analysis will not attempt to construct firm definitions, but rather will endeavor to navigate among these dynamic concepts. In examining civil society, it is crucial not only to take into consideration the myriad actors contained within this sector, but also to think about the ways in which it may function outside of the context of secular Western democracies. Although this project looks primarily at associational life as a means of representing

civic engagement, even this does not exist as an isolated entity. Civil associations and those who participate in them interact with other aspects of the society in which they operate, whether this be legal institutions or cultural frameworks. Thus, in this study in particular, it is also important to maintain a "slippery definition"[56] of the terms "sectarianism" and "secularism" in order to better understand the complex sociopolitical frameworks in which Lebanese civil society operates. Most important in this endeavor is to distinguish political sectarianism and secularism from individual religious identity. As we will see in later chapters, "sectarian identity" in this context refers to the ways in which citizenship is defined by sect-based categories.

Finally, this project works at the intersection of political activity and cultural frameworks. Thus, although it is not exclusively a study of gender, it should take into account the multifaceted nature of gendered citizenship in terms of agency (or better, intentionality) and oppression. It will also account for the overlapping nature of the public and the private, especially in the context of a state in which much of what would be considered "private" has come to play a prominent role in the political realm, by focusing on the existence of a "civic space."

Because identity is so deeply engrained in Lebanese sociopolitical structures, it is virtually impossible to decouple the personal from the political. Colonial statecraft and the perpetration of a sectarian elite through the 20th century and into the 21st constructed parameters of civic space that were fractured along sectarian lines. Within these spaces emerged sectarianized structures of patriarchy which implemented barriers to civic life for Lebanese women. Although these structures share similar traits, they exist independently within individual sects, preventing unified experiences of civic life and thus barring women from mobilizing under any collective identity.

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[56] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 23.

III. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LEBANESE POLITICAL SECTARIANISM

Imperial Statecraft: Foundations of a Sectarian State

Although Lebanon is not the only consociational political system in the post-colonial world, it is among the earliest.[1] This can be largely attributed to the statecraft employed by French powers in the Mandate period of the 1920s and '30s; however, the internal divisions of the Ottoman period which preceded the "political technologies"[2] of French control should not be dismissed as insignificant. It is these preexisting social and cultural structures that provided a foundation for this construction. Due to this foundation, the French annexation of territories around Mount Lebanon to form Greater Lebanon had profound effects not only on the demographic construction of Mandate Lebanon, but also on the development of a new national identity.

Mount Lebanon in the Ottoman Period

It is important to note that the concept of democracy and republican ideals was relatively well-established in Lebanon before the enactment French Mandate rule in the 1920s.[3] While under the Ottoman Empire, the territory of Mount Lebanon held close ties with European states because of the Maronite Christian population.[4] Additionally, the territory of Mount Lebanon and parts of Transjordan that fell within the constructed borders of modern Lebanon in the colonial era were inhabited by highly multiconfessional societies. The religious communities of

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[1] Salamey and Tabar, "Democratic Transition and Sectarian Populism," 500.
[2] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[3] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 25.
[4] Salamey and Tabar, "Democratic Transition and Sectarian Populism," 505.

Mount Lebanon (Maronite, Druze and Shi'a), while self-governing in their own communities,[5]

also had socioeconomic ties across communal lines.[6]

An early political sectarianism began to emerge in the mid- to late-19th century. It is

during this period that the territory was divided along sectarian fractures following

intercommunal disputes.[7] The *qa'imaqam* (two-district) system introduced in 1842 divided

Maronite and Druze populations, thus politicizing what was before a largely cultural identity.[8]

These early "communal power-sharing institutions" sparked "profound transformations in the

area's political field in which democratic and sectarian governance principles came to be

conjoined."[9] The political-sectarian divides imposed by the Ottoman powers ultimately

necessitated the formation of a multisectarian system of rule in order to quell the rise in

intercommunal violence.[10] Confessional divides remained as the Ottoman Empire fell, replacing

its control in the region with French Mandate rule.

Sectarian Statecraft in Mandate Lebanon

While existing social divisions did contribute to the creation of a sectarian form of governance,

Lebanon's history of colonialism and external statecraft in the 20th century was instrumental in

shaping the political sectarian system of modern Lebanon. During French colonization after

World War I, communal divides were leveraged as a means of implementing colonial policy and

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[5] David Hirst, Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East (London: Faber and Faber ltd, 2010), 8.
[6] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 24.
[7] Imad Salamey, *The Government and Politics of Lebanon* (London; New York: Routledge Press, 2014), 18.
[8] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 13.
[9] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 27.
[10] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 14.

shaping politics and society under a largely authoritarian rule.[11] By exploiting existing sectarian cleavages, French colonial powers were able to implement a strategy of "divide and rule" which further cultivated a class of sectarian elite and "the penetration of factionalized elite power deep into the Lebanese state."[12] Kingston describes this French influence as promoting "sectarianism from above" (the "reimposition of sectarian democracy") and "sectarianism from below" (leveraging civil and political society to carry out sectarian policy).[13]

The French expansion of the territory from Mount Lebanon to "Greater Lebanon" (incorporating what had formerly been parts of Syria and nearly doubling the size of the state[14]) fueled intercommunal tensions by incorporating Muslims of largely pan-Arab identities into this Maronite-led society.[15] With this territorial expansion, the society comprised groups of various backgrounds and identities stitched together under the overarching designation of Greater Lebanon. While the newly added Muslim populations opposed the annexation and continued to align themselves with pan-Arab nationalisms, the Christians of Mount Lebanon, finding themselves crowded out by new Muslim majorities, expanded upon a budding Christian nationalism. Their nationalist identity was rooted largely in the Maronites' indigenous claims to the territory and an ideology of "Phoenicianism," an historicist ideology "based on the belief that the Lebanese political entity is … not the product of the twentieth century."[16] Indeed, Asher

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[11] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 28.
[12] Ibid, 30.
[13] Ibid, 28.
[14] Hirst, Beware of Small States,10.
[15] Ibid, 11.
[16] As'ad Abukhalil, "Phoenicianism," in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa,* ed. Philip Mattar, 2nd Edition, Volume 3 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004): *Gale Virtual Reference Library,* Online.

Kaufman argues that it is Phoenicianism that linked Maronite communities with French colonial powers both politically and culturally.[17]

The Mandate era saw the drafting of the Lebanese Constitution in 1926, which was primarily an undertaking of French and Christian elites, and which integrated both democratic ideals and sectarian provisions. With this constitution, intended to shape the country in the mold of the French Third Republic, Lebanon was among the earliest emerging countries of the post-WWI international system to implement a democratic political framework.[18] In an effort to encompass the multiethnic structure of Lebanese society in this foundational document, the constitution further fractured the confessional system by "bypassing the historical development of the two main ethnic-nationalisms … [and recognizing] instead the existence of seventeen religious communities."[19] Political association within the new Lebanese nation-state was no longer a binary of Franco-Christian or pan-Arab allegiances, but a collection of politicized confessional identities. Although not explicitly sectarian or consociationalist, this constitution formed the foundation for sectarian divisions of power in favor of the Maronite communities by delegating a significant portion of state power to the office of President, which was held by the Maronites.[20]

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[17] Asher Kaufman, "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 no. 1 (2001): 173-194.
[18] Salamey, Government and Politics, 27.
[19] Walid Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 82.
[20] Salamey, Government and Politics, 29.

Because of their separation from the pan-Arab movement, Christian communities enjoyed almost exclusive participation in the statebuilding process of the early Mandate period.[21] Christian elites leveraged their historic relationship with France to promote a vision of an independent, separate Lebanese state, based extensively on Christian ideologies of Lebanese nationalism. This concept stood in stark contrast to the aspirations of the Muslim communities who continued to see themselves primarily as Syrian and favored integration into Arab Syria.[22] Thus, even in the earliest stages of its development, modern Lebanon was defined by a politicization of sectarian interests. The French territory was split into "ethnically divided mini-states"[23] in order to prevent a consolidated, unified resistance to colonial rule. Within these divides, factionalized civic spaces also began to emerge, though civic activity within the state was conducted largely by Christian elites. It is within this sociopolitical context that an independent Lebanese state emerged in the early 1940s, with complete autonomy recognized on November 22, 1943.[24]

Consociational Power-Sharing and the Birth of Modern Lebanon

By the mid-1930s, both Lebanese civic life and relations with French powers began to change. Within Lebanon, the Muslim communities began to participate more directly in Lebanese political life, and considerations of compromise with Christian political powers began to emerge in the Muslim political agenda.[25] Further, with the onset of WWII in Europe, French influence

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[21] Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism, 79.
[22] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 10.
[23] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[24] Salamey, Government and Politics, 29.
[25] Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism, 85.

in Lebanon was declining, leaving the Maronites more socially and politically vulnerable. These developments eventually led to the rise of the right-wing, Lebanese nationalist Phalange (Kata'eb) party, which (at least initially) worked with its Muslim counterparts to advocate for Lebanese independence from French colonial rule.[26]

After independence, sectarian divides were institutionalized and continued to dictate civic life as France's colonial policies and the leveraging of factionalized elite carried over into the formation of the independent Lebanese state. The 1943 National Pact between the sectarian elite established a power-sharing agreement among the seventeen recognized sects in "an historic compromise" in which both Christians and Muslims renounced external ties (to Western powers and to pan-Arab allegiances, respectively).[27] The pact also established a proportional power-sharing mechanism in which the political offices were allocated by sect: Maronites were given the presidency, Sunni Muslims the office of the Prime Minister, and Shi'a Muslims the Speaker of Parliament. With this allocation of power, sectarian divisions were enshrined at the highest levels of governance in the emerging independent state.

Lebanese social and political life was thus grounded in a precarious foundation of contesting identity, with Christians maintaining an ideology of Lebanese (i.e. Lebanese Christian) exceptionality and the Muslims adhering to a collective Arab identity.[28] The division of power impacted each sectarian community in different ways. While drawing concessions from both pan-Arab and Christian nationalist groups, the National Pact ultimately favored the

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[26] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 91.
[27] Ibid, 11.
[28] Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism, 88-9.

Christians not only by giving them the presidency, but also by assigning a proportional advantage in a six-to-five system of representation.[29]

The Maronite hegemony thus penetrated the structure of the independent state, despite their slipping claim to demographic majority. Conversely, the Shi'a communities, despite their growing numbers, were given the lowest position among the three major sects. Thus, the Shi'a experience in both the social and political spheres remained primarily one of otherness, a contributing factor to the development of a distinctive Shi'a nationalism "in which Lebanese Shi'ites [broke] with the dominant national narrative of Maronite Lebanon … and [aimed] to establish a national narrative dominated by Lebanese Shi'ite visions of morality, themes and symbolism."[30]

Following the formation of the Pact, Lebanon continued to struggle to define a coherent national identity. Among Christian communities, the Lebanese-Christian identity began to fracture in perceptions of nationhood: the "Arab-leftist" ideology which aligned with pan-Arabism, and the more mainstream right-wing "Lebanonist" philosophy. This divide "moved the center of gravity in the Christian traditional debate from the notion of a totally independent Lebanon to the search for a compromise between 'Lebanonism' and 'Arabism.'"[31]

The Shi'ites continued to face marginalization in the Maronite-dominated society. The Shi'a elite who did hold influence "were feudal traditional leaders disconnected from the realities

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[29] Salamey, Government and Politics, Kindle edition.
[30] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 3
[31] Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism, 119-20.

of their constituency,"[32] which left the largely rural Shi'a population with little connection to the political and social development of their country. These communities were further disadvantaged as tensions in the predominantly Shi'a south forced many inhabitants to migrate to the southern suburbs of Beirut as conflict with Israel escalated.[33]

The Shihabist administration (1958-1970)[34] attempted to implement cross-sectarian national sentiment, but by 1970 power returned to the hands of the political sectarian elite and these efforts faded in favor of sect-based identity structures.[35] Combined with the continued political uncertainty of the new state, persisting sectarian means of dictating political and social life pushed these divisions beyond intercommunal tensions into a fifteen-year civil war that shifted the Lebanese sociopolitical landscape and leveraged a tangible threat to the Christian hegemony in the Lebanese system.

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[32] Marie Claude Thomas, Women in Lebanon: Living with Christianity, Islam and Multiculturalism (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 89
[33] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 95
[34] See also Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 39.
[35] Bassel Salloukh, et. al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 19.

IV.   LEBANON'S CIVIL WAR AS A SECTARIAN PROXY WAR

1975: Sectarianism Implodes

The fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War splintered the urban landscape into sectarian battlegrounds for factional militias. The year 1975 saw the proliferation of intercommunal conflict between multiple factions of Lebanese society, specifically between conservative Maronite Christians, Palestinians[1] and Muslim reformists.[2] The "intensifying cycle of tit-for-tat atrocities" ultimately evolved into a full-scale civil war with the Black Saturday attacks in December 1975.[3] The ensuing war polarized identity groups as Maronite, Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, Palestinian, and other militias both sectarian and secular fought for power in a demographic free-for-all. Sectarianism was no longer an accommodation of public life; it became the primary means by which public spaces were delineated and navigated.

While sectarian divisions served as fuel for much of the conflict, the underlying causes were much more complex. Intersectarian tensions increased the conflict as the multiconfessional governmental structure collapsed and sectarian identities were manipulated to service the end goals of both domestic and external actors. Spheres of influence were meticulously cultivated as these interests merged and collided. The war illuminated the complex web of influence and interests among sectarian elite and international interests that had driven Lebanese politics and society since the Mandate period.

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[1] Thomas, Women in Lebanon, 86.
[2] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 109
[3] Ibid, 111.

Within national borders, militias quickly consolidated under factional allegiances. Muslim Arab nationalists of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) rallied in support of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the "Common Forces" alliance.[4] In the early stages of the war, this alliance fought a coalition of right-wing Christian militants known as the National Front (LF), consisting of Bashir Gemayel's Phalangists (Kata'eb), Camille Chamoun's Tigers, and President Suleiman Frangieh's personal militia known as the Marada Brigade.[5] As the largest and most powerful of these groups, the Kata'eb soon absorbed or wiped out the other militias, and the LF emerged as a predominately right-wing Phalangist force.[6] The rise of Shi'a militia movements in the late 70s and 80s, in the form of Amal and later Hezbollah, further complicated the militarized sectarian landscape, as they were aligned with neither the LNM nor the Christian militias.[7] The increasingly diverging interests of the two Shi'a factions only further agitated the conflict.

It is clear that the civil conflict was far more complicated than a mere Christian/Muslim split. Indeed, "it is more accurate to describe [the warring factions] as pro- and anti-status quo."[8] These inter- and intrasectarian geographic and ideological turf wars opened the conflict to outside players as well, as each faction sought to gain leverage over a vast array of competitors to influence this status quo. As conflict flared in Lebanon at the height of the civil war, both

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[4] Salamey, Government and Politics, 45.
[5] Ibid, 43.
[6] Wegner, "Lebanon's 15-Year Civil War."
[7] Salamey, Government and Politics, 45.
[8] Marie-Joëlle Zahar, "Power Sharing in Lebanon: Foreign Protectors, Domestic Peace, and Democratic Failure," in *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars* ed. Phillip G. Roeder and Donald Rothchild (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 231.

regional and international actors seized the opportunity to mold the outcome to their own strategic interests.

Civil War, Regional Battlefield

While the conflict was predominately a civil war, it was not an isolated one. International players also had stakes in the outcome of the war: the central role of the PLO led Israel to see the conflict as an extension of its own battle against Palestinian resistance; Iran supported Hezbollah in their effort to build an Islamic state in Lebanon; the United States saw Lebanon as a key component of its intelligence and security strategies in the Arab world; and Syria feared the loss of its hegemony in the area.[9] With the introduction of outside influences, sectarian divisions became further agitated as they were manipulated by external interests.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict on Lebanese Soil

Although the conflict was among intrastate actors, it is the transnational nature of the underlying tensions that played a key role in launching the civil war. Initially, much of the conflict pitted right-wing Christian (Maronite) nationalists against the PLO and its primarily Sunni Muslim supporters.[10] This positioned the conflict not as an exclusively intersectarian Sunni/Christian divide, but rather as a consequence of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

Christian factions had acted as proxies for Israeli interests in the territory even before the outbreak of the 1975 war.[11] With the eruption of the conflict, Israel played a more active role by

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[9] Martha Wegner, "Primer: Lebanon's 15-Year War, 1975-1990," *Middle East Report* 162 (1990).
[10] Geraint Hughes, "Lebanon, 1975-1990," in Geraint Hughes, *My Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), 88.
[11] See Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, chapters 2 & 3.

sponsoring the Kata'eb party and establishing the South Lebanon Army.[12] This external support

allowed Christian militants to compensate for their numerical disadvantage against the combined

PLO and Sunni Muslim forces. Israel, in turn, sought to bolster its presence in the region by

cultivating support among the more sympathetic Christian populations.[13]

This special relationship was most discernible in Israeli support of Phalangist LF leader

Bashir Gemayel, "the first Maronite leader ever to command undisputed, autocratic sway over

the whole [Maronite] community."[14] When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, they installed the

pro-Zionist Gemayel as president intending to "reestablish Maronite Christian hegemony over

Lebanon" and ultimately create a bilateral peace agreement. With this strategy, Israel bolstered

the Kata'eb hegemony over the Maronite ethnic identity while also increasing tensions with

Palestinian, Syrian and other anti-Israeli factions.

As Israel further cultivated Maronite power in the territory, it simultaneously reproduced

the socioeconomic disenfranchisement of the largely Shi'a south. Much of the direct conflict

between the PLO and Israel occurred in this border region, leaving these populations vulnerable

in a country that was already crumbling around them. With the 1982 invasion and occupation,

Israel became directly involved in the rise of Shi'a political movements and violent resistance, a

new social reality that would greatly impact the construction of politics and civic activity in the

postwar state.

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[12] Hughes, "Lebanon," 91.
[13] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 104.
[14] Ibid, 121

The ongoing conditions of conflict and social marginalization within the Shi'a community created a space for the rise of charismatic populist leaders. A wave of Shi'a political-intellectual movements began with Musa al-Sadr's "Movement of the Deprived" (*harakat al-mahrumin*) in 1974,[15] which consolidated Shi'a activism under a collective cultural identity to form a "coherent political force."[16] The Movement of the Deprived pursued a two-fold mission: to advocate on behalf of the largely Shi'a South and to provide social services directly to these populations.[17] Al-Sadr also introduced the Shi'a militia Amal, which "eventually evolved into the main political party of this 'crushed but awakened community' as a whole."[18] It is the formation of the unified Shi'a front that would ultimately shape the role of this community in the sociopolitical structures of Lebanon during and after the civil war.

This political movement connected the Lebanese Shi'a community with a transnational Shi'a identity. It opened a space for the outcomes 1979 Islamic revolution and the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran to penetrate deep into the Lebanese Shi'a political consciousness through a precise manipulation – and ultimate usurpation – of al-Sadr's movement on the part of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Certainly, the creation of an Islamic Republic in "one of the world's oldest and most illustrious nation-states"[19] can be expected to have significant impact in the Arab world at large; however, it was particularly influential within Shi'a-populated areas.

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[15] Ciezadlo, "Sect Symbols."
[16] Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon,* 25
[17] Maria Holt, "Surviving, Resisting and 'Becoming Modern': Experiences of Shi'a Women in Lebanon," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 3 no. 4 (2010): 386.
[18] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 101
[19] Ibid, 174

This was especially true in Lebanon, where by the 1970s, Shi'a identity was strengthening in a nationalism tangential from that of Lebanese citizenship and statehood. By 1982, ideological dissonance led to the split of the al-Sadr's party, with some members forming what would ultimately become Hezbollah, the Party of God.[20] The rift within the Shi'a political movement was a direct consequence of the "exporting" of the Islamic Revolution. Not only were the Lebanese Shi'a militias driven by the success of the revolution,[21] but this success also allowed Iran to enter the fray as a major player in the civil war. Under the pretext of combatting Israel after the 1982 invasion, Iranian forces entered the Beqa'a Valley, where they were able to cultivate a pro-Iranian, anti-Israeli Shi'a militant faction.[22] Iran's support for a splinter faction led to an intrasectarian battle for leadership over Shi'a populations not unlike that which emerged between the Christian factions of the LF, with Hezbollah ultimately "[emerging] as the most effective and organized military group"[23] against the rival Amal.

With this split within the Shi'a movement, the Lebanese political Shi'a identity ceased to be a unified force. While Amal emphasized Lebanese-Arab identity and Arab Shi'ism, Hezbollah aligned closely with Iran and a transnational Shi'a identity.[24] Hezbollah's 1985 manifesto, "Open Letter to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World," cites this identity specifically: "We are… linked to the Muslims of the whole world by the solid doctrinal and

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[20] Ibid, 187

[21] Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr. and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East,* 9th Edition (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2010), 393

[22] A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993): 322.

[23] Salamey, Government and Politics, loc. 1139.

[24]See Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon,* Chapter 4.

religious connection of Islam… This is why whatever touches or strikes the Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines and elsewhere reverberates throughout the whole Muslim *umma* of which we are an integral part."[25] It is this transnational Islamic identity that formed the foundation for Hezbollah's twofold mission: the pursuit of a "theoretical"[26] Islamic state in Lebanon which answered to the authority of the *wali al-faqih* (the Ayatollah),[27] and the development of necessary structures to "initiate *jihad* against Israel."[28]

With the backing of the Ayatollah, Hezbollah became the party of resistance in the ongoing conflict with Israel and the antithetical ideology to Zionism.[29] As the party coalesced around this mission of resistance, "its boldness of vision and clarity of intent proved irresistible to large numbers of disaffected Shi'as who had been inspired by the Iranian revolution and infuriated by Israeli aggression against Lebanese and Palestinians."[30] The powerful group soon developed a "state within a state,"[31] not only serving as a militant faction but also developing a social infrastructure within its territories.[32] In cultivating an alternative to the marginalizing political sectarian state (and in fact openly opposing the confessionalist system during this period),[33] Hezbollah reinforced the factionalized society by engendering a distinct Shi'a nationalist identity.

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[25] "An Open Letter: The Hizballah Program," *Council on Foreign Relations,* January 1, 1988. Online.
[26] Thomas, Women in Lebanon, 93
[27] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 158
[28] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 189
[29] Marilyn Raschka, "Led by Hezbollah, Lebanon's Shi'a Community Waits its Turn," *The Arab American News*, September 27, 2002: 10.
[30] Holt, "Experiences of Shi'a Women," 387.
[31] Raschka, "Led by Hezbollah," 10.
[32] Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East,* 2nd Edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013): 71-72.
[33] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 159

The outbreak of conflict in 1975 also coincided with a rising interest in the region as a Cold War battleground. Players on both sides of the Iron Curtain identified strategic advantages within the various militias, and soon joined regional players in attempting to influence the outcome of the conflict in their best interests. Because of the international structures already at play, victories of certain militias impacted the power and influence of other countries allied with the West or the USSR.

Prior to the 1982 Israeli invasion, aid to the Palestinian resistance presented a strategic advantage to the USSR. Support for the PLO and other Palestinian factions "was offered for the same reason as military and economic assistance to allied states, most notably Syria and Iraq, insofar as Moscow's objective was to maximize its influence in the region at the West's expense."[34] It is due to the geostrategic importance of the region for players on both sides of the Cold War that the USSR supported "opposition to Israel, and by extension the former European colonial powers."[35] Israel's 1982 invasion, then, signaled a strengthening of U.S. power in the region. The U.S. and Europe (predominantly France) played their part in the conflict by lending support to what they viewed as the more Western-sympathetic factions: Christian militias, most notably the Kata'eb.[36] The U.S. and its allies also had an interest in specifically deterring Iranian-backed Hezbollah and proxies of Soviet-allied Syria.

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[34] Hughes, "Lebanon," 94.
[35] Salamey, Politics and Government, loc. 970.
[36] Hughes, "Lebanon," 95.

The overarching priority of the United States (and by extension its Western allies) was a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which would ensure both regional stability and strategic U.S. influence. Despite attempts on the part of the Americans to assert influence through impartial peace negotiations in 1983, they were, as David Hirst argues, "anything but."[37] The U.S.-brokered May 17th Accord between Gemayel's government and Israel "brought satisfaction to the Americans, the Israelis, and the Lebanese Forces, but was violently denounced by Damascus and its local allies in Lebanon,"[38] and the objective of negotiating Arab-Israeli peace ultimately stoked intersectarian and regional tensions and escalated the conflict.

Syrian Alliances of Opportunity

Syria's involvement in the civil war was characterized not by the backing of one specific faction, but by a fluid procession of allegiances constantly shifting to ensure Damascus maintained strategic advantages in the territory. President Hafez al-Assad saw the collapse of Lebanon as a crippling blow to Syrian efforts against Israel and a threat to the country's regional hegemony.[39] Although concerns about the outcome of the 1975 Lebanese Civil War were far from the first instance of Syrian interest in Lebanon's domestic affairs, the country's manipulation of various sectarian forces set the foundation for the "Syrianization" of public spaces in the postwar republic.

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[37] Hirst, Beware of Small States, 172.
[38] Phares, Lebanese Christian Nationalism, 145.
[39] Bassel Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed," *Middle East Report Online* 35, no. 236 (2005).

Ultimately, "Syria sought to develop an independent power position from which to conduct its regional and international policies in an autonomous fashion" by leveraging remaining spheres of influence in Lebanon. In the beginning of the war, Syrian forces supported their "traditional proxies": the PLO and its Muslim-leftist allies.[40] This was a continuation of Syria's support of Arab movements as the leading entity in the pan-Arab cause. However, this allegiance pivoted soon after, and by 1976, fearing the implications of a Christian defeat in the larger Arab-Israeli conflict, Assad had thrown support behind the Christian Lebanese Forces.[41] The shift demonstrated Syria's primary interest in maintaining a strong regional autonomy and influence in the neighboring territory, as Syrian leadership feared that a defeat of Christian forces would permanently fracture the territory and lead to the creation of an Israeli-allied Christian entity.[42]

As its early actions indicated, Syria's interests in the war were not tied to a singular factional mission; rather, they were a means through which Syria could solidify its influence across sectarian spheres in Lebanon. Syria's invasion in 1976 achieved first and foremost a firm standing as one of the most influential players in the conflict.[43] While Damascus continued to oppose the PLO in an effort to prevent the creation of Christian and Muslim mini-states, it did not rely solely on Christian militias as a proxy. Israel's growing military pressure, and ultimately the invasion in 1982, necessitated the cultivation of a Syrian-allied buffer in the southern border

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[40] Hughes, "Lebanon," 89.
[41] Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."
[42] Karol R. Sorby, "Syria and the 1975-76 Civil War in Lebanon," *Asian and African Studies* 20, no. 2 (2011): 204-205.
[43] Salamey, Government and Politics, 50.

regions. Thus, Syria cultivated alliances with both Shi'a and Druze factions to push back against

the Gemayel presidency,[44] and Amal (later, Hezbollah) served as a proxy against further PLO

engagement.

By the close of the fifteen-year civil war in 1989, Syria had exerted its influence – through

support, opposition, and oftentimes both – across most of the warring factions. More

importantly, Damascus effectively solidified Syria's "special relationship" with Lebanon by

ensuring Syrian military and political interests were integral to the stability of the postwar

republic. The civil war thus laid the foundation for *pax Syriana* in the 1990s and early 2000s,

legitimizing the presence of Syrian troops and leaving open channels of influence in every aspect

of public life.

Women, War and Nationalism: Gendering the Sectarian Conflict

During the 1975-1989 Civil War, sectarian conflict offered women new opportunities to engage

in what were perceived as public, male-dominated spaces. Some became involved directly in

political activity and even combat; during the wave of Christian nationalist activity in the 60s and

70s, young women were actively engaged in this movement, participating in the Kata'eb party

and "even joining paramilitary organizations, thereby providing them with a stepping stone into

combat during the civil war."[45] The outbreak of conflict in 1975 opened other avenues for

women's participation in the nationalist struggle, including the formation of three all-female

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[44] Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."

[45] Kirsten E. Schulze, " Communal Violence, Civil War and Foreign Occupation: Women in Lebanon," in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition* (London: Routledge, 1998), 153.

Christian militias of "young female soldiers [who] had decided to take up arms to defend their community, their way of life, their image of Lebanon as a state."[46]

In the Shi'a communities, particularly in the Israeli-occupied South, women also engaged in defensive actions as well as political activity. Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, a leader in the Lebanese Shi'a intellectual and political movement, believed that "the Qu'ran states that all believers, men and women, should cooperate together in facing conflict and those who commit aggression against Islam."[47] However, while women may take up arms if needed, their primary role is that of "supporting fighters and producing the next generation."[48] Thus, the role of motherhood became a woman's sacred duty, especially within societies deeply affected by conflict in which coping with the realities of conflict transcended the personal and the familial and became integrated in the structure of public life.

Women in particular experienced this fusion of the "public" and "private" in their interactions within what could be considered the wartime civic space. The social position of women came to occupy a precarious space in public/private life, as "the elevation of the role of motherhood to the realm of sanctity [seemed] to capture women within the domain of the domestic and thus patriarchy … yet, it is the same emphasis on her role as mother that allows her flexibility outside the realm of the domestic."[49] Thus, women integrated into their societies without becoming active participants. Even when deviating from peaceful roles, they embodied

[46] Schulze, "Communal Violence, Civil War and Foreign Occupation," 157
[47] Holt, "Experiences of Shi'a Women," 388.
[48] Anne Marie Baylouny, "Hizbullah's Women: Internal Transformation in a Social Movement and Militia," in *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* ed. Joel Beinin and Frederic Vairel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011): 170.
[49] Zeina Zaatari, "The Culture of Motherhood: An Avenue for Women's Civil Participation in South Lebanon," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 36.

the larger struggles of their society as the maternal entity not only to affected individuals, but also to this conflict society at large.

The example of Shi'a women demonstrates an important point: that in a society in which all aspects of life have been politicized and even militarized, non-combative roles were also political and played an active role in the civic realm. During the war, and in the postwar period, women played a role in peace activism[50] as well as the provision of social services within their own communities. In this way, women engaged in sectarian struggles and formed new civic spaces. However, these spaces were volatile and could not remain as the sectarian sociopolitical structures stabilized in the postwar state of the 1990s.

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[50] Schulze, "Women in Lebanon," 158.

V.   CASE STUDY: GENDER AND CIVIC SPACE IN MODERN LEBANON

The social structures and political turmoil in Lebanon today can be traced directly to the 20th century transformations outlined in previous chapters. French and Ottoman statecraft cultivated a sectarian political elite within the multiconfessional society which was dominated by a Maronite hegemony, despite the relative demographic minority of the Maronites in the new territory of "Greater Lebanon." This facilitated the development of factionalized political spheres divided between 18 officially-recognized sectarian identities. Ultimately, the consociational power-sharing system enshrined in the 1943 National Pact proved too weak to withstand competing pressures from both domestic and international actors, and the country collapsed into 15 years of civil war from 1985-1989.

Civic spaces and engagement with Lebanese citizenship found no fresh beginnings during the post-Civil War reconstruction – rather, the precarious interplay of relationships to identity and state molded to the continued proliferation of political sectarianism and manipulation by external actors and the sectarian elite. The postwar reconstruction and the political system of the 21st century were built on the same fragile foundation as the power-sharing agreements of the Ottoman, Mandate, and post-independence periods. The sectarian social, political and legal structures further integrated gendered notions of citizenship and identity in the modern Lebanese state.

The post-civil war period of the 1990s also saw the proliferation of voluntary organizations and NGOs to "fill in" for the state in both social services provision and rights-

based advocacy.[1] However, these organizations further served to reinforce sectarian power structures by serving specific sectarian groups. Rather than unify the Lebanese state within one collective postwar society, the provision of social services by civilian organizations (rather than the state) ensured that confessional divides dictated social hierarchies. Further, the strong Syrian presence in postwar Lebanon severely restricted the freedoms of civil society. Even with the removal of this factor, Lebanese political and civil society remained fractured according to sectarian allegiances.

The extent to which the *pax Syriana* shaped (or hindered) the sociopolitical evolution of the postwar state is not fully understood; however, it is evident that Syria, much like France, Israel, Iran, and the other states in Lebanon's history of occupation and foreign patronage, significantly impacted the Lebanese political system. The social policies and political structures implemented over the course of Lebanon's recent history allowed for sectarian divides to extend beyond cultural groups or even militant factions. Today, Lebanon's sociopolitical structure reflects just how deeply entrenched the state has become in sectarian modes of identity, law, and politics. In studying the development of this state, the legacies of colonialism and civil war become evident, offering a means by which to measure and study civic spaces. It is within these spaces that gendered barriers to political life are erected, both explicitly and implicitly, as a result of political sectarian structures that reinforce patriarchal norms of civic life.

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[1] Salloukh et. al, The Politics of Sectarianism, 54.

Reconstructing Sectarianism in the Postwar State

The 1989 Taif Agreement

After fifteen years of brutal civil war which resulted in an estimated 150,000 fatalities, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons,[2] and the disrupted livelihood of an entire country, the return to a precarious sectarian balance was negotiated between factional leaders and external parties. It did not, however, reduce the role of sectarianism in public life. The Taif Agreement restructured the Lebanese confessional system only insofar as it amended the existing power-sharing agreements to dilute the political power of the Maronite president and redistribute this power to at least partially reflect the country's demographic realities.[3]

By the late 1980s, it became increasingly evident there would be no clear victor in the war, and by 1989, "the Lebanese Civil War came to an end… at a time when movement toward internal reconciliation coincided with favorable regional and international developments."[4] In other words, the realization of a peaceful settlement was driven largely by the shifts in global power brought about by the conclusion of the Cold War: in addition to the war-weary Lebanese citizens, many of the militias' international patrons were eager to see a settlement reached. Thus, much as these external actors played an instrumental role in fueling the intersectarian conflicts, so would they also come to dictate the peace settlement which would bring an end to the large-scale violence.

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[2] Wegner, "Lebanon's 15-Year War."
[3] Salamey, Government and Politics, loc. 1340.
[4] Ibid, loc. 1410.

The Taif Agreement was negotiated in 1989 between the sectarian elite who comprised what remained of the pre-war parliament, with significant input from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. It was only through the establishment of a new sectarian power-sharing agreement, regarded as a "necessary but temporary evil"[5] which would be cycled out of the political structure[6] at some unspecified point in the future, that an agreement could be reached. Thus, sectarian violence was to be quelled by reinforcing sectarian systems of governance under the auspices of international players.

The formal text of the agreement began by establishing Lebanon as "a final homeland for all its citizens," and affirming that "Lebanon's soil belongs to all Lebanese."[7] However, sectarian provisions were woven into many fundamental details of what was to become the politics and governance of the postwar state. The Taif Agreement brought about what was arguably the most significant shift in the Lebanese sociopolitical system since the formation of Greater Lebanon – and it was to the disadvantage of the Christian sects, most notably the Maronites. Indeed, the agreement "achieved what all previous peace initiatives and proposals to end the Lebanese conflict failed to achieve: the abolition of the Maronites' constitutional predominance."[8]

Thus, the consociational power-sharing model of the 1926 Constitution and the 1943 National Pact, developed at a time when Maronite elites held enough political capital to

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[5] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[6] Reference to the impermanent nature of the consociational structure can be found throughout the agreement; however, this is most explicitly stated in Article II section G: "Abolishing political sectarianism is a fundamental national objective."
[7] Art I, The Taif Agreement. Accessed online: https://www.un.int/lebanon/lebanon/about-lebanon
[8] Simon Haddad, "A Survey of Maronite Christian Socio-Political Attitudes in Postwar Lebanon," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12 no. 4 (2001): 466.

maintain dominance, was rearranged to reflect the demographic realities of the postwar republic. The office of the President became more symbolic than political,[9] and the powers of that office were conferred onto the Council of Ministers and the Parliament.[10] The proportional six-to-five ratio of representation was also discarded in favor of equal representation between Muslims and Christians.[11] By restructuring the balance of factionalized power, sectarian civic spaces also shifted to accommodate this change.

The devastation of the 1975 war had consequences for "Christian Lebanon" beyond the more evident political aftermath. Although the early stages of the war were sparked by nationalist essentialism and defense against "a mortal threat to the state of Lebanon, and to its Christian citizens in particular,"[12] the fifteen years of conflict ultimately left the position of the Lebanese Christian population more fragile than ever. As Faour notes, Maronites were more likely to emigrate due to their socioeconomic advantages,[13] and in fact many were among the estimated one million Lebanese who emigrated to escape the conflict.[14] Although there is no official data on population shifts during the Lebanese Civil War, it is estimated that the Maronite population was significantly reduced in this time. Thus, the Maronite claim to demographic dominance was even further weakened as Lebanon transitioned into the postwar period of the early 1990s.

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[9] See Art II.B, The Taif Agreement
[10] Salamey, Government and Politics, loc. 1431.
[11] Ibid, loc. 1448.
[12] Hughes, "Lebanon," 88.
[13] Muhammad Faour, "Religion, Demography and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43 no. 6 (2007): 911.
[14] Kinston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 48.

The Shi'a, on the other hand, came to possess significant political capital and influence, particularly in areas with heavy Shi'a populations including South Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut. The new power-sharing agreement enshrined in the 1989 Taif Accord reflected this shift in sectarian influences, stripping powers from the Maronite-held office of President and strengthening the political influence of the Shi'a Speaker of Parliament. Further, Hezbollah, as the primary resistance to Israel, was the only militia not required to disarm following the peace agreement.[15] Later, despite the party's objections to the perpetuation of political sectarianism in the postwar state, they participated in the 1992 parliamentary elections. This was the first move toward the "Lebanization" of the party – integrating into the Lebanese national identity rather than isolating its Shi'a identity.[16] Their intrasectarian rival, the Amal movement, also took a position in the country's new political structure. With the entrance of both these factions into Lebanese political life, the Shi'a identity became politicized and integrated within the political sectarian framework of the Lebanese state.

Pax Syriana and Politics of the Early Postwar System

Internal Restructuring of the Sect-Based Society

The Taif Agreement may have brought an end to extensive factional violence, but it did not smooth sectarian inequalities. Although the events of the post-independence era and the 1975-89 civil war shaped a firm Shi'a political presence in Lebanon, they did not eliminate the social rifts between the different sects. Rather, they solidified the sectarian populism that defined the

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[15] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 161
[16] Baylouny, "Hizbullah's Women," 169.

country's politics. Indeed, unlike the other prominent sectarian groups, the Shi'a entered the

postwar era with "growing organizational and political power" tied both to "emerging communal

strength" within the Lebanese system and the "growing regional influence of Iran,"[17] the

international patron of political Shi'ism. Meanwhile, "the Maronites [became] more inward-

looking, and ... emigrated in increasing numbers."[18] Thus, the overall lack of confidence in the

new sociopolitical structure of the Lebanese state weakened Christian ethnonationalist power

and influence in Lebanese politics and society. This can be seen in the transition from a

Christian-Muslim to Sunni-Shi'a split in the country[19]: while sectarianism continues to dictate

sociopolitical structures, the identity struggle is no longer a question of Lebanese essentialism

versus pan-Arab nationalism. The public sphere, therefore, came to be shaped by both the

"Arabization" of the country under the Syrian-controlled government as well as the

fragmentation of the Christian political leadership and identity.[20]

Syrian Influence in Postwar Politics and Society

In addition to internal restructuring, the Taif Agreement allowed for the introduction of an

amnesty law through which sectarian militias and their leaders could not be prosecuted for

actions during the war, a move that facilitated what Annia Ciezadlo calls the postwar "orgy of

forgetting"[21] which plagues Lebanese society, politics and civic life even today. It also formalized

the "special relationship" between Lebanon and Syria "in a manner that accomplishes the two

[17] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 109.
[18] Haddad, "Maronite Socio-Political Attitudes," 467.
[19] Abukhalil, As'ad. Quoted in Maria Abi-Habib, "Divided Lebanon Debates Federalism." *Al-Jazeera* July 12, 2007. Online.
[20] See "Epilogue" in Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism*, 211-224.
[21] Annia Ciezadlo, "Sect Symbols," *The Nation*, February 21, 2007.

fraternal countries' interests within the sovereignty and independence of each of them."[22]

Although the agreement called for the gradual removal of existing Syrian troops, Syrian influence

in the country only strengthened in peacetime.

The insertion of Syrian interests into the formation of the postwar state played a

significant role in the replication of a sectarian state. During *pax Syriana,* Damascus controlled

virtually every aspect of Lebanese public life.[23] In the political realm, it cultivated a class of

sectarian political elite sympathetic to Syrian interests in the country. The post-civil war political

structure determined the allocation of power among the major Sunni, Shi'a and Maronite sects

"based on a competition to gain the support of Damascus,"[24] drastically reducing popular support

for the elected bodies of the new government.[25] In the development of a postwar civil society, *pax*

Syriana restricted the proliferation of associations and politically oriented actors by suppressing

opposition to Syrian rule,[26] and "civil society organizations were penetrated, pulverized, and

consequently succumbed to the control of Syria's local agents."[27]

The Cedar Revolution and the Rise of the March Alliances

While Syrian intervention in Lebanon shaped the political system to align with Syrian interests,

it also agitated civic spaces, opening a space for collective opposition to Syrian military presence.

As the military protection became less and less relevant in the eyes of the Lebanese populace and

the international community, dissent was able to chip away at Syria's claims to legitimacy.

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[22] Art. III, The Taif Agreement
[23] Salloukh et. al, The Politics of Sectarianism, 25.
[24] Salamey, *Government and Politics*, 87.
[25] Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 50.
[26] Ibid, 50.
[27] Salloukh et. al, *The Politics of Sectarianism*, 27.

Ultimately, this dissent erupted into the public space with the 2005 Cedar Revolution, which marked a turning point in Lebanese political and civic life. The assassination of the anti-Syria former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri mobilized "an eclectic multigenerational, multiconfessional, and multiclass mix of activists linked to both civil and political society"[28] to demand an end to Syrian involvement in Lebanon, both militarily and politically. The Sunni Future Movement, in alliance with Druze and Christian political parties, turned out masses of young people to gather in Martyr's Square to call for the removal of the pro-Syrian regime.[29] Counter-protests led by Hezbollah opposed the withdrawal of Syria.

While many demands of the revolution were met, the movement did not bring about a wave of secular politics. Kingston argues that "it would be a mistake … to ignore the deep-rooted sectarian political dynamics at work before, during and after the March 14 demonstrations."[30] Rather than unify society under one secular national identity, the revolution exacerbated sectarian divides. This was evident in the polarization between the Future Movement and Hezbollah, "reflective of the sharp divisions along increasingly sectarian lines and incompatible visions of Lebanon's past, present and future."[31] This altered political landscape also gave rise to new sectarian populist movements, namely the Christian movement under Michel Aoun and the Sunni Muslim movement under Saad Al-Din Al-Hariri.[32]

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[28] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 77.
[29] Heather Sharp, "Cedar Revolution's Bitter Aftertaste," *BBC News* February 13, 2006.
[30] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 78.
[31] Salamey, *Government and Politics*, 88
[32] Salamey and Tabar, "Democratic Transitions and Sectarian Populism," 501.

The sectarian upheavals incited by the Cedar Revolution coalesced into two opposing coalitions: the March 14 Alliance, led by Saad Al-Din Al-Hariri's Future Movement; and the March 8 Alliance, led by the Shi'a parties Amal and Hezbollah, and Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement.[33] Thus, rather than transcending sectarian allegiances and achieving any form of secular Lebanese nationality, the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon only further paralyzed the country's political system in a sectarian stalemate.

Sectarianism and Secularism in the Post-Syria National Identity

The structures of governance implemented as temporary measures in the amended constitution remain in Lebanese politics today, and the sectarian divides formalized by the National Pact continue to dictate political representation as well as legal regimes. As per the Taif Agreement, the legislative body (Chamber of Deputies) is split evenly between Christians and Muslims, with the position of Speaker of Parliament held by a Shi'a Muslim.[34] The new power-sharing agreement has become difficult to shake, as partisan interests hinder possibilities of intersectarian concessions.

If Lebanon were to implement a fully proportional electoral system, Christians would have the most to lose. Muslim communities, particularly the Shi'a, would gain significant political leverage over the Christian minority if sectarian quotas were abolished. The fear of this outcome can be seen not only in the actions of political leaders, but also in the political views of Maronite citizens, the majority of whom support confessionalism.[35] Even in post-Syria Lebanon,

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[33] Salloukh et. al, *The Politics of Sectarianism*, 29.
[34] Salamey, Government and *Politics*, 129-131.
[35] Haddad, "Maronite Christian Socio-Political Attitudes," 475.

"Christians continue to view themselves as the targets of malevolent forces of Syrianization."[36] A study published in 2012 found that, among the three major sects in Lebanon, Maronites had the strongest orientation to sectarian communalism: 70% of Maronites held society rather than their own sect responsible for socioeconomic problems (compared to 44% of Sunnis and 55% of Shiites).[37] The decline of Christian preeminence, both demographically and politically, have made Christian leaders particularly aware of the need to maintain influence in Lebanese politics and society, and to "strengthen Lebanon's Christian minority in the face of rising tensions between the Middle East's two dominant forces, [Iran and Saudi Arabia]."[38]

Law, Gender and Civic Spaces in 21st-Century Lebanon

Colonial Legacies in Legal Code

Legal Frameworks for Civil Society

Much of the legal precedent for civil society is based on laws implemented before Lebanon was an independent state. This not only creates barriers for civil society actors, but also ties civic engagement and civic space to the underlying interests of the colonial actors and factional elite of nearly a century ago. Lebanese associational life continues to be dictated by the Law of Associations established by the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century,[39] which defines an association as "a group of several persons permanently unifying their knowledge or efforts for

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[36] Ibid, 467.

[37] Salamey and Tabar, "Demographic Transitions and Sectarian Populism," 503.

[38] Nour Samaha, "Lebanon's Christians Bury the Hatchet Amid Turmoil," *Al-Jazeera America* January 30, 2016.

[39] Abou Assi, Lebanese Civil Society, 73.

nonprofit objectives."[40] Under this law, all associations must be registered with the state before being permitted to conduct activities.

At face value, the Law of Associations protects all civil organizations within the Lebanese state. In practice, however, there are many ways in which this legal arrangement can be leveraged against particular civil society organizations. While registration laws do provide a unified system through which to examine associational activities, they also restrict such a study by making unregistered organizations, or groups that do not qualify to be registered, virtually inaccessible.[41] There are several opportunities through which "sectarian elites [can] use both formal and informal means to infiltrate what can be considered relatively minor civil society organizations."[42]

In addition to the Ottoman Law of Associations, the 1926 Lebanese Constitution establishes a broader set of rights norms for civil society. Most notable is Article 13, which states that "the freedom to express one's own opinion orally or in writing, the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom of association are guaranteed within the limits established by law."[43] The preamble of the 1990 amended constitution also recognizes Lebanon's adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[44] By integrating these acknowledgements into one of the country's fundamental legal documents, Lebanon has, in theory, integrated free association and the foundation of a vibrant civil society into the legal framework of the country.

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[40] Art. 1, The Law of Associations, as published in Mazhar El-Haraka, "The Legal Framework of Associations in Lebanon," in *Internal Governance for NGOs in Lebanon: Reference Book 2004,* ed. Lisa Ball-Lechgar and Ghassan Makarem, trans. Alim Bazouni (United Nations Development Programme NGO Resource & Support Unit, 2004), 13.
[41] Edwards, Civil Society, 21.
[42] Janine Clark and Bassel Salloukh, "Elite Strategies, Civil Society, and Sectarian Identities in Postwar Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 no. 4 (2013): 732.
[43] El Haraka, "Legal Framework," 15-16
[44] Preamble, The Lebanese Constitution

However, the establishment of any overarching national legal norm is precluded by the divisive nature of political sectarianism.

Sectarian Legal Structures

The sectarian frameworks of Lebanese society do not end at political structures or even aspects of what can be considered "public life." Political sectarianism is deeply entrenched in both Lebanese nationhood and citizenship, thus providing the parameters of corresponding civic spaces. Indeed, the sectarian legal system itself "is the vehicle through which society denotes not only its regulations, but also its actual values and behavioral patterns, as well as what is considered to be natural or unnatural."[45] What results is a fragmented relationship between the state and its citizens, in which the rights and experiences of citizenship vary based on state-established identity. Consequently, this leads to the fragmentation of civic spaces among – and quite possibly within – the various sects.

An example of divided citizenship which is of particular importance to this study is the Personal Status Code. Rather than one secular personal status law, this aspect of civil law falls under the jurisdiction of fifteen individual sectarian civil courts that "determine, regulate and legislate blood-based kinship regimes in Lebanon."[46] These courts rule on all issues of marriage, parentage, and domestic disputes, among other legal issues considered part of "family law." The jurisdictions of these courts effectively drive sectarian cleavages beyond the "public" realm and into "private" life by dictating the legal structures of domestic life according to a person's

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[45] Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, "Gender-Relevant Legal Change in Lebanon," *Feminist Formations* 22 no. 3 (2010): 212.
[46] Mikdashi, "Sex and Sectarianism," 282.

officially-recognized sect. In practice, this means that religious law can determine matters of personal status whether or not it coincides with an individual's religious identity or values.

Gendered Barriers to Civic Life

The legal status of women in Lebanon directly affects their relationship with public life, disassociating women's groups from the political realm.[47] As one woman activist observed, "sectarianism is a taboo topic to discuss, plus… feminism is not political in their [women's groups'] eyes."[48] Further, political life is considered to be a component of the male-dominated public sphere and contains inherent structures of patriarchy.[49] Thus, the perceptions of the "public" and the "private" directly impact the roles and activities of Lebanese citizens. By polarizing the two, the "private" is removed from the "public" realm,[50] despite the politicization of sectarian identity through personal status laws; that is, the intermingling of the "public" and "private" in the civic realm.

It should be noted that, in Lebanon, women are not necessarily underrepresented as a whole in civil society organizations. In the CIVICUS consultations for the 2006 Civil Society Index, "the diversity of participants was not highlighted as a significant problem… of the respondents to the regional stakeholder consultations, 91% were satisfied with the representation of women."[51] However, this report also noted that, with the exception of women's groups, men dominated leadership positions in civil society organizations.[52] Women's participation in public life, whether through civic engagement or direct participation in the political system, is dictated

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[47] Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency," 442.
[48] Rana Issa, quoted in Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency," 443.
[49] Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency," 442.
[50] Ibid, 443.
[51] Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society*, 9.
[52] Ibid, 41.

by a complex relationship with legal frameworks and social norms. This engagement in civil

society and civic life does not exist independently of the sectarian backdrop of the Lebanese

system. Rather, this aspect of Lebanese society exists as an extension of intersectarian

sociopolitical relationships. Issues of interest to women in Lebanese civil society, from gender

equality to social services and philanthropy, are approached from varying lenses of sectarian

identities. Groups that are multisectarian in nature often reflect the broader power relations of

the state.

The most prominent example of such an arrangement can be found in the Lebanese

Council of Women (LCW), which the authors of *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*

argue has "allowed" itself to be "appropriated by the sectarian/political elite."[53] The leadership of

the LCW is structured similarly to the power-sharing model of the state itself, and the internal

politics of the organization have consistently reflected the political climate in the society at

large.[54] This organization demonstrates the ways in which the precarious sociopolitical position

of Lebanese women prevents a truly unified mobilization within civic spaces.

The Legal Status of Women
As Khatib notes, "although Lebanese law does not discriminate against women regarding

political participation and voting, women's involvement in politics in Lebanon is marginalized"[55]

due to inherently discriminatory institutions. This marginalization manifests in both law and

culture, as sociopolitical structures confine women's participation in public life within

[53] Salloukh et. al, Politics of Sectarianism, 56.
[54] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 120.
[55] Khatib, Lena, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon," in *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 3 (2008), 438.

frameworks unique to their position among the sectarian factionalization of law and politics. Even within secular legal structures, the legal status of women remains ambiguous at best, and often times more explicitly distinguished from that of the male citizens of the Lebanese state.

Women's marginalization is present even at the core of the country's legal structure in the 1926 Lebanese constitution and its post-Taif amendments. At face value this document implies equality in status between men and women. For example, Article 7 states: "All Lebanese should be equal before the law. They shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction,"[56] and Article 12 ensures that "every Lebanese shall have the right to hold public office, no preference shall be made on the basis of merit and competence."[57] However, in using gender-neutral terminology and not explicitly prohibiting gender discrimination, the Lebanese constitution effectively institutionalizes gender disparity in political and public life.[58]

More overtly affecting women's relationship with the state is personal status law. Khatib notes that this fragmented, sect-based structure causes women of different confessional identities to have different experiences of family and citizenship.[59] Mikdashi further points out that a woman's registered sectarian association (and thus personal status) does not always accurately represent her personal identity, religious beliefs or political orientation.[60] This creates a complex relationship between perceived private and public spheres, particularly when personal and sectarian identities do not directly coincide.

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[56] Art. 7, The Lebanese Constitution
[57] Art. 12, The Lebanese Constitution
[58] Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency," 439.
[59] Ibid, 439
[60] Mikdashi, "Sex and Sectarianism," 283.

Personal status laws often represent the sociopolitical orientations and objectives of the sects themselves, as they are a means by which private life can be dictated by religious authorities. Thus, gendered participation in sectarian communities is not limited to social perceptions; the values and ideologies that facilitate this participation are reflected to religious law. Each of the three major sects adhere to the personal status laws of three separate schools. Maronite religious law is dictated by the Maronite church which – much like Christian society itself – did not emerge unaffected from the war and the subsequent fall in Maronite power. Indeed, "there emerged a strong sense of disillusionment within Lebanon's Maronite communities that was mirrored by that within the church itself,"[61] adding to the uncertain nature of the Maronite's position in the postwar state. This was met with an effort by the Vatican to "rejuvenate and 'purify' the church as a way of preserving its strong presence in the country and in the region."[62] Thus, religious law in Maronite tradition has been tied directly to the survival of Maronite nationhood.

The religious courts that dictate Shi'a personal status law follow the Ja'fari school,[63] a legal tradition specific to Shi'a jurisprudence.[64] Like many religious legal traditions, the Ja'fari school integrates religious teachings and a complex history of religious scholarship, which this study unfortunately does not have the space to thoroughly explore. What is important to note for the context of sectarian legal structures, is that the Ja'fari courts dictate the personal status laws of Shi'a Muslims only - citizens identified as Sunni Muslim adhere to the legal authority of a

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[61] Kinston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 108.
[62] Ibid, 108.
[63] See Shehadeh, "Gender-Relevant Legal Change."
[64] Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2010): 93.

separate religious court. Thus, the disengagement of the Shi'a community from other groups is not only social or cultural, but enshrined in legal tradition as well.

As a consequence of this divide, Lebanese women navigate legal structures unique to their sectarian identity. For example, "in Lebanon certain Christian and Jewish personal status laws are much more stringent in their production and regulation of normative gender roles than codified Islamic personal status laws."[65] Further, while Sunni legal codes do not permit women to inherit, Shi'a courts dictate that a woman's inheritance can equal "as much as half as much as their brothers"[66] – further reflecting the familial structure of Shi'a society and establishing financial obligation as a male role.[67]

Relationships with the state are also gendered within the system of citizenship and residency regimes – an area of law which falls under the secular civil code, rather than the jurisdiction of religious courts. According to citizenship laws, a woman cannot pass on her citizenship to her children or to a non-Lebanese spouse.[68] Further, women do not retain their residency (registered birthplace) upon marriage – they assume the residency of their spouse. Because of this, women are prevented from interacting independently with the state, their relationship to civic life instead characterized by their marital (and by extension, domestic) relationship.

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[65] Mikdashi, "How Not to Study Gender."
[66] Joseph, "Public/Private," 82.
[67] Thomas, Women in Lebanon, 155.
[68] Shehadeh, "Gender-Relevant Legal Change," 224.

Gender and Sectarian Political Orientations

Because sectarian identity continues to dictate Lebanese politics and society, nationalist projects remain predominant within sectarian spaces. The Lebanese identity is rooted in collective nationalisms, and citizens interact with the state through the lens of sectarian nationalist and/or populist identity. Thus, women continue to navigate civic spaces within the framework of these orientations.

This can be seen among women's civic engagement within individual sectarian structures. Such activity is largely reflective of the civic consciousness of the sectarian community as a whole, which serves to uphold nationalist ideals and sectarian power. For example, Kingston notes that "while women within the Shi'a communities of Lebanon have clearly been entering the public sphere in unprecedented numbers… the contours of that public sphere and the role of women within it continue to be defined by Shi'a communal political projects."[69] Movements such as transnational Shi'a Islamism offer a means of entry to civic spaces within existing sectarian frameworks. Indeed, women represent a "key constituency" in Islamist populism, as they "perform the grassroots daily functions that have built and sustained" these movements.[70]

Such is the case with women's participation in Hezbollah. The Women's Association of Hezbollah (WAH) plays an important role in the promotion and implementation of the party's vision for the Lebanese state. At the same time, they promote the view of gender roles within the Shi'a society as parallel and complementary. Zaatari observed that WAH women "believed in

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[69] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 111
[70] Baylouny, "Hizbullah's Women," 166.

equality between men and women but not in the 'Western' sense of sameness."[71] Rather, they

emphasized "motherly qualities" and familial duties.[72] In this sense, women within this Shi'a

Islamist movement reproduce sectarian modes of patriarchy within their own sociopolitical

context.

However, participation in the party also offers a means by which women can more

actively participate in civic life.[73] It establishes a channel through which women can interact with

and influence their own political-sectarian identities. As Baylouny notes, "the notion of 'the

political' itself must be enlarged. Much transformation occurs through both the dynamics of

everyday life and member involvement in movement institutions that are not geared to formal

politics."[74] Through involvement with Hezbollah and Shi'a Islamism, women have taken on the

task of defining their own identity and agency in "an authentic expression of empowerment, a

way of shaking off Western-style modernization."[75]

Similarly, Christian women navigate public spaces through a lens of Lebanese Christian

nationalism. This includes not only ethnonationalist claims to the territory itself, but also an

engagement with the position of Christians in post-Taif Lebanon. After the conflict ended with

the Taif Agreement, the role of women in the Christian nationalist project evolved from direct

engagement in the sectarian conflict to a more traditional, "feminized" role. Women are

engaging in the new battle the Christians face: the struggle to maintain influence in the postwar

Lebanese system and to overturn the population crisis of the minority sect. In this project,

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[71] Zaatari, "Motherhood", 40.
[72] Ibid, 40.
[73] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 111.
[74] Baylouny, "Hizbullah's Women," 185.
[75] Holt, "Experiences of Shi'a Women," 400.

focused on encouraging intra-sect marriage and discouraging emigration, women have been tasked with strengthening the Christian nation through marriage and parenthood. In the 21st century, "the perceived threat of a declining birth rate and an aging population has made marriage and childbirth a question of survival for young Lebanese [Christians] who are concerned for the continued existence of their specific family and religious groups and for the future of the nation as a whole."[76] Thus, women have been integrated into the nationalist project through their domestic roles, politicizing what is traditionally considered the "feminine" private sphere.

Although nationalism appears to offer a plausible entryway to civic spaces for women, it is not a permanent solution. The inherent "nation-first" ideologies that drive nationalist movements do not leave a space for divergent feminist discourse. Participants in the nationalist project integrate any ideologies beyond the nationalist narrative (such as gender equality in society as a whole) into the central collectivist mission. Ellen Fleischmann notes that this was an obstacle to the formation of a "feminist consciousness" among women's movements in the colonized Middle East, and that "the question of gender inequity invariably was postponed or considered divisive, and the national issue seen as the priority."[77] Nationalism, therefore, does not serve as a foundation for expanded participation in public life, but rather restricts the means and purposes of this participation to that which best serves the nationalist agenda.

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[76] Thomas, Women in Lebanon, 54.
[77] Ellen L Fleischmann, "The Other 'Awakening': The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940," in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East,* ed. Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 92.

Social Structures and Sectarian Identities

Beyond the limiting factors of nationalist projects, women face constraints within the social structures of sectarian communities. The political and cultural orientations of different sects construct frameworks of patriarchy that restrict women from full participation in public life. While it is tempting to pursue the question of "who is the most liberated?", this suggests a hierarchy of sect-based oppression. Such an examination of social structures does not fully realize the existence of social, economic, and political marginalization of women in even the most "liberal" of sectarian structures.

Consider the example of Christian women, who are generally regarded to be more "liberated" and "Westernized" than their Muslim counterparts, yet are subjected to the same sectarian social and legal structures as women of other religious groups and must navigate their own sectarianized structures of patriarchy. As Rustum Shehadeh has noted, Lebanese Christian legal and social structures have not developed in a vacuum; they are the result of both sectarian ideologies and the influences of their position in a multiconfessional society.[78]

Marriage remains "a deeply rooted social value"[79] in many Christian societies. Thomas notes that, particularly in rural Lebanon, "marriage is a significant means of integration into the community, which is why mothers have always sought out suitors for their daughters."[80] Women's communal identity is therefore based significantly on marital status, or their participation in "a contract between two unequal partners."[81] Because of the importance placed

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[78] Shehadeh, "Gender-Relevant Legal Change," 220.
[79] Thomas, Women in Lebanon, 54.
[80] Ibid, 63.
[81] Shehadeh, "Gender-Relevant Legal Change," 215.

on this contract, the participation of women in Maronite public spaces is influenced by this social indicator.

Within Shi'a communities, the period of political mobilization has been – and continues to be – accompanied by a movement to rethink the role of women and gender within the context of Islamic laws and values. Both al-Sadr and Fadlallah, the foremost leaders in the Shi'a political and intellectual movement of the civil war and postwar periods, followed a "tradition of progressive thinking"[82] in regards to the role and position of women in society. Thus, as Shi'a populism redefined the role of this community in the Lebanese political project, women were encouraged to play a more active and role by working outside the home and pursuing an education and *itjihad*[83] (independent reasoning). This tradition of revisiting the role of women from within an Islamic framework has "served to break the monopolizing hegemony of the discourse of the pre–civil war Shi'a religious establishment on issues relating to gender relations within Lebanon's Shi'a communities."[84]

Shi'a women enjoy a certain level of social equity and play a relatively active role in public life, but in doing so they must nevertheless navigate a social and institutional framework of patriarchy. Not unlike their Christian counterparts, the social role of women in the Shi'a community is centered around familial duties, despite their increasing participation in politics, education, and the workforce. One educated woman interviewed by Marie-Claude Thomas "shared that her goal is to capture and embrace this time, without forgetting that family is the

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[82] Holt, "Experiences of Shi'a Women," 390.
[83] Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism*, 109.
[84] Ibid, 110.

basis of society and that her role as a mother is to form a family that is full of knowledge and awareness, which in turn contributes to a righteous society."[85] Within this structure, a woman navigates society and civic life as an extension of the domestic or "private" sphere. Her education, professional life and civic participation ultimately reinforce her primary role as the caretaker of her family, and by extension, her society.

Gender, Confessional Identity, and the Failure of the Sectarian State

Political Rifts and Regional Instability

Forty years after the outbreak of Lebanon's fifteen-year civil war, the political conditions in the country and the instability of surrounding states are not unlike the conditions that precluded the outbreak of conflict in 1975.[86] Political power structures are little more than modern iterations of the governance of the sectarian political elite established in the 20th century, leaving the national government fragile and static. Regional instability and the inflow of refugees is exacerbating the sectarian social tensions carried over into the postwar period of the 21st century. Powerful international actors are invested in Lebanese domestic affairs, whether it be election results or militant activity.

The fragility of the Lebanese state and the failure of the modern political sectarian system disproportionately affects marginalized populations, including women, and corresponding civil society activities. Because social and legal structures bar them from full participation in the political system, they cannot play an active role in the restructuring and mending of this system.

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[85] Thomas, *Women in Lebanon*, 152.
[86] The International Crisis Group, "Executive Summary," in *Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies (Report),* July 20, 2015. Web.

As political uncertainty continues, civic spaces do not necessarily grow when restricted to the existing frameworks of participation.

Historical Legacies in Modern Political Sectarianism

The Cedar Revolution in 2005 succeeded in pushing Syrian troops from the country, but otherwise accomplished little overhaul in the political structures established as early as the Mandate period. The cultivation of a sectarian elite employed by the French can be seen even today, as the same leaders and family names continue to appear on what is quickly becoming a stale political stage. Further, the power structures erected during the fifteen-year civil war continue to drive domestic affairs, as many of the political parties today were once sectarian militias led by the men who now lead political affairs.

Still fractured along decades-old factional lines, the failures of the modern Lebanese government demonstrate "that sectarian politics carries within it the seeds of political paralysis."[87] Yet these seeds are not necessarily a direct result of intercommunal tensions among citizens; much of the stalemate is rooted in established power structures driven by sectarian populisms. Indeed, "Lebanon's leaders have become expert in workarounds and postponing things. Officials' terms are extended or elections postponed when no one can agree on a replacement or a new electoral law."[88] Since its election in 2009, the current Lebanese parliament has twice extended its mandate, with the current extension expiring in 2017. The memory of the civil war can be found in the paralyzing fear of provoking any form of unrest that might destroy the delicate

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[87] Clovis Maksoud, "Stalled Elections a Lesson for Lebanon," *Al-Monitor* May 9, 2014. Web.
[88] Alice Fordham, "Amid Political Dysfunction, Beirut Residents Suffer the Stench of Garbage," *NPR* July 30, 2015. Web.

sectarian balance renegotiated in 1989. Even with the extension, the parliament has been unable to elect a president for over a year. To date, there have been 36 votes held for this position.

Lebanon, International Forces and Regional Conflict

Although Lebanese territory is no longer occupied directly by foreign militaries, external actors and events continue to influence its domestic affairs. The strategic importance of Lebanon to regional and international players has become increasingly evident as crises of instability unfold in the surrounding states. The Syrian crisis, ongoing conflict with Israel, and the tumultuous social and political transformations inundating the post–Arab Spring Middle East have caused concern both domestically and internationally for Lebanon's position as a relatively stable country in the region.

Lebanon and Syria have become inextricably intertwined politically, socially and culturally. The mutual pan-Arab identities of the early 20ᵗʰ century, political patronage of the post-independence period, and military occupation during the final decades of the century have linked both the political development and stability of these neighboring states. As conflict and instability in Syria continues, sectarianism becomes more prevalent as "sectarian tensions are no longer restricted to Lebanon, and the Syrians can no longer assume that they are free from sectarianism."[89] Across the border, the massive flow of refugees is triggering a new shift in the demographic balance of Lebanese sectarianism as large numbers of Sunni Muslims are added to

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[89] Saada Oulwa, "Lebanon-Syria Border Towns Ravaged by Sectarianism," *Al-Monitor,* October 31, 2012. Web.

the population.[90] Further entangling Lebanese domestic affairs with the fate of Syria is Hezbollah's alliance with the Asad regime and direct involvement in the conflict. The intricate web of alliances and political interests – sectarian or otherwise – ensure that "the longer that Syria continues to be in this violent uprising, Lebanon will become more destabilized, and every single group in Lebanon may get involved in what is happening in Syria."[91]

Gendered Citizenship in a Post-Sectarian State?
In 2011, demonstrators across the country came out to call for the end of political sectarianism in Lebanon. Unlike the sectarian protests of the Cedar Revolution, "men and women from all age groups, areas and socio-economic strata march together through parts of Southern Beirut, East Beirut, West Beirut and the rest of the country shouting slogans such as 'we want the end of political sectarianism.'"[92] These demonstrations represented a break from institutional sectarianism at the grassroots level. While ultimately unsuccessful, they highlighted the ongoing divergences in public opinion incited by enduring consociational power structures of the state.

Amid regional turmoil and a shaky domestic government, political sectarianism is becoming ever more difficult to maintain. Indeed, recent changes "[necessitate] that the Lebanese rethink their future, seriously involve civil society, secular forces and women – all practically marginalized now – and redefine Lebanon as a state, not a framework for sectarian pluralism."[93] Whether a move to secularism would remove or even decrease gendered barriers to

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[90] Lina Khatib and Maxwell Gardiner, "Lebanon: Situation Report," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Middle East Center, April 17, 2015. Web.
[91] Maya Mikdashi, "Lebanon, the Sectarianization of Politics, and Genderizing the Arab Uprisings: Interview with Maya Mikdashi," *Jadaliyya,* June 21, 2012. Web.
[92] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."
[93] Clovis Maksoud, "Lebanon Deserves Better," *Al-Monitor*, March 17, 2014. Web.

public life and civic spaces, however, is not clear. As Mikdashi has argued, "secular states are just as good at engaging in gender oppression and discrimination as any religious movement."[94]

Women in a Fragile Lebanon

As the country itself faces an existential crisis, women continue to face social marginalization and discrimination in the legal and political realm. A 2015 report by Human Rights Watch found that women remain disproportionately disadvantaged by the sectarian legal structures, particularly due to the personal status laws. According to the report, "the multiplicity of laws means that Lebanese citizens are treated differently when it comes to key aspects of their lives, including marriage, divorce, and custody of children,"[95] a legal discrepancy which most directly impacts the social functions perceived as occupying the feminized private space.

The marginalization perpetuated by disparate personal status laws extends directly into women's participation in public life. In a study of women in managerial positions in Lebanon, Hayfaa Tlaiss and Saleema Kauser observed that "although it has been shown that gender stereotyping attitudes are changing, the role of women in Arab societies is mainly identified within the context of family and the traditions and culture of Arab society."[96] The study found that, despite an increase of women in the workplace, less than 5% of managerial positions are occupied by women[97] and noted that Middle Eastern women are "continually being marginalized" from senior positions despite education and experience.[98] This disparity is evident

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[94] Mikdashi, "Interview."
[95] Human Rights Watch, "Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws," Human Rights Watch Middle East and North Africa Division (January 19, 2015).
[96] Tlaiss and Kauser, "Lebanese Women Managers," 11-12.
[97] Ibid, 10.
[98] Ibid, 13.

in the more specific context of women in politically active life in Lebanon as well. In the 2015 Inter-Parliamentary Union rankings of women in parliament, Lebanon was ranked at number 134, with only 3% of lower-house seats held by women – fewer than any other country in the Levant region (Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Syria and Iraq).[99]

The political realm and spheres of power continue to be occupied largely by men as a direct result of the sociopolitical structures perpetuated by the sectarian system. Although disproportionate political presence between genders is hardly unique to Lebanon, in this particular case it means that women are largely barred from determining the country's political future. This is not to say that women are not taking on active roles in pursuing gender-specific or overarching social, political and legal change: women's organizations in Lebanon are working to combat issues such as violence against women and create feminist spaces for future advocacy. However, there exists no unified "women's policy domain within the state,"[100] and thus, no consolidated means by which women may participate in political reform.

Overcoming such obstacles and opening spaces for women to take on a more active role in political life requires not only a more dominant presence of women in these areas, but also a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to participate in civic space. Particularly important is to redefine the political: as this study has demonstrated, the "political" and "non-political" do not always align with the "public" and the "private." Civil society organizations focusing on issues such as social welfare, violence against women, divorce laws, or domestic labor rights operate within the same sociopolitical frameworks as those focused on direct political

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[99] "Women in Parliaments: World Classification," *The Inter-Parliamentary Union*, November 1, 2015.
[100] Kingston, Reproducing Sectarianism, 86.

mobilization. It follows that all such associations play a role in establishing the parameters of civic, i.e. political, spaces – even if some deal mainly in what is perceived to be the "private sphere."

Beyond this reconceptualization of political space, more tangible opportunities arise from the growth of transnational feminist networks and global platforms for civic engagement. Although international collaboration between women's associations and activists is not a recent phenomenon, the development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has created new platforms for such cooperation. As Youngs notes, "the historically rigid vertical structures of the mainstream are now accompanied, thanks to ICTs, by endless horizontal forms of communication, putting women directly in touch with one another, whether locally, nationally, or globally."[101] Digital platforms, while constantly evolving and still largely unexplored for these specific purposes, offer a space detached from state structures where women can develop their own civic consciousness.

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[101] Gillian Youngs, "Digital Transformations of Transnational Feminism in Theory and Practice," in *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements,* ed. Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2014): 2.

VI.   CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings: Gender and Sectarianism in the Lebanese Context

Understanding the parameters of civic space is an important step in identifying existing and potential avenues for civic engagement and political development. In exploring the gendered frameworks of political sectarianism in Lebanon, we can better comprehend the complexities of these parameters in the Lebanese system. As this study has demonstrated, the sociopolitical structures which determine when and by what means women can enter civic spaces are the result of a long history of internal power struggles and foreign intervention.

Lebanon, though a sovereign nation for over 70 years, has never been truly independent. The interests and influence of powerful international actors on the sociopolitical structures of Lebanon is evident in today's fragile system of political sectarianism, a delicate balance which relies largely on the continued patronage of a variety of these actors. From French colonial visions of a "Christian Lebanon," to Israeli apprehensions of Palestinian retaliation, to Iranian manipulation of the Shi'a movement and Syrian usurpation of postwar Lebanese politics, the domestic structures of Lebanon are continually rebuilt on the strategic interests of foreign actors.

The resulting sectarian cleavages permeate not only systems of governance, but also the civic consciousness of the Lebanese public. Since sectarianism is so deeply ingrained in Lebanese politics and society, it directly impacts citizens' relationships with the state in both the public and private realm. Sociopolitical cleavages are further reproduced by institutionalized sectarian structures in politics and law. This can be seen in the personal status laws that politicize what are perceived to be "private" spaces. If we are to understand "civic space" as a realm in which the perceived "public" and "private" converge, the sectarianization of these spheres ultimately

produces experiences of civic life that are not unified but deeply factionalized. Although sectarianism is officially regarded as a temporary measure, diverging sect-based legal jurisdictions and electoral structures continually cultivate a sectarian elite and ensure that consociational power-sharing structures remain a political reality.

Therefore, it is impossible to discuss women's engagement with public life without acknowledging these underlying dynamics. Because citizenship is both sectarian and gendered, women occupy a unique position at the intersection of these spheres. In civic spaces, women must reconcile societal norms, sectarian legal structures, and individual identities in order to participate in areas of public life. The experiences of women within their unique sectarian frameworks and across intersectarian relations reflect the divides and tensions in Lebanese politics and society at large. Thus, if society remains factionalized, so too will women's interactions within it, leaving little opportunity for a unified, cross-confessional experience of public life.

However, although sect-specific public spaces vary, there are shared experiences among Lebanese women. Though separate, each sectarianized public sphere contains within it some structure of patriarchy, which must be overcome in order to fully participate in public life. These structures take the forms of nationalist ideologies, emphasis on women's maternal roles, and androcentric legal frameworks, among others. Indeed, what obstructs a comprehensive, defactionalized solidarity is not a lack of shared experiences between women, but the sociopolitical frameworks that prevent them from unifying under these experiences.

Limitations and Avenues for Further Study

Questions of civic space, gender and political identity are deeply nuanced, and this study was limited to only a few facets of this subject. Further study should take place to more thoroughly explore the structures that influence Lebanese citizens' relationships to the state and society, particularly among women. Although a significant amount of state power in Lebanon is held by the Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'a sects, these are not the only sectarian communities that affect the sectarian balance of the Lebanese system. There are eighteen recognized sects and fifteen religious courts, and consequently, there exist many more sectarian public spaces than were addressed in this study. In order to fully comprehend the position of Lebanon within a global context, we must also understand the ways in which these individual spaces interact.

This study also addressed only the broad sociopolitical contexts in which Lebanese women interact with public spaces. However, equally important are the lived experiences of women within these spaces. As with any society, these experiences are influenced by many unique elements, and while sect is one of them, it is not the singular determining factor responsible for how individuals, or even organizations, navigate civic life. A comprehensive study of sectarianized spaces merely provides the foundation for a deeper exploration of these experiences.

The stability of the Lebanese state and a strong civil society are crucial not only for Lebanon itself, but also for international politics and global civil society. Although it is a small country, Lebanon's importance within the international system of the 21st century is evident: it is situated at the precipice of ongoing tensions in the Middle East not only geographically, but also culturally and politically. However, because of Lebanon's fragmented sociopolitical structure, it

is difficult to engage citizens in this important role on the international stage. Instead, it is external allegiances that continue to dictate the country's domestic and foreign affairs. Nearly a century after the beginning of French colonization, "divide and rule" still dictates modes of citizen engagement in Lebanon.

How, then, can these barriers be overcome? How can transnational actors engage Lebanese citizens, particularly Lebanese women, in international systems and global civil society? This is an important area of research which this study was unable to fully address. Due to Lebanon's internal sociopolitical structures and histories of external interference, this kind of engagement could and should draw citizens and civil society into transnational spaces without upsetting the fragile social balance upheld by elite interests. Indeed, the balance between citizen engagement and proxy manipulation is at best delicate.

Looking Forward: Gender, Sectarianism, and the Future of Lebanon

Political sectarianism in Lebanon is a self-reproducing mechanism which bolsters the interests of the sectarian elite, as well as international patrons, which are maintained in the state and society of Lebanon. Even when there is no explicit sectarian conflict, the tensions remain both within and among sectarian communities as evidenced in the political evolution of the post-2005 Lebanese state. As this study has demonstrated, the confessional identities that reinforce sectarian cleavages also produce gendered spaces unique to that identity. It is Lebanese women who ultimately find oppression within these sectarian structures of patriarchy, while simultaneously reproducing these structures as a way of navigating civic spaces.

Today, Lebanon's political stability is almost entirely dependent on the continued efficacy of this system. Any sectarian imbalance could plunge the country back into intercommunal

conflict in an already quickly destabilizing region. But measures to avoid such an outcome ultimately result in an equally detrimental political stalemate as demonstrated by the current state of the Lebanese government. This dilemma presents a particular challenge to civil society actors, who find themselves restricted by factionalized spaces and sect-based hierarchies.

The solution to these issues will not be straightforward. Lebanese political sectarianism cannot simply be denounced in favor of secular governance. In order to dismantle and reform this complex system, the very foundations of modern Lebanese society must be restructured. It is as Maya Mikdashi has noted: "Calling for the end of political sectarianism is the same as calling for the end of the modern Lebanese state."[1] However, the modern Lebanese state is already faltering – perhaps such an overhaul of existing structures is the only way to revive it.

Beyond Lebanon: Conceptualizing Civic Space beyond Eurocentric Frameworks

The conclusions reached within this study apply specifically to the context of civic spaces in Lebanon. However, much of this research can be employed in the study of broader concepts of social development and civic engagement in the developing world, particularly in the Middle East. Certainly, Lebanon shares a history of colonialism and continued external influence with other countries of the region. The framework of study presented here can be used to examine the development of civic spaces in other Middle East states in a way that challenges Eurocentric assumptions about civil society, civic engagement, and democratization.

Lebanon is one of many states to experience geographic and demographic restructuring in the colonial and post-colonial period. Just as the territory of Mandate Lebanon was determined

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[1] Mikdashi, "Political Sectarianism."

in a way that serviced the strategic interests of France, the borders of neighboring countries were drawn with little consideration for ethnonational or confessional communities. Even after the region gained independence, it continued to serve as a focal point for proxy warfare during the Cold War (take, for example, U.S. and Soviet interventions in Afghanistan). Today, a large part of Middle East politics comprises a complex web of international alliances and external interests.

This can be seen in the pressing interest of foreign governments, development agencies, and NGOs in the region. While interest in civil society, governance, and social development is not inherently negative, most approaches to these goals by Western actors operate within liberal-secular Eurocentric frameworks which do not account for the diverse experiences of citizenship and civic spaces outlined in this study. By thinking more critically about the social, cultural and historical contexts in which these spaces have developed, efforts to promote civic engagement in these states can move beyond blanket solutions that homogenize the experiences of entire populations. If we recognize that the current sociopolitical conditions of a given country did not develop independently of domestic and international spheres of influence, we can better understand the parameters of its civic sphere and the barriers found within these spaces.

Applying this critical framework is particularly important for women's NGOs and "gender in development" efforts. It is important to recognize that women's experiences and identities are not always universal, and that they will almost certainly vary based on the cultural contexts they navigate. This may vary by country, but it can also vary by community, as evidenced by the differing experiences of women within different sects in Lebanon. Because each sectarian community presents different barriers and points of entry to civic life, "engagement" of women within these communities would require different approaches. Recognizing these differences, as well as their historical roots in colonial statecraft and "colonial feminism," is a

crucial step in developing a movement toward greater gender equality that is truly inclusive of all women. Unless concepts of agency, empowerment, and inequality can be understood as fluid and dynamic, and removed from a singular (i.e. liberal-secular) framework, such a movement will continue to be obstructed.

Women across the world face different forms of structural inequality and navigate different spaces of patriarchy in their daily lives. Thus, the conclusions reached in this paper should not be applied as generalizations of the experiences of all women in the Middle East. This study only reflects a small sample of these experiences, but the frameworks it presents can be applied to other contexts. By challenging homogenized conceptions of citizenship, culture, and identity, Western governments and nongovernmental actors can more effectively approach social development, human security and post-conflict reconstruction in the region.

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