# UNIVERZITET U SARAJEVU
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# USMJERENJE: MEĐUNARODNI ODNOSI I DIPLOMATIJA

# ELITE INFLUENCE ON REGIME DURABILITY
# IN SYRIA AND LEBANON

**Magistarski rad**

Kandidat:

**Kenan Kadić**                                    .

Broj indeksa:

1027/II-PIR

Mentor:

**prof.dr. Damir
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**Sarajevo, juni 2020.**

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**List of Abbreviations**

CEO – Chief executive officer

FH – Freedom House

FM – Future Movement

FPM – Free Patriotic Movement

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

LAF – Lebanese Armed Forces

LCP – Lebanese Communist Party

LF – Lebanese Forces

MB – Muslim Brotherhood

MP – Member of Parliament

PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization

PSP - Progressive Socialist Party

SSNP - Syrian Social Nationalist Party

UAR – United Arab Republic

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNSC – United Nation Security Council

USA – United States of America

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

**Introduction**

This thesis has the aim to provide an explanation of how do various types of elites in Syria and Lebanon influence the durability of their regimes over a specific period of time which, in the case of Syria, includes the period from 1970 which marks the ascendance of Hafez al-Assad to power and in the case of Lebanon the period from the Taif Agreement in 1989 onwards. As of theory, a significant amount of literature encompassing both classical and modern elitists will be analyzed especially in relation to our case studies. Starting with early elite works of Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, one should see the underlying notion of elite inevitability stressing that societies and states were in fact always driven by certain, discernible elites that only reproduced themselves over time through their ability to adapt to major changes in the particular political system. Having in mind the complexities associated with ruling a society and major developments that the „state" as such undertook throughout history, one could see that elites are not monolithic blocs equal in size but differentiated minorities that are on top of a specific aspect of society's life be it the economy, military or high politics. Elites are further differentiated internally whereby some may have specific characteristics such as wealth or noble roots that allocates them greater importance in terms of decision making while others, like the military elite, might acquire this importance through violent means through revolutions and uprisings that replace the old elites or simply their natural position as the guardian of a regime that cannot risk losing the foundational pillar of its rule. Here we see that interests play a major role when it comes to elite formation since it is easier for them to rule effectively if their interests converge as well as if their formation process was identical (coming from noble or wealthy families). Major historical events and policies like wars, colonialism and imperialism greatly shape elites' composition and interests especially in our case studies, both of which situated in the Middle East, a region that throughout its history underwent significant changes that shaped its outlook as we know it today. In the Middle East, it was the high differentiation of societies, multiple value systems, wars coupled with foreign intervention through the lens of colonialism and imperialism that shaped their elites whose present outlook and behavior (for instance, anti-Americanism) is greatly influenced by these historical experiences. The other theoretical pillar are works on regime durability which is often part of larger studies about democratization and authoritarianism which is helpful since it helps one to delineate and situate regime durability in theory.

The starting points included in this field include definitions of regime and durability and the assumption that the main goal or incentive of an autocrat is to stay as long as possible in power. We will outline variables like economic development, degree of popular discontent with the regime as well as institutions to show in our case studies how each of them relates to regime durability. A particular set of conditions exists in every authoritarian system that leaders employ to effectively rule and it includes ways of acquiring legitimacy, degree of regime institutionalization, strategies of cooptation and repression as well as kinship and clientelism, both of which common to both Syria and Lebanon. One of the most significant contributions in this part includes the typology by Geddes (1999) of nondemocratic regime types which will help us to situate and identify the political systems of our case studies. After the theoretical reflection and literature review, the focus will be switched to historical analysis of Syria and Lebanon which brings us to the notion of process-tracing since it is one of the goals of this research to unpack and causally analyze the complete chain of events, processes and experiences that shaped Syrian and Lebanese elites, their composition, interests which will enable one to discern a pattern of behavior that elites use when it comes to sustain regime durability in contexts that may challenge their legitimacy and rule in a regime. Syria and Lebanon are good examples of countries through which one can test and analyze elite and regime durability theories' core assumptions and come up with a theoretical framework that can be applicable in other countries because of the richness and diversity in terms of their political histories, societies, state formation and geopolitics since their geographical position in a global hotspot (Middle East), international relations and foreign policies of many states. The fact that Lebanon once had a significant stint as a democracy which slipped into civil war and authoritarianism while Syria was for the whole part of the analyzed period ruled as a dictatorship invites research into reasons why this happened. Both of them have complex societies and expressed sectarianism underlying politics and elite decision making while the patterns of elite behavior differ because of the contrasting sectarian balance of power as well as exogenous events like regional conflicts that resulted in particular alignments internationally which in turn influenced elite behavior/interests domestically. Present relevance played a major role in the selection of case studies because both of them underwent major transformations ranging from war and possibility of regime overthrow in the case of Syria to economic crisis and inter-sectarian violence in Lebanon while in both cases it was the behavior of elites that, in greatest measure, influenced the course of these events and will, as we will show, definitely have a decisive impact on its end.

A further importance that these case studies imply is their influence on regional and international alignments, alliances and events ranging from the usual global and regional power geopolitical rivalries between the US and its allies like Saudi Arabia, Israel on the one side and Russia, Iran and China on the other side. Consequences of the Syrian turmoil are the most reported ones and include a large part of the story called migration and humanitarian disaster that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic coverage, still occupy newsletters of major media companies. Following the historical overview of our case studies the thesis will discuss their political systems to present the institutional and actors' backgrounds because, for one to be able to describe elite behavior and influence they wield, it is important to know the outlines and limits of their „playing field", institutional channels through which they act or not and how this relates to regime durability. Then the thesis will provide the reader with the main types of elites in both Syria and Lebanon where one can see commonalities and differences in their composition, formation and level of influence. The civil war in Lebanon greatly influenced the types and formation process of post-war elites since many of the former war militias and warlords simply transformed into political parties and main political elites differentiated in the initial post-war period by their (non)alignment with Syria. The elites stemming from notable families preserved their elite status where one can see the influence of history and the result of continuous interaction or link between notable families and their constituencies which proved hard to break because of entrenched patronage networks dating back hundreds of years. Prime examples include the prominent Karami family (Sunni) and the Druze family of Jumblatts which continuously wield influence since the times of the Emirate of Mt. Lebanon. Those that didn't have noble descent, compensated for this by possessing large financial wealth through which they bought (and institutionalized through the Future Movement) their membership in the political and economic elite for which the best example was Rafiq Hariri and his cohort of wealthy followers, described in detail. Other elites with smaller influence include the religious/clerical and technocratic elite whose influence largely depends on people's perception of the importance (in important decision making) of their political-symbolic-social capital that they possess. The most important finding, in the case of Lebanon, is that elites strictly follow sectarian lines and operate in a clearly delineated domestic political environment defined by the Ta'if Agreement while their maneuverings are also influenced by regional/international patrons or supporters thereby expanding elites' overall „playing field" which makes a strict delineation of their activities hard to devise.

We will prove this by using the recent protests that started in Lebanon in October 2019 and subsequent behavior of particular elites to support our argument. The case of Syria is similar to the Lebanese in terms of common historical experiences (mainly colonialism) and sectarianism which influenced government representation and membership in elite circles. Syria is ruled from 1970 as a dictatorship lead first by Hafez and after 2000, Bashar al-Assad. Since this is a long period of regime durability (50 years) and relative stability, it is a good case for showing how the right mix of tools and strategies increases elite continuity and commitment to the regime. After assuming power, Hafez al-Assad was quick to appoint his most trusted allies, that were in most cases Alawi or related to him by kinship/blood ties, into top positions of power especially in the military because this institution was the main pillar of his regime upon whose support he eventually took over power from a more radical military faction led by Alawi Salah Jadid through the 1970 „Corrective Movement". Assad's strategy, beside creating a coup-proof and loyal military apparatus, consisted of the creation of multiple security services whose personnel was frequently reshuffled in order to prevent the creation of an autonomous center of power and kept busy looking after each other. The second pillar of his regime was the Baath party that was the ideological driver of Syrian society and through which Assad widened his base of support and legitimacy because Baathism resonated strongly among the poor urban and rural as well as minority groups since it promised them some existential certainty and a way out of political marginalization that was a constant reality for them throughout history when wealthy, mostly Sunni landowners and merchants ruled the country. To avoid critics depicting his regime as an Alawi one, Assad coopted urban, popular Sunnis by giving them a stake in the survival of the regime. He did this by opening up the Syrian economy which benefited wealthy Sunni merchants as well as many military officers close to Assad which led to the creation of a link between the wealthy (mostly Sunni) business elite and top military officers. This interaction or networking resulted in the creation of complex patronage linkages, supported and tolerated by the state whose strategic goal was slowly getting fulfilled and that was increasing the cost of opposing Assad's regime and tying the survival of these elites to the survival of the regime. In Syria, the cooption of the religious elite was important since many Sunnis allocated great value to their religious leader, the Grand Mufti of Syria. Both Hafez and Bashar provided them with state resources to finance religious education, mosques and overall giving them more autonomy to act. However, the most important elite in Syria was the so called „Jama'a elite" which consisted of top military officers and Assad's family which decided on all major decisions.

A notable development happened after Bashar's assumed power when he retired the „old guard" that served under his father's rule and replaced it with his loyalists – mostly cousins that narrowed the previously more inclusive top elite circle. This was further amplified after the start of the civil war, when Bashar's inner circle consisted of only a few people including his brother Maher and cousin Rami Makhlouf who was the strongest representative of the Syrian business elite. The final part of the thesis shows Syrian elites' influence on regime durability in the context of the civil war that started after the 2011 protests where main elite patterns of behavior are highlighted that explain and prove their inevitability when discussing regime durability in Syria.

1. **Methodology section**

Since events in the Middle East have always been one of the most interesting research subjects for many political scientists, here we will build upon that tradition and provide an analysis of elites in Syrian and Lebanese regimes. This thesis has the aim to provide an answer to the research question: **„How did specific types of elites in Syria and Lebanon influence the durability of their regimes?"**. The time frame of analysis for Syria includes the period from 1970 which marks the ascendance of Hafez al-Assad to power and in the case of Lebanon the period from the Ta'if Agreement in 1989 onwards. In order to grasp the essence of Syrian and Lebanese elites this thesis will include and briefly describe the histories of both countries and their political systems as well as democratic institutions. Also, the emergence, cohesion, ties, degrees of institutionalization and sources of legitimacy of elites will be discussed in order to provide a starting point and theoretical framework for understanding this topic.

The following hypotheses will be tested:

**H1**: Regime durability in Syria rests upon elite's successful monopolization of important levers of power.

**H2**: The ability of Lebanese elites to achieve a cross-sectarian compromise over their power-sharing political system is crucial for regime durability.

This thesis will contribute to the existing literature on elites in Syria and Lebanon by exploring how do elite interests and composition influence regime durability but also under what conditions and how do Syrian and Lebanese elites maintain their hold on power.

Answering these questions will enable one to better understand the differences and commonalities of Syrian and Lebanese elites, their current behavior and importance in the context of recent events such as the civil war in Syria and civil protests in Lebanon but also serve as a framework to be applied in other case studies in international relations.

The results of this research can be a starting point for a future research that would deal with then-relevant internal or external events whose outcome would greatly depend, as in our cases, on particular elites as well as their behavior and interest realization. This thesis is also one of the few studies that deal with Syrian and Lebanese elites in comparative perspective as well as latest in terms of coverage of contemporary events like the ongoing civil war in Syria and civil protests in Lebanon.

This thesis predominantly relies on qualitative data which allows the researcher to conduct a detailed analysis which would otherwise be difficult or obscured by using quantitative data.

Books written on particular topics like the histories of Lebanon and Syria, country studies and articles from relevant academic journals provided a solid foundation on which to further build on. The main theoretical framework is two-fold since it includes both theories about elites and regime durability in general which we will then operationalize in our case studies. This research also aims to complement qualitative data that deal only generally about our main research variables, elites and regime durability. Therefore, the final conclusions in this thesis will greatly contribute to the richness of data available on this body of literature. Having in mind the time frames for each case study and the aim of explaining the causal chain of events that led to an outcome, the method that best suits this kind of research is process tracing which will enable us linking causes with outcomes. Since process tracing is a single case method and our aim is to be able to make larger generalizations, we need to couple process tracing with the comparative method after which we can claim that our conclusions about a set of cases (two in this thesis) can be applicable to other cases as well. The majority of used sources are secondary and include journal articles written by experts in the field of Middle East politics and society as well as authors on democratization and authoritarianism since a significant part of the thesis is devoted for describing a specific regime and its traits. Books from the most cited authors on topics of Syria and Lebanon form a major part of the literature too, due to their comprehensive approach to politics in our case studies that includes historical backgrounds and first-hand reports from Syria and Lebanon such as Seale's (1988) biography about Hafez al-Assad.

## 1.1. *Mapping the thesis*

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. The first two chapters discuss elite theory and regime durability theory as a starting point for the research. The next three chapters describe Lebanon first in its historical and geographical perspective, then the political system and finally Lebanese elites in chapter five. Chapters six starts with positioning Syria in a historical and geographical perspective after which the Syrian political system is described in detail until the 1970 „Corrective Movement" because of this period's importance for future developments that took place in Syria. Chapter eight provides an overview and differentiates between Syrian elites while the ninth chapter synthesizes the previous ones by outlining the main findings about elites' influence on regime durability in both case studies. Finally, chapter ten lays out the main conclusions about the whole research and provides some final thoughts about the theoretical applicability of the research framework developed in this thesis for future works in this field of study.

## 2. Elites and elite theory

In this section, a historical overview of elites and elite theory will be discussed together with the main theoretical assumptions of classical as well as modern elitists. Elites are at the center of this work because they will provide the answer to questions regarding regime durability in Lebanon and Syria but in order to do that, one must grasp the most important ideas of elite theory and operationalize them through examples. Since this discipline is rich in literature and there is no benefit for one to compress everything in one section, the forthcoming discussion will only consider the most known authors and works as the basis of this work.

Elite theory is closely aligned with disciplines such as sociology and rational choice theory and as such it seeks to explain how elite behavior influences outcomes as well as interactions between elites, their circulation and transformation. The starting point for doing research in this field are the works of classical elitists such as Pareto (1935), Mosca (1939) and Michels (1915). Elite inevitability is the essential idea of early elite theory which stands in opposition to theories of socialism and democracy and stresses that all states and their societies were always elite driven and the only change that happened was the change of elites themselves. A significant contribution to elite theory is also that of Max Weber who used the term „ruling minorities“ instead of elites and developed the concept of „democratic elitism“ stating that democracy and elites can go together since democratization only changes the character of elites which then use legal ways and delegated mandates, won through elections, to govern. Weber also wrote about the influence of modernization on state and society, concluding that it brought about among other things professionalism, legality and efficiency thereby increasing instead of reducing the power of elites. In his view, the modern nation-state became the center of power and interest for modern elites. (Pakulski 2012, 42-44) Power flows from different sources or functional sectors which means that elites emerge from them and thereby are not homogenous and they differ in recruitment and integration. The most researched is the political elite and often when one reads about elites it refers to political ones but there is also a significant number of studies on different elites ranging from corporate (Carrol and Sapinski 2010) to media elites (Lopez 2012). An attempt has been made by Higley, Field and Burton, on the basis of classical elite theory and historical analysis, to establish a new elite paradigm that would critically assess the previous works of Pareto, Mosca and Michels and include new variables such as relationships between elites, differentiation, transformation and interdependence of elites. (Cammack 1990, 415)

These authors also introduced a proposition about types of elites which could be disunited, consensually united and/or ideologically united but a greater insight into this and other typologies will be given in the next subsection. The first theoretical works on elites date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and authors like Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels and Max Weber while the French word „élite" dates back to the seventeenth century when it was used to denote something very expensive or exclusive goods and later it was used to describe aristocratic groups and prestigious/highly valued military units. Pareto in his Treatise on General Sociology (1916) provided a picturesque and broad explanation of „elite" as a group of people whose main link to each other is that they perform the best in their spheres of life or branches of activity. Through this explanation he highlighted the existing gap of inequality among people which is a consequence of their performance in various activities. This elite was, according to Pareto, divided into a governing elite referring to individuals with some sway over politics and government and non-governing elite. Henceforth, he comes up with two strata of a population: a lower and non-elite one and the higher or elite stratum with the above mentioned division. (Pareto, 1916 : 1423-4) In a similar vein, Mosca wrote about two classes of people, the first being a minority class, well organized and also composed of skillful or superior individuals which rule over and govern the other, more numerous and subordinated class. However, he also noticed a middle class called sub-elite (being part of the lower class) that serves as a link between the initial two classes and provides the elite with new skillful recruits. (Mosca 1939) Be it the governing elite of Pareto or the political class of Mosca, it is clear that both authors identified a ruling minority with the clout to influence political decision-making and outcomes of utmost importance for regime durability and survival. Elite theory as many other social science theories was a product of crisis in the early twentieth century and necessity to define what a good society should look like and as such is opposed to radical social ideas such as Marxism for which it cannot find reasonable justifications and considers it as a utopian idea since, among other critiques, there was not a case in history of an egalitarian and classless society. Elite theory has also been subject of various criticisms including the Marxist and democratic critiques which stressed the authoritarian outlook of elites and dangerous as such since it excludes the majority of people from actual decision-making and insulates itself thereby perpetuating its future influence. This insulation or elite autonomy is a precondition for political effectiveness in the neo-elitist camp of elite theory while the demo-elitist camp gives more credit to relations with non-elite members and sharing of power so it is seen as a democratic alternative to neoelitism thought. (Pakulski 2018)

Elites vary in their composition but there is agreement that top executive officials, military and government leaders, managers, leaders of political parties, labor unions as well as of media and cultural organizations are members of elites. For instance, C. Wright Mills (1956) in his book „The Power Elite" differentiates between three strongest elites: the military, corporate (economic) and political which together form the power elite of the United States. He recognizes that power is best attainted and maintained through core institutions of these branches but it is not the single source of power. What unites these branches is their interference in each other's affairs, the mobility of people through all branches and the fact that none is powerful enough without the other. There is debate about the actual number of individuals composing different elites ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand depending on the size of the polity. In this respect, Max Weber represents those who limit the number of individuals in certain elites only to those holding top executive and leadership positions while Charles Murray on the other hand proposes broad definitions of elites in the United States which include several thousand people. (Weber 1978); (Murray 2012)

Mosca also invented the notion „circulation of elites" by which he meant that elites are not fixed and closed but subject to change and entrance of new members, be it from the non-elite whose members gained new skills and competences, into the elite. New members may be drawn from the non-elite after their attendance of prestigious universities or because of their party activism which was clearly the case in the former Soviet Union where the only channel that could propel someone to the top communist elite was the Communist Party. There is also the possibility of a complete disbandment of the existing elite by the so called counter-elite which happens in revolutions and other uprisings. Through the examples of revolution we can observe what specific qualities (psychological or social) these new or aspiring elite members have and on the other hand what are the specific circumstances that increase the propensity of the established elite. (Mosca 1939) Whenever a change or break in continuity in the political, social or economic systems happens it is logical to assume that the same change will happen to existing elites prompting them to alter their behavior or cause their disbandment.

For instance, Henri Pirenne in his work „The Stages in the Social History of Capitalism" published back in 1914, puts the focus on capitalist classes that characterized societies and economic systems from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries and concludes that with every break of continuity, caused by a new development such as trade and industries, a new capitalist class would emerge completely different from the one it replaced.

In these new systems, the previous capitalist classes would lose their previous role because of their inability to adapt to new circumstances.

In a similar vein, Bottomore has observed the role of the individual but also society in the circulation of elites stressing reasons such as the level of energy endowment and intelligence but also the openess of upper classes. (Bottomore 1993, 43-44)

It is obvious from the above examples that one of the main goals and tasks of elites would be to work hard to maintain their status because of fear of losing it after a major change in the overall political system. The other option would be to anticipate change and try to adapt to the new circumstances thereby reducing the overall risk of being sidelined. This is what happened in some former communist countries during their transition to democracy. Former communist elites (for instance those in Bulgaria) were the best positioned group to maintain their leadership and maximize profits in a new political system and still were able to exercise power. (Dimitrova 2002, 126-27) The twentieth century saw a number of events that changed the course of human history and it is considered that three types of elites succeeded, replaced the old ruling elites, aristocracies, classes and were tasked with outlining and creating new ways of life, political and economic systems as well as ideologies. Those were the intellectuals, high government officials and industrial managers, each with their own specific composition and role in society. (Bottomore 1993, 52) The first elite group is the most heterogeneous one for reasons of social origin and professional orientation but nevertheless the most competent one and resembles the class of technocrats – individuals (the scientists and engineers) through whose agency the rule of the people is effective. Industrial managers gained an elite status since they are the ones who make important economic decisions and control the production process though they are separated from the owners of industry but they still can be major shareholders of the same company. These managers hold a great amount of wealth and prestige since they're mostly recruited from upper class or higher middle class families which have interests in these days in every branch of industry. Mills noted that, in the United States these managers among the above reasons usually are white, Protestant Americans whose fathers were primarily entrepreneurs and wealthy businessmen. (Mills 1956, 126) High government officials are, as the previous two groups, not independent elites and all lack cohesiveness.

In Bottomore's book „Elites and society" he points to various debates about the composition and operation of these officials and many consider them equivalent with bureaucrats. Bureaucracies can be, and often are, under conditions of low political oversight independent powerhouses with significant policy-making abilities.

On the other hand, they can be quite politicized because of their appointments by the ruling political party or parties as be used as instruments through which the governing elite rules. The underlying, common characteristic of these three elites is that they are not powerful and cohesive enough to form a governing elite. (Bottomore 1993, 63-69)

## 2.1. Elite integration and typologies

Elite integration is one of the two core dimensions, the other being the character of elite-citizen linkages, along which typologies of elites are made. It refers to the internal character and cohesion of elites, their cooperativeness when making important political decisions. It also means the ability to gather and prepare elite members to act. Mosca and Michels were among authors who stressed the cohesiveness of elites as crucial for their attainment and maintenance of status and privileges. (Hoffmann-Lange 2018, 54) Calling upon Machiavelli's analogy of lions and foxes, Pareto (1935) conceptualizes it to characterize and differentiate elites as lions and foxes. The elite with the lion attribute would be the conservative and prone to use coercion to achieve goals while the latter rests on its abilities such as persuasion and negotiation, a more constructivist approach. As Femia (2002) rightly noted, if there can be a balance between these two types, their persistence is inevitable. In terms of elite integration, their backgrounds carry an important role because they shape relations between them and influence the formation of potential elite alliances and rivalries. We can distinguish two types of elite integration: moral and social integration. Moral integration refers to the adoption of a value consensus, specific *modus operandi* and behavior which is shared by all members and that seeks to achieve ends through persuasion and negotiation. Social integration means the number of interactions and exchanges between members as well the way they behave towards each other. Higley and Burton 2006, 11) A common assumption shared by these authors is that increased elite integration or cohesiveness results in regime stability which further raises the importance of investigating this process. Elite members which shared the same experience in the past, for instance those that went on the same university or are descendants from noble families, greatly contribute to their future interaction and cohesiveness in an elite group. John Higley et. al. (Higley and Burton 2006) have developed a commonly used typology of elite integration and differentiated between three types of political elites: united elites which can be consensually or ideologically united, share a code of behavior, have a value consensus and disunited elites, those that produce illiberal democracies and authoritarian regimes, which is the most common type throughout political history.

Value consensus about norms and rules of behavior is a great indicator which can show the level of elite integration. Consensually united elites are adept at realistically acknowledging their bargaining position, clout, capacity and flexibility which is necessary for them to function properly with opposing elites in terms of ideology or other higher goals.

Reciprocity is inherent in their conduct and they are able to compromise on basic or fundamental issues since it guarantees their persistence and endorse the main values of their society and its organization of the political system. This does not mean that everything is running smooth among different factions since they frequently oppose and criticize each other on policy grounds but over time this basic consensus on core goals is observable (Burton 2006, 10-11)

While the consensual type signals a dispersion of power to multiple centers, the ideologically united elite is characterized by centralized power in the hands of a few top leaders. Ideologically united elites are uniform and adhere to the same set of principles or ideology and conflicts among their members are rare since they share the same goals. This type sidelines rational thinking and instead perceives events as the result of divine or ideological truths that transcend reality. It makes them more grounded and devoid of flexibility and negotiation. Examples would include communist regimes such as North Korea, former Soviet Union under Stalin and on the other ideological spectrums Hitler's Germany and Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. (Hoffmann-Lange 2018, 58) Typologies along the elite-citizens linkage dimension deal with the variety of actors, groups and interests that are represented in the political elite or the social inclusiveness and propensity of political elites. In this sense, indicators such as plurality of elites with their multiple political parties, competition through elections and existence of many formal or informal ties in society etc. are of great applicability in order to measure the second dimension.

### 2.2.    Research methods for exploring elites

In order to conduct research on elites, one must be able to use the appropriate methods which will help to define the elite population, its structure and the starting point for this is an applicable working definition of elites which must not be too specific nor too general. Purposive sampling is usually used in elite research and that is a method where the researcher's knowledge of the population guides the process and three methods have come out of purposive sampling: the positional, decisional and reputational method. (Tansey 2007, 770) (Hoffmann-Lange 2018, 80) Each of these three methods rests on different assumptions. The positional method has been mostly used for research on national elites and rests on the assumption that power is concentrated in top leadership positions in government, various organizations and institutions such as mass media, academia, the military and public administration. The above mentioned study conducted by Mills (1956) resembles this method because he included different functional sectors in his „power elite" consisting of military, political and corporate elites.

To be successful, the positional method has to be combined with knowledge about power relations and networks since not every functional sector and its members have equal power and decision-making abilities. For one to further grasp these abilities, it is useful to measure and explore an individual's involvement in key policy decision-making for which the decisional method applies. Developed by Robert Dahl (1961), the decisional method includes the collection of large amounts of data and selection of the most important policy areas, that concern the majority of population, where those involved in decision-making or initiating policies are added on the elite list. This has its limits such as the focus on policies which make it to the agenda, those that don't reach the decision-making phase are destined to be excluded *per se*. The last, reputational method was introduced by Floyd Hunter (1953) and uses the knowledge of experts to find elites and is the most complex method because of difficulties such as requiring experts (which are very much differentiated among themselves) to rate the influence or power of a potential elite member and lacking information about certain power-networks which are closed to public's view. (Hoffmann-Lange 2018, 82-86) Social network analysis (SNA) is also a useful tool for studying political elites since it employs a wide variety of datasets that include the backgrounds and characteristics of actors which then enable one to spot ties between actors or nodes as social network analysts call them. In this way, elite interactions and relationships can be easily identified by collecting relevant data for instance in parliament, in parliamentary committees etc. An interesting study by James Fowler (2006) has used SNA to track co-sponsorships of bills in the US Congress so as to be able to find commonalities among MPs.

## 2.3. *Background and attributes of political elites*

While one cannot negate that many attributes of elites such as wealth, ethnicity, gender and descent, those are not the crucial criteria for elite's ability to make or influence important political decisions. Rather, it is during the lifetime of individuals when they acquire, through education, social interactions etc. the leadership positions and enter the highest echelons of power in their state or some organization. Thus one can look on elites through a sociological lens because of the large influence of external societal factors on individuals that define their careers in the first place. Personal character traits, habits, experiences and skills can have an impact on elite decision-making but they should not be exaggerated since there are also structural constraints and context-dependent issues that must be taken into account too. (Dietrich et. Al 2012, 196)

There exists a significant amount of research that aims to explain the linkage between political elites and personal traits in order to come up with conclusions and patterns about their decision-making. Research on traits is divided into: single-trait theories of personality which seek to explain one specific pattern of behavior or trait and multi-trait theories that have a comprehensively encompass a person's character including all traits and patterns of behavior. (Caprara and Silvester 2018, 470) Traits like motivation, ambition, intelligence are together or in combination strong determinants of a person's behavior especially in politics because of its complexity and necessity of dealing with multiple tasks and relationships. They form one's belief and worldview and, once established, are hard to dismiss although adopting new ones is not a sign of weakness. Research has proved that personal traits play an important role when it comes to forming alliances in political settings, responding to crises and interaction with the electorate and that is the most important relation since it is the electorate and their voting ability which decides on one's position in politics but not always since many politicians can be appointed thereby avoiding the campaigning and election process. This contributes to their insulation and autonomy as well as assertiveness in politics because they don't have to care about public opinion as much as other politicians do. Studies such as those of Simonton (1988, 2006) that studied US presidents and their personal traits, later linking them to performance can be of great practical value because of its applicability to other cases/persons.

Politics was not always accessible to public masses but it was preserve for the notables that is, those who had economic (wealth, land), social (personal ties to other notables, aristocratic families), cultural (university degrees) and moral (good reputation/moral standing) means to achieve political ends. It is out of the struggle against these notables that later professional, modern politicians appeared as the bearers of politics in a specific state. People from the middle class started to challenge notables and as time passed, became the majority of political office holders through organizing in political parties, institutionalizing their presence and actions. (Gaxie 2018, 490) Political elites nowadays operate in a specific area where they have a monopoly over decision-making or initiative but also have limited autonomy since they are still accountable to their electorate although it is possible, for those appointed to political office, to avoid this accountability thereby insulate themselves completely which can also lead them being out of touch with reality. The above mentioned economic, cultural, social and moral means can be, according to the *interconvertibility theory* of Pierre Bourdieu , exchanged into a single form of capital which we will call political capital, a term often used by politicians but carries different meanings. In this sense, the wealth acquired or inherited by notables (economic capital) is easily exchanged by them into political capital because their wealth enables them to actively engage in politics and care less about their earnings. (Swartz 1997)

Here the definition from Casey (2008) of political capital as „***the sum of combining other types of capital for purposive political action or the return of an investment of political capital which is returned into the system of production (reinvestment)***)" is helpful when we come to explaining how some Lebanese political elites utilized their economic or other capital for political purposes. The market for political capital is mostly centered around elections (where they are held) since it is there when exchanges happen such as campaigning, which can be seen as turning economic capital into political by donations, political funding, and it is the market where someone either gains or loses. Gaxie's (2018) theorizing about political capital brought him to further describe it by dividing political capital into external and internal support where the former indicated the number of votes and campaign funding while the latter support means the one inside the political party to which the politician belongs. While those with noble or aristocratic background inherited their economic, social and political capital constituted for instance in Germany and UK around 40% of all MPs in late nineteenth century, today there are less than 5% of MPs with noble titles in most western parliaments. (Best and Cotta 2000)

## 2.4. Political elites in the Middle East

Middle Eastern states as they look nowadays do not resemble any previous polity that existed there throughout history. This is because the contemporary borders of these states are artificial and were drawn by imperialist powers in the 20th century such as Britain and France. Before the creation of these new states back then, the most of the Middle East was dominated by the Ottoman Empire with the exception of Iran and Morocco. The specific administrative system of the Ottoman Empire enabled local rulers to have some autonomy in turn for obeying the Porte and paying taxes. At many occasions, this system didn't run smooth which was a consequence of too much autonomy that these local rulers had and then tried to establish their own polity and authority in the region. The appointed governors of administrative units such as vilayets were tasked with exercising authority and making sure that local movements, rulers and population are kept at bay. To make this work, they did not hesitate to use the old tactic of *divide et impera* whereby they would antagonize different tribes, sects or other communities which guaranteed that no one will prevail and strengthen enough to challenge the Ottoman authority. By the time the Ottomans came to control this region, various local elites were already established which were mostly Muslim. (Henry 2018, 181-183) After the Great War and the subsequent divisions of the Middle East into spheres of influence or mandates, foreign (British and French) authority was installed which made use of the local elites to rule and the British were especially adept at this. (Hinnebusch 2003)

These mandates were run as colonies and after the Second World War ended a wave of decolonization started which resulted in the establishment of independent nation states. However, many traditional elites remained in power and were not displaced easily as some thought. Lebanon and Syria are good examples of this and we will discuss this in detail in upcoming sections.

## 2.5. Politically relevant elite (PRE)

With the aim of extending and going beyond a narrow definition of elites, Perthes (2004) has invented the term politically relevant elite to include a larger amount of individuals that can have influence on the decision-making process in a certain state. He goes on to define PRE as those „***people in a given country who wield political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision-making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values, and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues***. (Perthes 2004, 5) He also states the fact that someone might be a top businessman, part of religious elites but not considered part of the politically relevant elite if they don't wield influence in the decision-making process. His PRE model is a three-way structured model whereby each circle of it has a different amount of influence and significance in the decision-making process. Those that make the most important, strategic decisions are considered to be part of the inner circle or core elite while those which make decisions of lesser importance and unless delegated, don't make decisions of strategic importance comprise the second circle or the intermediate elite. The weakest, in terms of influence, is the third circle which he defines as the sub-elite which, because of their governmental and administrative positions, media and lobbies are able to contribute to national agenda setting and discourse but also indirectly influence strategic decision-making. (Maalouf 2018, 10) This study will use the PRE concept of elites since it captures a greater amount of actors, among them also those that are not necessarily seeking political offices.

## 3. Regime durability

The persistence of authoritarian regimes and lack of democratic transitions in the Middle East was and is a common question for many scholars including O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) whose work notes that this particular region hasn't had any experience of transition away from authoritarian rule. However, the 2000s and 2010s have witnessed significant political developments that show people of many Middle Eastern states, driven by a set of grievances and anti-regime resentment, protesting and demanding change which was clear in Lebanon during the „Cedar Revolution" in 2005 and the more recent „Arab Spring" that resulted not in the radical regime reorientation initially thought but in much more modest changes. We will borrow the definition of regimes by Geddes et al. (2014) that describes regimes *„as basic informal and formal rules that determine what interests are represented in the authoritarian leadership group and whether these interests can constrain the dictator"*. The fact that Middle Eastern regimes have not initiated transitions away from authoritarianism resulted in scholars' research into authoritarian persistence, that is, what are the underlying conditions that enable authoritarianism to remain resilient to democracy, how do such regimes and its protagonists maintain their rule and what are their strategies that adapt to changing internal and external political, socio-economic circumstances. (Schlumberger 2007, 2-7) It is a well-known fact in political science literature that consistent (consistency meaning the existence of a mutually reinforcing set of institutions) autocracies and democracies are best in terms of regime durability and stability which was covered in studies of Gurr (1974), Sanhueza (1999) and many more. For instance, Sanhueza shows that the variable of economic development is crucial for stability of democratic regimes while the same is not the case with autocracies where another factor, the degree of popular discontent is more important meaning that the higher rate of popular discontent the less stable the autocracy is. (Sanhueza 1999, 354) We will borrow Gurr's meaning of persistence to define durability simply as the length of a time period during which no significant/radical change altered the authority pattern. (Gurr 1974, 1484) Gates et al. (2006) study proved the paramount importance of institutional structures to the maintenance and stability of both democracies and autocracies with the latter defined as *„an institutional arrangement that hinders competing elites' access to political power"* with the recognition that the main incentive of an autocrat in power is to stay in power as long as possible while also describing in detail the ideal democratic and autocratic type. Whenever a channel exists through which competing elites could challenge the incumbent, the regime is less stable and prone to change.

Therefore, it is important for the incumbent to increase the cost of challenging his powerbase which may range from imprisonment and even death which is observable in our case studies, especially in Syria.

Institutions are not just the foundation of democracy but also a necessary instrument for autocracies because they balance different elites' interests and increases interaction, transparency between them as well as allows the autocrat in power to check on potential threats. An example would be the Syrian case and the relations between president Assad and top security agencies but also the Baath Party. These and other interactions between various institutions in autocratic regimes are well detailed in Boix & Svolik (2013) analysis on the foundations of limited authoritarian government. Autocracies need to weigh multiple factors in order to ensure regime durability which can range from partially allowing media/press freedom, multiparty elections and creation of various organizations (when facing great threats) clearly showing how difficult it is to preserve power even in conditions where it is concentrated in small groups of people. (Knutsen & Nygard 2015, 657-658) While the difference between democracy and autocracy is clear, distinguishing between types of autocracies is sometimes difficult because of their many variations that are reflected in the manner decisions are made, leaders are chosen and how the state interacts with society. (Geddes 1999, 121) The typology by Geddes (1999) remains one of the most referenced works on nondemocratic regime types in which she outlined the qualitative distinction (using as criteria control over access to power/influence) between personalist, military and single-party regimes as well as their hybrids. Since one of our case studies (Syria) fits into the personalist regime category, a brief description will be in order. When the leader of a personalist regime is able to select and control the elite recruitment process as well as the appointment of important security/military officers while the main political party (Baath) or military/security agencies are underdeveloped and not autonomous we are talking about a personalist regime. The leader relies on loose, mostly kinship/ethnic/religious support and patronage networks through which power is exercised and favors dispersed in return for loyalty. This narrow concentration of power positively affects regime durability because splits within these networks are possible but highly unlikely because of the nature of connections (kin, ethnicity, religion, regionalism).

One of the main shortcomings is their reliance on the economy as a source from which material benefits are dispersed and any geopolitical, economic shock (internal or external) might seriously undermine regime durability and cause the regime to fall.

A notable fact is that since 1945 until Geddes's article has been published in 1999, 16% of personalist regime breakdowns resulted in stable democracies while 49% continued to persist as authoritarianisms in various forms. A typology based on Geddes has been worked out by Hadenius and Teorell (2007) that analyzes the prospects of nondemocratic regime types for democratization as well as providing the average regime durability for their types. (Geddes 1999, 132-136) Various tactics are used by autocratic regimes in order to extend regime durability that range from political liberalization (allowing elections), easing of economic restrictions (opening up the state to foreign capital), privatization, easing restrictions on Islamist parties/movements' participation (in the Middle East), using money collected from oil/gas rents to finance patronage networks and prevent elite defection, creating international alliances instead of being isolated but also using repression which is not uncommon in most Middle Eastern countries especially in the recent „Arab Spring". (Kelly, 2016, 20-21) Of particular importance is the concept of regime legitimacy (both internal and external dimensions of it) since it is the foundation upon which regime survival rests. Sources of internal legitimacy in the Middle East include religion/religious legitimacy, tradition, procedural legitimacy, international support, collectivist/socialist ideologies in Middle Eastern republics and material legitimation that is closely related to oil/gas rents that is used to simply buy legitimacy. (Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004, 376-377) Examples of Middle Eastern countries that use religion as a source of legitimacy include Saudi Arabia (guardian of holy Muslim sites, Mecca and Medina), Jordan (Hashemite ruling dynasty claims descent from Prophet Muhammad) and Morocco also claiming ties to the Prophet. (Joffe 1988, 201) (Kumaraswamy 2019, 7). The use of tradition as a source of legitimacy may refer to traditional ruling practices such as dynasticism, primogeniture which is visible in Gulf monarchies but also includes Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well. The gradual introduction of parliamentarianism, reforms, media freedom refers to procedural legitimacy. (Bank et al. 2014, 166-167) States such as Syria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria have at some point in their histories relied (some still rely) on legitimacy derived from collectivist ideologies like Baathism in Iraq and Syria, Nasserism in Egypt or simply Arab nationalism in general where egalitarian policies were pursued, state-led development while the military under presidential influence was the binding element for national unity.

Material and legitimation derived from international linkages/support refers to the allocative power of states, their distribution of state resources which, in the case of the Middle East, are oil and gas rents and those that lack these resources are receiving rents from their transit/distribution role.

Also, significant financial resources have been allocated by international powers like the USA to countries that made peace with Israel as well as the general financial provisions provided throughout the Cold War by the USA and Soviet Union as part of the superpower rivalry. These financial provisions continued after the Cold War to be used for particular Western foreign policy interests ranging from containing the spread of terrorism, protection of Israel and flow of oil/gas and many other, small-scale interests. (Kelly 2016, 27) (Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004, 377) Alongside legitimacy, autocracies heavily rely on the military, security services for regime durability and it is the confluence of many factors that shows one the conditions under which the military could defect or continue to support the regime. One of the foremost factors that determines the willingness of the military to defect or side with the regime in times of uprisings (like the Arab Spring) is its level of institutionalization. The military, as every other institution, has its interests and goals that it must weigh when deciding on important issues like the one about regime survival and durability. These interests can be economic, for instance ensuring regular reception of salaries, access to top military equipment but also existential like maintaining internal cohesion and discipline as well as keeping the prestige of the military high. If the military is highly institutionalized, professional, in some measure autonomous from state institutions (government, presidency) and if it has its own distinct corporate identity then it can see its existence beyond the current regime because it is not tied too close to the specific regime and top regime elites (presidency, high government officials). It is likely that an institutionalized military will see no problem in replacing the autocracy and siding with the people that demand regime transition like in the Arab Spring cases. However, if the military is organized along patrimonial, kinship, religious ties, then the military is endowed to side with the regime and do everything to defend the status quo partly because of fear that they'll lose their privileges and status after a regime transition (violent or not). Under this latter condition, the military won't resist shooting or otherwise repressing threats, in the case of the Arab Spring – shooting/repressing protesters. This was the case in Bahrein where a minority Sunni regime, Sunni military and foreign mercenaries decided to shoot on Shia protesters (Shia Muslims are the majority population in Bahrein) to protect the regime. Another example is Syria, where the military too is organized along patrimonial, kinship, religious ties where the top military officers are from the Alawi sect that decided to shoot on protesters as well leading to a protracted, ongoing civil war.

In Tunisia, the military was fairly institutionalized, insulated from Ben Ali's crony regime and therefore it decided not to shoot on protestors. The case of Libya showed the consequence of tribalism and tribal organization of the military with some elements willing to shoot and others not while in Egypt, despite military professionalism, it was endowed to keep the status quo because of previous regime-friendly relations but the result was the replacement of Hosni Mubarak showing to the public that the military was not his personal instrument (as the military is in Assad's Syria) but he was rather instrumentalized by the military. Another determining factor was the will of the military to shoot or not as well as the perception of the potential cost that would result from mass popular mobilization. If the military perceived that its future after regime change is worse that the status quo, it will suppress the threat and invest themselves fully to regime survival no matter the cost. Fiscal status and international support of the military but also of the regime generally furthermore influence regime durability because if financial needs are not met it is more likely for people and regime elites to rise up against the ruling elite. Therefore, Middle Eastern states are characterized by high military spending with the population carrying the burden. Finally, the existence of a credible threat and level of social mobilization influence regime durability in many ways. A specific set of factors that ignited the recent Arab Spring was in many ways different than previous, small-scale protests in these countries. For instance, alongside socioeconomic grievances and anger the protesters made wide use of social media and modern ways of communication to spread the message and cause the spillover effect in neighboring countries. (Bellin 2004, 144-147) (Bellin 2012, 130-135) While the majority of Arab states have long records of authoritarianism, the case of Lebanon is somewhat different because of its specific consociational organization. Long considered the prime example of Middle Eastern constitutional democracy, Lebanon has because of its complicated political system been prone to conflict and recourse to authoritarian practices which were the consequence of its vulnerability to foreign pressure/interference and because of the long civil war after which it became a democracy only on paper while under Syrian tutelage in practice all the way until the Cedar Revolution in 2005 which resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanese soil. The Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinian presence and foreign intervention are considered by many scholars to be prime, overarching reasons (not the power-sharing nature *per se)* influencing regime durability in Lebanon. (Fakhoury 2014, 236) Freedom House (FH), one of the most cited democracy indices, has considered Lebanon throughout the civil war as „partly free" while after the Ta'if Agreement in 1989 it was considered as „not free" and this lasted until the Syrian troops withdrawal after the Cedar Revolution although elections have been held regularly since 1992.

Many questioned this FH result because the post-Taif period resulted in unprecedented stability and economic development in Lebanon, so questions emerged that challenged FH methodologies, judging them to be to focused on few factors while downplaying the above positive developments. (Harik 2006, 669-670)

## 4. Lebanon in historical and geographical perspective

In order to understand modern Lebanon, it is necessary to go back in history as such and history of Islam, to see how and what specific developments took place which sow the seeds of this state's present complexities, both in terms of demography and religion. One of the prominent studies conducted about Lebanese history are the ones by historian Kamal Salibi (1988) and Fawaz Traboulsi (2007). Lebanon's specific geographical location in the Middle East, the world's hotspot of many contemporary and past conflicts, further adds to its importance in international relations and geopolitics. Lebanon is located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean bordering Syria on the north and east and Israel on the south while the terrain mostly consists of high mountain ranges and hills as well as of the coastal and more prosperous part where its capital and major port city is located namely, Beirut. Apart from the coast and Mount Lebanon, another three important geographical areas are: the Bekaa Valley which lies between Mt. Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountains which constitute the second area and lastly the southern highlands of upper Galilee also known as Jabal Amil. (Salibi, 1988 : 4) The area of Lebanon has been continuously inhabited since the Phoenician times and ruled by different empires, kingdoms and dynasties whose style of governance influenced the way different ethnic and religious groups developed and coexisted mainly because all these subjects differently organized/divided the territory of present-day Lebanon into various districts, counties and other administrative units. After the destruction of the Phoenician city-states along the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian empire's defeat by Alexander the Great the territory of present-day Lebanon became part of the Hellenistic Seleucid kingdom comprising also most of Syria. Afterwards, the people of this Lebanese territory experienced and were subordinated by the Roman and later Byzantine empires whose disappearance from these lands was caused by Arab conquests after which these parts of the Middle East were ruled by successive Islamic empires headed by caliphs or sultans ranging from caliphates such as the Umayyad and Abbasid ones to sultanates such as the Mamluk and Ottoman sultanate. (Salibi, 1988 : 6-10) The most important period, which will be analyzed in following sub-sections, in which we can identify the contours of modern Lebanon happened during Ottoman rule of this region from 1516 up until the end of World War I.

After the Great War the Ottoman empire ceased to exist and, under the aegis of the newly formed League of Nations and on the basis of the 1916 Sykes-Picout agreement and 1920 San Remo agreement, France and Britain divided among themselves the territories of the Middle East into major spheres of influence as mandates under which a significant number of new mini-states was created that were politically weak which was also the aim of both the French and British. (Hinnebusch, 2003, 19)

Historical or natural Syria, which contains the territory between the Taurus mountains in the north, Arabian desert in the south and the Euphrates river in the east and the Mediterranean coast on the west (Bilad al-Sham), was divided by the French into four states: Greater Lebanon (officially declared on 1 September 1920), State of Aleppo, State of Damascus and the Alawite state while the state of Druzes was added in 1921. (Traboulsi, 2007, 80) (Iqbal 1990, 216) Greater Lebanon included the territory of the former Ottoman mutessarifat or privileged sanjak and Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, the Bekaa Valley, Akkar and southern Lebanon mainly because the Maronite community insisted and appealed to the French to fulfill their demand. (Harris, 2017) Also, according to Jawaid Iqbal, the French did not only create Greater Lebanon because of sympathy for the Maronite community but also for their own imperial reasons which saw Greater Lebanon as a stronghold in the Middle East against rising Arab nationalism which was perceived as a threat. (Iqbal, 1990, 317) This incorporation of rich coastal cities also marked the beginning of the reorientation of the Lebanese economy from agriculture towards more profitable sectors such as trade and banking but also signified a change in the demographic structure of this new entity. From the creation of Greater Lebanon onwards, the Maronites no longer constituted a large majority of the population as they had before in the territory of Mount Lebanon (during the mutessarifat) because large populations of Sunni and Shia Muslims from coastal cities named above were added to the overall population thereby effectively reducing the Maronite's influence and later actual representation in government bodies. (Harris, 2017) An important observation and conclusion deriving from this period, with regards to Sunni Muslims, is that this chain of events ranging from the general partitioning of former Ottoman Arab territories to the creation of an artificial, French-sponsored state namely Greater Lebanon psychologically struck the Sunni population and created among them a sense of embarrassment because up until this time, Sunnis were never a minority in this region and subordinated to Christians whom they always regarded as inferior. This development is important because it is from this period onwards that Sunni population started to be more hard-pressed and emotionally driven to act against imperialism. (Wadih, 1973); (Iqbal, 1990 : 318)

Greater Lebanon kept its name until the proclamation of the 1926 constitution, which was drafted despite major opposition from both Sunni and Shia communities, whereby it became the Lebanese Republic with a flag resembling that of France only with a cedar tree in the white stripe.

This constitution envisaged the institutionalization of the sectarian nature of Lebanon with the creation of a parliament whose members must appeal, besides their own, to other communities in order to be elected. One of the most notable shortcomings of this constitution was that it didn't recognize the changed demographic reality which was not anymore completely in favor of the Maronite community. (Hourani, 1986, 12); (Traboulsi, 2007, 90) The period between 1920 and 1943 was characterized by frequent crises in economic, political and social aspects of life but also specific political tensions revolving around the identity and future of the Lebanese Republic. In this context, there were established political blocks arguing for unification with Syria and the wider Arab world while others (mainly Maronite Christians) favored a more independent and Western/French-oriented future. In a similar way that World War I precipitated a political change in the Middle East, so did the Second World War because it created a new reality, facts on the ground such as French weakness and renewed Franco-British rivalry that would be well exploited, in our case, by Lebanese and Syrian but also Egyptian political figures such as Egypt's prime minister Mustafa Nahhas Pasha under whose patronage the negotiations over Lebanon's independence took place in Cairo. (Traboulsi, 2007) Many factors persuaded the Lebanese people from all sects to push for independence. For instance, businessmen wanted to distance themselves and their corporations from a weak French monetary zone and privatize what was left from French economic instruments through which they economically controlled Lebanon. It was through careful political maneuvering and negotiation that Lebanon in 1943 got its independence from the French and a new chapter in its history started with two new documents, the first one being the new constitution which was without any reference to the French mandate anymore and the other one was the „National Pact" (al-Mithaq al Watani) – an unwritten agreement between Bishara al-Khouri, representative from the Maronite Christian community, and Riad al-Sulh – the Sunni Muslim representative. This agreement was the product of intense negotiations between relevant and competent representatives from all communities and it was not imposed on anyone but accepted as a necessary step towards greater harmonization of relations in Lebanon's diverse society.

It specified how the future allocation of political offices, parliamentary seats as well as administrative posts will be implemented whereby a 6:5 (Christian-Muslim) ratio in representation was agreed as well as a principle which stipulated that the post of the president will always be held by a Maronite Christian, that of prime minister by a Sunni Muslim and the Shi'a community will have their representative as Speaker of Parliament. Muslims also had to proclaim that they will restrain from unification ideas with Syria while Christians obliged not to involve Lebanon in any military pacts from either side, be it Western or Arab ones. (Traboulsi 2017); (El-Husseini 2012); (Harris 2017)

Shortly after independence, Lebanon joined the Arab League in 1944 but stuck to a neutral course in foreign policy matters as much as it could. Afterwards Lebanon was caught in regional geopolitical settings which were characterized by the first Arab-Israeli War, a military coup in Syria, booming Arab oil economy, Palestinian refugee influx which settled in southern Lebanon thereby changing the demography of Lebanon which shook many non-Muslim politicians. In 1958 there emerged a short crisis whose roots can be traced to then-president Camille Chamoun wish to extend his six-year presidential mandate, which according to the constitution couldn't be extended. This crisis resulted in a Muslim uprising and a brief US military intervention and the election of Fouad Shebab, a military commander, as president of Lebanon. The 1960s were a period of economic and social growth for Lebanon since it became the main intersection of Western and Arab capital in the Middle East. (Harris 2017) The causes leading up to the outbreak of Lebanese civil war (1975-1989) were mostly centered around the Palestinian question that is, their armed presence in southern Lebanon which was confirmed in the Cairo Agreement in 1969 and a great number of Palestinian refugees since their expulsion from Jordan after Black September in 1970 but also sectarian issues surfaced again because, by this time, the facts on the ground in terms of demography had significantly changed whereby Muslims constituted the majority of Lebanese population. These issues coupled with the formation of many militias controlled by various factions of all communities were a recipe for a civil war that broke out in 1975. (Haugbolle 2011) (Singh 2015) The civil war displayed many differences in thinking about the future of Lebanon with one side viewing it aligned with Syria and considering that Lebanon has no specific history of its own while on the other side there were groups insisting on the specific historic place of Lebanon in the wider Arab-Islamic history and its character as a Christian oasis and refuge in the Arab world. The (un)surprising developments during the war were the new divisions and intra-confessional conflicts especially those among the Christian community which resulted in many civilian deaths and urban destruction which was a characteristic of the capital city of Beirut that was divided into different parts with strict borders and bosses that controlled them.

A consequence of these divisions and the war in general was the deterioration of previous inter-communal relations as well as the economic picture of Lebanon which, during the war, was dull and no longer deserved the nickname „Switzerland of the East" because the only ones benefiting were the militia leaders who exploited the war situation to collect money from illicit activities, most of which went through various ports on the Lebanese coast.

Political figures were frequently assassinated, people from every community were displaced and fled the country so in the end, an atmosphere of fear was created which, more often than not, served as a justification for continued violence perpetrated by communal militias as well as foreign militaries such as the Israeli and Syrian ones. These foreign interventions in Lebanese internal affairs were partly a product of the bipolar rivalry between the USA and USSR as well as regional dynamics such as the long-lasting Arab-Israeli conflict whose peaceful end was perceived as a priority by many in the region as well as in the West. In 1989 the Arab League managed to broker a ceasefire and, together with the USA, initiate negotiations between the majority of pre-war Lebanese parliamentarians in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia which resulted in the signing of the Document of National Understanding also known as the Ta'if Agreement which brought an end to civil war in Lebanon. The agreement's provisions included significant changes in the political system of Lebanon whereby the role of the president was reduced in favor of the Cabinet of Ministers traditionally headed by a Sunni prime minister, the Shi'a speaker of the Chamber of Deputies gained more powers and the composition of this unicameral legislative body was changed from the previous 6:5 ratio that favored Christians to parity between Christians and Muslims which leads observers to conclude that Ta'if was in many provisions a reproduction of the National Pact and continuation of sectarian politics in Lebanon. (Traboulsi 2007) (Harris 2017) (El-Khazen 1991)

### 4.1. Confessional composition of Lebanon

The aim of this section is to provide a brief overview of the most politically relevant religious sects, their history and political representation. As a result of its rich history, Lebanon has often been the refuge for many persecuted religious communities and enjoyed a special narrative in relation to its other Arab neighbors. Every sect had its own vision of Lebanon and when this proved impossible to realize, they had to ally themselves into two main camps. The first of them, constituted mainly by Maronites, stressed the uniqueness of Lebanese identity and pro-Western orientation while the other camp, constituted mainly by Sunnis, saw Lebanon as an Arab nation which should be united together with other Arab states in all matters or be incorporated into Syria due to their historical ties.

The membership of these camps is not exclusive and restricted to some sects and one can find a number of liberal Maronites favoring the second option and vice versa. The various Lebanese communities organize into political parties which are clearly made along sectarian lines and more about them will be said in the section which talks generally about the political system of Lebanon.

The basis for the 1943 National Pact and subsequent popular representation in government and administration was the one and only 1932 census after which the Maronite Christian dominance was justified numerically after which the principle of proportional representation of each sect was in place. The latter formula was revised after the civil war, in the Ta'if Agreement which significantly reduced Christian political dominance and employed a principle of parity in political representation of Muslims and Christians. The census was also the base for citizenship laws which defined the status of Lebanese residents and migrants too. The census was heavily politicized in favor of Maronite Christians whereby many laws and regulations issued just before the census were intended to include/exclude categories of citizens for political objectives. One example would be the inclusion of the Lebanese emigrant community (that was mostly Maronite Christian) in the census that proved critical for the Christian slight majority. Out of the total emigrant community in Lebanon, Maronites constituted almost a half (48%) while the resident Maronite community constituted 29% of citizens. When the former was added to the resident citizen number, the overall Maronite population numbered 33.5 % of the total Lebanese population. (Maktabi 1999, 219-238)

Table 1. Summary of the results of the census of inhabitants of the Lebanese Republic taken in 1932 according to the Regulation of the Higher Census Committee (see p. 223 for original (Figure 1))

| | | Residents | | Emigrants Before August 30, 1924 | | Emigrants After August 30, 1924 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Pays taxes | Does not pay | Pays taxes | Does not pay |
| Residents | 793,396 | Sunni | 178,100 | 2,653 | 9,840 | 1,089 | 3,623 |
| Emigrants | 254,987 | Shi'i | 155,035 | 2,977 | 4,543 | 1,770 | 2,220 |
| Foreigners | 61,297 | Druze | 53,334 | 2,067 | 3,205 | 1,183 | 2,295 |
| Total | 1,109,680 | Maronite | 227,800 | 31,697 | 58,457 | 11,434 | 21,809 |
| | | Greek Catholic | 46,709 | 7,190 | 16,544 | 1,855 | 4,038 |
| | | Greek Orthodox | 77,312 | 12,547 | 31,521 | 3,922 | 9,041 |
| | | Protestant | 6,869 | 607 | 1,575 | 174 | 575 |
| | | Armenian Orthodox | 26,102 | 1 | 60 | 191 | 1,718 |
| | | Armenian Catholic | 5,890 | 9 | 50 | 20 | 375 |
| | | Syriac Orthodox | 2,723 | 6 | 34 | 3 | 54 |
| | | Syriac Catholic | 2,803 | 9 | 196 | 6 | 101 |
| | | Jews | 3,588 | 6 | 214 | 7 | 188 |
| | | Chaldean Orthodox | 190 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | Chaldean Catholic | 548 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 19 |
| | | Miscellaneous | 6,393 | 212 | 758 | 59 | 234 |
| | | Total | 793,396 | 59,981 | 127,003 | 21,713 | 46,290 |
| | | Thereof | | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| | | | | 44,749 | 15,232 | 72,447 | 54,556 |
| | | Before August 1924 | 186,984 | | | | |
| | | Pays fees and does not pay before 30 August 1924 | | | | | |
| | | | | 16,578 | 5,135 | 26,246 | 20,044 |
| | | After August 1924 | 68,003 | Pays fees and does not pay after 30 August 1924 | | | |
| | | Total | 254,987 | | | | |

Source: *al-jarida a-rasmiyya, Official Gazette*, 2718 (5 October 1932).

Figure 1: Results of the 1932 Lebanese census (Official Gazette 1932, 2718)

## 4.2. Maronite Christians

Mount Lebanon has not been the primary residence of Maronites according to their own historical writings which identify northern Syria, specifically the Orontes valley, as their primary settlement after migrating from another land(s), possibly southern parts of the Arabian peninsula or they're descendants of Mardaites from Anatolia which were persecuted by Byzantines. An important remark is that they arrived in the Orontes valley as Christians and met there other Christian Arab tribes (Jacobites and Melchites) before Prophet Muhammad began preaching Islam in 610. Further evidence indicates that it were the Byzantines, which during the tenth and eleventh century ruled this region, who persecuted Maronites and forced them to abandon the Orontes valley and settle in Mount Lebanon which then became their stronghold. Also, a small number of Maronites got to Aleppo where to this day a small number of them can be found.

As of the first contact between Maronites and the Roman papacy it is considered that it was a consequence of the arrival of Crusaders in late eleventh century, when they conquered Jerusalem, that the Maronite patriarch insisted that his congratulations messages and praise be reported to the Pope via a Frankish delegation which later returned to the Maronite patriarch and delivered him a present from Rome while ultimately at the beginning of the 16th century Maronites were recognized as a specific Eastern Christian community. Another important event that happened in the 16th century was the Mamluk defeat by the Ottomans in 1516 which then came to rule this region for centuries to come under a specific administrative system which created the administrative unit the Emirate of Mount Lebanon (1523-1842) and afterwards this status was changed to the Mutessarifat or privileged sanjak status (1861-1915). During these times Maronites, together with Druzes, monopolized power and benefited from the flourishing silk trade. Also the Maronite Church gained immense importance and power as it became the single largest landowner and spread its influence from the traditional northern stronghold to southern parts previously ruled by Druze tribal chiefs and emirs. The specific system which allocated tax-farming rights to ethnic or tribal chiefs, the *iqta* or *iltizam* system, was one of the first instances of elite formation in the area of Lebanon since it were the *muqata'ji* families which ran this system under the eye of Ottoman walis that monopolized and shared power among their family or tribe members. The most prominent Maronite families were the Khazins, Hubaysh and Shibab (which were previously Sunni) families whose rule extended over large parts in the north of Mount Lebanon and later, when they became a majority and formidable force in formerly Druze controlled regions, in the southern parts as well. (Traboulsi 2017)

During the Ottoman times, the area of Mount Lebanon experienced two more administrative changes, in the first instance it is the division of the area into two administrative units/regions called *kaymakamet* – a subdivision of a *vilayet,* the northern Christian and southern Druze although a the majority of the southern region were also Christians. The second administrative change happened in 1861 when the former two regions or kaymakamets were merged into a *mutessarifat* which had limited autonomy inside the Ottoman Empire and its status was guaranteed by European powers (Prussia, Russia, Austria, France and Great Britain). During both of these administrative changes the Maronites constituted the majority of the population until the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 when the inclusion of major cities on the coast brought a large number of Muslims into the mix thereby reducing the former Maronite absolute majority to a bare majority.

From this point onwards, Christian population in general and Maronites in particular were becoming overwhelmed by the Muslim population, both Sunni and Shi'a, which after the 1943 independence and National Pact and its political representation provisions were becoming more frustrated because it was obvious that they were a majority and had not proportional power which ultimately constituted one of the reasons for the civil war which started in 1975. After the Ta'if agreement the principle of parity instead of the 6:5 Christian/Muslim ratio in political representation was introduced and holds to this day.
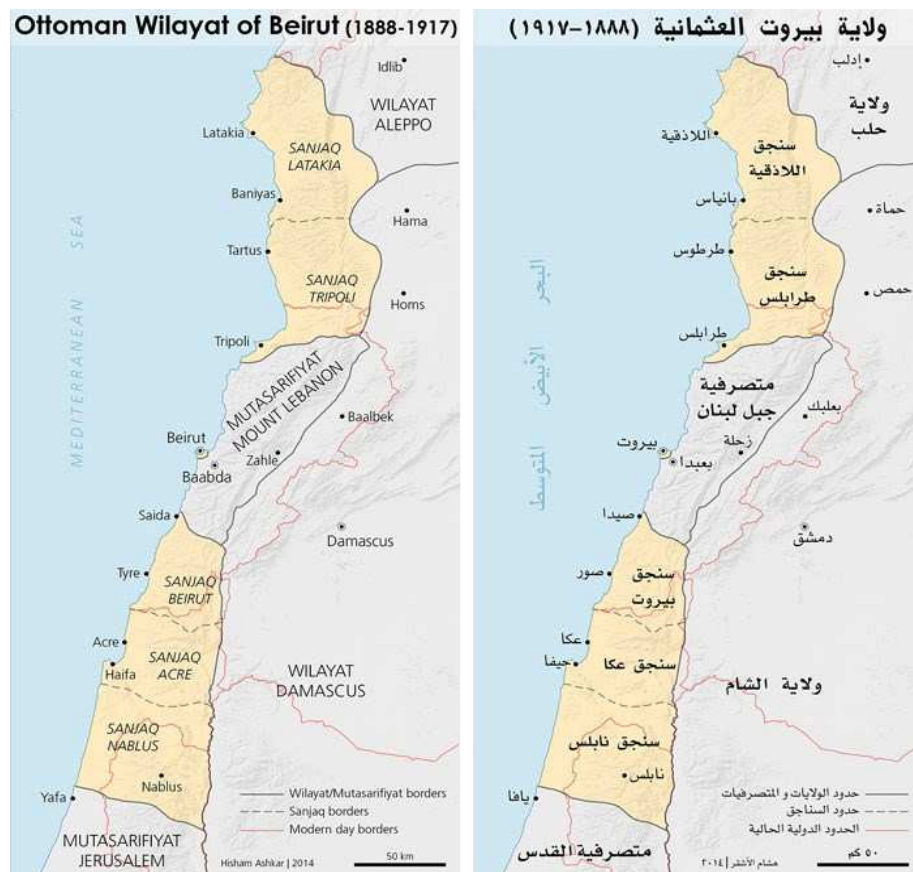


Figure 2: Ottoman Wilayat of Beirut (Askhar 2014)

*4.3.The Druzes*

Paradoxically, the term Druze is accorded to this community by outsiders after the 11th century missionary called al-Darazi, which came from Persia to Cairo at the beginning of the 11th century, joined the movement but he is considered by Druzes to be the first apostate or deviate. Because of this, the term „Unionists (Muwwahhidun)" is used among many Druzes to denote their community. (Swayd 2006) Druze religion originated during the Fatimid Caliphate which had their own interpretation of Islam. Druzes were members of the Shiite sect of Ismailis or Seveners as they were called and their founder was the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah.

According to Swayd (2006), the history of the Druzes can be divided into three main periods: the establishment era (996-1043), the emirates era (1040s-1840s) and the modern era from 1840 onwards. Alongside al-Hakim, the most important missionary and doctrinal father of Druzism was Hamza ibn Ali who, on behalf of al-Hakim, started propagating the Druze faith with his followers and after this propagating phase ended in 1043 no one could ever more join their community since they don't proselytize. When it comes to the origin of Lebanese Druzes, most historians believe that Arabian tribes (Tanukhs being the most prominent one) which were sent by the Abbasids as protectors of the Syrian coast against intruders from Byzantine and later Crusaders. These tribes converted to Druzism (when most of Syria was under Fatimid rule) and established a particular style of self-rule in Mount Lebanon known as the „Emirate" of which three were created acted as the ultimate political authority for the Druzes. The first of these emirates was the Buhturi Emirate also known as the Gharb (Western) Emirate (1040s-1507) whose importance lies in the fact that it served as the first line of defense against Crusaders in the 11th and 12th centuries and was subjected to the rule of successive Islamic empires that ruled this region of geographical Syria or Bilad al-Sham. The Buhturi Emirate was succeeded by the Ma'ni Emirate at the beginning of the 16th century when also Ottomans started to rule this region. The most famous Druze political figure to this day was Fakhr al-Din II because he was able to extend the emirate further north to the city of Palmyra and south to the Sinai peninsula but also encouraged migration of Christians from the northern parts into Druze territory. After a couple of instances of Fakhr al-Din's disobedience to the Ottomans he was executed in Constantinople and shorty after that the power was transferred to the Shibabs who were initially Sunnis later converted to Maronites. During their reign the territory of the emirate was reduced and later the establishment of two kaymakamates brought the era of emirates to and end. (Hazran 2009) (Swayd 2006)

The next significant event in relation to the Druzes was the creation of the French and British Mandates at the end of World War I when Druze communities were split in a way that those in Syria and Lebanon fell under the French Mandate while those in Palestine and Jordan under the British Mandate. Later on, after the 1943 Lebanese independence the Druzes rejected the National Pact of 1943 and completely opposed the confessional/sectarian political system made by a coalition of Maronites and Sunnis. Instead, from the 1950s onwards they stressed the concept of secularization and socialism under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt who originated from the historically important Druze family of Jumblatts but was later assassinated in 1977. From then on, he was succeeded by his son Walid who continued to promote the same ideas as his father did. The other important Druze family in this period are the Arslans whose alliance with the Jumblatts and other Druze families is key to their political survival. Today Druzes represent 7% of Lebanese population and are mostly found in the Shuf region, south of Beirut. (Harris 2017)

### 4.4.  Lebanese Shi'a and Sunni Muslims

According to Muhammad Jabir Al Safa (2004), Arab tribes in southern Lebanon from 650 onwards gave their loyalty to the Shia interpretation of Islam of which the tribe Amila was the most prominent one and inhabited the hills south of the Litani river henceforth the name of this region Jabal Amil. Since the Shia belief system didn't crystallize until the ninth and tenth centuries these early communities should be termed proto-Shia. This divide in Islam happened after the death of Prophet Muhammad on the issue of who should continue to hold the title of caliph (successor) and hold the ultimate religious authority. There were those who believed that the right of succession belongs to the one chosen by the Muslim elite and hose who thought that this right should belong to the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin Ali. Since Ali didn't became the immediate successor to the Prophet it caused a deep religious divide persistent to this day. Most of the Lebanese Shia's are Twelver Shia's, one of two principal factions of Shia's the other being Ismailis or Seveners, and their traditional settlements in Lebanon were the mentioned Jabal Amil and most of the Beqaa Valley. While their history in these areas is closely related to those of the Druzes and Maronites, being landlords themselves but less so than the former two communities because they were residents in a Sunni dominated empire whose great enemy was the Safavid empire during which Shiism was proclaimed as state religion which implicated that religious and cultural isolation would be added to the geographical one. The most prominent Shia figure in Lebanon during the twentieth century was Musa al Sadr – a cleric which came from Iran in 1959 to Tyre to the post of religious judge or mufti.

During his life in Lebanon he wanted to change and influence the overall Shia outlook and was adept at interpreting events from Shia history to modern times which was well received among the Shia population. His mysterious disappearance in 1978 while on a trip to meet Libya's Qaddafi added fuel to his follower's imagination about him. (Ajami 1985) Today, the Shia community constitute half the overall Muslim population of Lebanon which is, according to the CIA Factbook, estimated at 61.1 %. The other half is constituted of Sunni population whose history in Lebanese territory is rich and brighter than that of other communities because this region was for centuries ruled by Sunni Muslim empires which in most cases appointed a Sunni to govern these areas.

They mostly settled the coastal area and port cities such as Sidon, Tripoli and Beirut but also had settlements in the Beqaa Valley and the Shuf region. Prominent Sunni families throughout Lebanese history were the Assafs which ruled Kisrawan and Beirut, Sayfas that were originally Kurdish Sunni rulers of Tripoli and the Shibabs which later, as mentioned in the previous section, converted to Christianity. Their inclusion into Greater Lebanon, role and influence after the National Pact and the civil war resulting in the Ta'if Agreement are already mentioned.

### 4.5. Armenians, Greek Orthodox/Catholic and other smaller officially recognized sects

Numbering today about 120,000, most of Armenians came to Lebanon between 1918-1920 from eastern Anatolia as refugees fleeing Turkish persecution and massacres. A number of them also came as refugees from the Sanjak of Alexandretta which was ceded to Turkey by the French (1937-1939). They managed to maintain their unique identity and religion which is mostly Orthodox Christianity, belonging to the Armenian Gregorian Orthodox Church and a number of them are Protestant (cca. 5,000) and the rest are Catholic. In Lebanon, they settled in the area east of Beirut in a suburb known as Burj Hammoud and in the town of Anjar in the Beqaa Valley. Some of them organized into political parties such as the Ramgavar Azadagan or the Dashnak party. Their negative contribution to Lebanon were the gangsters which, on several occasions, attacked Turkish diplomats. (Gordon 2016, 155)

The origin of Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic denominations can be traced back the the period when the Byzantine Empire ruled this region of historical Syria when Christianity, due to internal lack of agreement on the nature of Christ, split into different sects with those that followed the Byzantine Greek rite called Melchites and others such as Monophysites and Monothelites were considered as heterodox sects of Christianity.

These Melchites were Arabs and lived in historical Syria and in Ottoman times their church became controlled by Greek clergy and influenced by Phanariot Greeks from Constantinople but still were a distinct Syrian church with Patriarch of Antioch as its head. As a consequence of rising importance in terms of trade of Aleppo in late 16th century, many people visited the city and among them were also Roman Catholic missionaries who influenced the Melchites there who were becoming rich as a result of Aleppo's new trade role. This pushed them towards reconsidering their allegiance to a church dominated by Greeks and matters came to a head when an elected Melchite cleric in Aleppo pledged allegiance to the Roman pope which resulted in the split of Syrian Melchites into so called Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox (which later also managed to elect an Arab as Patriarch). (Salibi 1988, 42-44)

The Greek Catholics after the split were persecuted from Aleppo and other parts of Syria by the Greek Orthodox and eventually settling among the Maronites and Druzes in Mount Lebanon which by that time (17th century) became a refuge for many persecuted communities. The Greek Orthodox were later, during the period of Greater Lebanon, organized mostly around the Syrian Nationalist Party, founded by Antoun Sadeh which provided an opposite narrative to Arabism and Maronite Lebanism into existence, that of its inclusion into Syria. They are well represented in the upper classes and mainly inhabit the Kura district, Wadi al-Taym and the Matn while the Greek Catholics mostly live in Beirut, Zahle and places east of Sidon. (Harris 2012, 16-18) The remaining recognized sects which constitute a very small percentage of Lebanese population are the Ismailis, Alawites, Jacobites, Roman Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Chaldean Catholics, Protestants, Copts (from 1995), Nestorians (a very few) and Jews. Only six of them have political entitlements/power are the Maronites, Sunnis, Shi'is, Greek Orthodox/Catholic and the Druze.
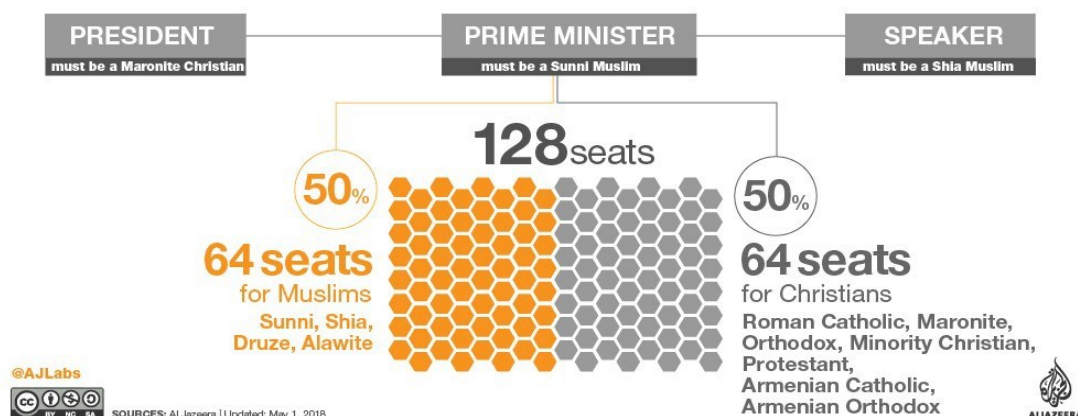


Figure 3: Al Jazeera (2018)

In the above figure, one can see that the parliamentary distribution of seats is equally shared between Muslims and Christians. Out of the 64 seats for Muslims, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims have each 27 seats, Druze 8 and Alawites have 2 deputies while on the Christian side Maronites have 34 seats, Greek Orthodox 14, Greek Catholic 8, Orthodox Armenian 5, Catholic Armenian, Protestants and Others have 1 seat each. (Traboulsi 2007, 241)

## 5. Political system of Lebanon

The aim of this section is to found the basic documents in which the Lebanese confessional system is entrenched and out of which subsequent changes were developed which last to this day. The Lebanese political system came as a result of long historical and communal developments. Also, there is the necessity to mention and describe the consociational nature of the Lebanese political system and in this regard an attempt will be made to trace the (dis)advantages of it in the period from the 1943 National Pact until the outbreak of the civil war. Since this period was both in terms of politics and society of Lebanon very fruitful, it will provide the reader with the background and political history which is of utmost importance for understanding the post-Ta'if politics in general and political elites in particular. The nature of the Lebanese political system is deeply entrenched into its history under the Ottoman Empire, patrimonialism and kinship but also regional context that significantly determined the internal confessional politics and elite relations for decades to come.

### 5.1. The 1926 constitution and the 1943 National Pact provisions

The basis of the Lebanese political system are the 1926 constitution and the 1943 National Pact which were later modified after the civil war in the Ta'if Agreement. After the French High Commissionner appointed a parliamentary drafting commission consisting of Petro Trad (a distinguished Lebanese lawyer), Omak Daouk, Shibl Dammus and Michel Chiha, it was in May 1926 that the constitutional text was made, on the basis of the 1875 French constitution, which renamed Greater Lebanon into the Lebanese Republic, adopted a new flag and added French, beside Arabic, as the second official language. (Traboulsi 2007, 89-90) The Lebanese Republic had a bicameral legislature, the lower house called the Chamber of Deputies and the upper house the Senate which would represent sects and regions but was short-lived and abolished in 1927. Membership of parliament was subject to the principle of proportionality between different sects. Executive power was shared between the President who had more powers and was elected by parliament although the first two were appointed by the High Commissionner (Greek Orthodox Charles Debbas was the first president) and Premier which headed the Council

of Minister or Cabinet and appointed by the president with parliamentary consultation and approval. The second amendment was the extension of the presidential term from four to six years in office in 1929.

The fair distribution of government offices and administrative posts between various sects (except parliamentary seats) was enshrined in article 95 of the constitution. (Hitti 1965, 220-221) During the late 1920s it was clear that the majority of parliament members were descendants of those who had a say in government during Ottoman times.

For instance, Emile Edde and Bishara al-Khoury are members of old Maronite families (from the Hubaysh and Shibab clans) which were in Ottoman times the *muqata'ji* families operating the *iqta* feudal system. The Beirut-based merchant elite, which as mostly Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic, was instrumental in promoting aspiring politicians to government office. Among these elites, prominent families included the Sursuks and Far'uns (Greek Orthodox/Catholic) and Sunni families like the Sulhs and Bayhums. (Harris 2012, 182-184)

The 1943 National Pact was an unwritten agreement, result of long negotiations between Lebanese Muslim and Christian elites as well as with some foreign powers, between the new president Bishara al-Khoury and Sunni prime minister Riad al-Sulh which dealt with Lebanon's identity and sectarian politics. It is the only instance, in history of Lebanon, when foreign interference played a positive role sine it united all confessional elites in pursuing independence from the French. The National Pact recognized and adopted a specific power-sharing formula (on the basis of article 95 of the previous constitution) which was the 6:5 ratio in political representation and reserved the post of President to Maronite, of Premier to a Sunni and speaker of Parliament would be a Shi'a. Lebanon's links with the West (French) were accepted as well as the country's Arab profile along with the pledge not to involve the country into foreign military entanglements or pacts. (Iqbal 1990, 322-324) (Traboulsi 2012, 110) When it comes to personal status issues, it was regulated by religious codes not by civil law and religious institutions of each community such as the Higher Shi'a Islamic Council, Sunni chief Mufti and the Maronite Church and Patriarch.

## 5.2.  *Lebanese consociationalism and the role of elites*

Lebanon has always gained scholarly attention since it represents a good example of consociationalism, a term developed by Arend Lijphart to denote the political system in which **„*a variety of groups, none of which are large enough to constitute a majority, are able to achieve social stability by means of a pact among the elites of various groups*"**. (El-Husseini 2012, 1)

Consociationalism in Lebanon was successful in the period from independence in 1943 until the outbreak of civil war in 1975 because the communal elites managed to bridge their differences and run the political system of a deeply divided society which also entailed concessions from all sides.

The governmental division of the highest offices (presidency, premiership and speakership of parliament) reflected the prime consociational principle of a grand coalition while the existence of religious institutions and codes which regulated personal matters reflected the principle of segmental autonomy of each sect which thereby retained much powers to themselves.

It wouldn't be a mistake to categorize the Lebanese political system as confessional, seeing it as a subtype of consociationalism whereby confessionalism reflects the processes of conflict management and power balance since it is the confessional groups/sects/communities and hence their elites which are the prime political actors in Lebanon and date back to Ottoman times in terms of formation (Reinkowski and Saadeh 2006, 99-100)

Besides the grand coalition and segmental autonomy, there are a significant number of other reasons that sustain consociationalism in Lebanon but in other cases as well. Cooperative strategies and bargaining among confessional elites in Lebanon before the civil war were present and almost became internalized as norms and institutionalized by the elites in state institutions such as the Chamber of Deputies. However, this particular period had its own political turbulences and crisis which shook the elites willingness to fully commit to cooperative strategies (the 1958 crisis which resulted in US military intervention and the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973). There must be certain conditions whose fulfillment facilitates consociationalism and it is to these that we now turn. Some of the theoretical framework of Lehmbruch (1975) is very useful in this regard since he divides these conditions into internal and external and simplifies them as much as possible although this has its own shortcomings. The acceptance of common national symbols such as the national flag or language, the mutual perception of past conflicts as negative and detrimental to all affected by it (conflict between Druzes and Christians in Ottoman times), communication channels between top confessional elites and established traditions of cooperation which in the case of Lebanon could be the negotiations leading to the National Pact between Christians and Muslims. The less these conditions are fulfilled, the less likely the chances of success are. The external conditions center on the perception of external threats in the international or regional context and in this regard if elites have a unified perception of a threat they resort to cooperative strategies to resist the intrusion of foreign powers into their system.

This was not the case in Lebanon because some communities were welcoming the option of foreign interference (Muslims favorable to Syrian presence and unification) while others did

not and ultimately aligned with other regional actors with whom they considered it to suit their interests (Christian alignment with the French and later Israel).

This can lead to a widening gap, in terms of communication and relations, between internal confessional elites which then may align themselves with external/foreign elites thereby undermining the stability of their regime. Pursuing a course of neutrality in foreign affairs is the best strategy to avoid being entangled in regional conflicts which is what Lebanon at least tried to do but ultimately fell prey to foreign interference. (Lehmbruch 1975, 380-386)

Further factors which contributed to Lebanese consociationalism were many democratic instances of political representation in the past such as during the mutessarifat period when, alongside the appointed governor, an Administrative council was in place that included confessional members according to their size as well as the confessional representation during times of Greater Lebanon.

However, a history full of inter-communal conflicts should not be overlooked (Kliot 1987, 54) A strong factor which had a direct influence on Lebanese political elites, their outlook and integration were the strong kinship and communal ties established early on in Lebanese feudal history perpetuated later on. In Lebanon, a person's political career and social status are to a great extent defined by his family which is the basic unit of social organization, not the individual hence the phrase *ibn 'ayleh* – son of a family. (Khalaf 1968, 246) The various government positions after they were reserved from 1943 onwards for one or the other community were held mostly by Lebanese prominent families. The premiership is a good example since between 1943-1964, 31 out of 35 cabinets were headed and rotated among four Sunni families: the Solhs, Yafis, Karamis and Salams which led many to conclude that Lebanese elections are nothing more than contests between extended families of various sects. (Khalaf 1968, 248) From these ties follows the conclusion that essential reasons for the relative success of Lebanese consociationalism were the elites' predominance over their followers, elites' continuity and commitment to system maintenance. The predominance over their followers stems also from historical practices such as the link between the communal/political lord of a community or Za'im and Zu'ama (his followers) whereby the Za'im managed to keep his followers (Zu'ama) subordinated by way of patronage, that is the satisfaction of one's demands in return for loyalty which was predominant and characteristic of feudal societies. (Fakhoury-Muelbacher 2009, 88)

The modern practice of Za'imship includes the provision of benefits such as jobs and projects for one's constituency by an elected Za'im who became a minister or other high-ranking government official. This is very similar to *pork-barrel* legislation in the US political system

which relates to the appropriations made by legislators for local projects (their home districts). (Ansolabehere et. al 2010, 176); (Hudson 1985, 220)

As for the commitment to system maintenance, an example such as the 1958 crisis shows the political elite's willingness to preserve the system by undertaking concrete steps such as the amendment of the recruitment law which resulted in equal proportions of civil service posts between Christians and Muslims and the intention to apply the same in the military thereby solving at least part of the problem of Muslim discontent back then.

Justifying this state of affairs was the fact that cabinets were more durable and voter turnouts were higher which are clear indicators of system maintenance and durability. (Hudson 1985, 221) While elite predominance over their followers were necessary for their interests to be realized, it had its downfalls as well. By strengthening loyalty, elites also strengthened political cleavages and clearly drew a demarcation line between communities thereby disabling cross-cutting activities and inter-confessional dialogue which in the end made it more difficult for elites to bridge differences. This had a detrimental effect on political institutions which was mostly visible in the Lebanese parliament which didn't strive for initiating and legislating national policies which would benefit the whole society but done only what was necessary to appease their electorate hence community although similar things were visible in the executive branch where the presidents' appointment of relatives to high positions only amplified the claim. (Hudson 1969, 251) This confessional centrism naturally lowered national unity and commitment to the political system since the overarching, national ideology was lacking. Kliot (1987, 65-74) wrote that, rather than the Chamber of Deputies, it is 50 prominent clans of clerics, semi-feudal lords and some bankers, businessmen and professionals that have real power in Lebanon which made the existence of political parties obsolete. The absence of political parties with a unifying ideology just before the outbreak of the civil war left the vacuum to be filled by confessional militias. The breakdown of Lebanese consociationalism which came with the 1975 civil war cannot be understood without taking into account the combination of internal and external factors that led to this. While one can argue about the importance of internal conditions and question the amount of its influence on the outbreak of civil war, the case with external conditions is clear-cut in that it was decisive for the outbreak of civil war.

The internal conditions which we just mentioned above needed a flame to set them on fire and turn the country into a 15-year long war. As the civil war was nearing in the early 1970, the amount of elite predominance over their followers was significantly decreasing since masses from all communities were going out of elite control. For instance, in the case of Sunni Muslims it was the ideology of Arabism and/or Arab nationalism of Nasser that reached the masses

which then started developing ideas without taking into account other communities interests while in the case of Shi'is it was their feeling of desperation because of Sunni political predominance that led them to embrace different, more assertive ideas under the leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr. (Fakhoury-Muelbacher 2009, 110-111)

The external events which exacerbated the internal Lebanese divisions were the Arab-Israeli wars in 1967 and 1973 and „Black September" conflict in Jordan which resulted in the displacement of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Jordan into Lebanon (mostly in the southern part from where they conducted attacks against Israel). In these circumstances, Lebanese communities took confessional stances not national thereby aligning themselves with foreign powers favorable to their agenda. On the eve of civil war, the intra and inter-elite state of affairs was not favorable to peaceful coexistence since divisions were looming both from inside and outside. The communal elites needed to show at this point more coalescence and recognize what is good for Lebanon, not only their own sect or foreign patron be it Syria or Israel whose military intervention and presence in Lebanon cemented confessional loyalties but also created new, at times strange, alliances which in the end didn't bring much good for either side. (Traboulsi 2007, 187-220)

### 5.3.   Political parties in Lebanon

The emergence of Lebanese political parties dates back to the beginning of the 20th century and they were not resembling those of the Western democracies but were more like a modern extension to already established kinship and Za'imship structures from medieval and Ottoman times. (Suleiman 1967) In the early stages, these political parties were not grounded in a specific ideology but centered around the personality of its leader and its patronage networks. (El-Husseini 2012, 39) It is possible to divide the emergence of Lebanese political parties into several periods, the first during the French Mandate from 1920 to 1943, then from 1943 until the outbreak of civil war in 1975, the period during the civil war 1975-1990 which is of particular importance since many parties armed and trained their followers and transformed themselves into militias and then from the end of the war onwards.

Centering only on the political party leader and lacking an overarching ideology had its main downfall in the event of the leader's death because afterwards the established cohesion and legitimacy is hard to maintain except in cases were a strong and designated successor takes over. According to El-Khazen (2003), the Mandate period saw the emergence of ideological parties such as the LCP (communist ideology), the SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party espousing pan-Syrianism) and the Kata'ib party (Phalanges) had nationalistic overtones and a

common opposition to Arab nationalism and on the other hand, elite-based parties such as Bishara al-Khoury's Constitutional Bloc and Emile Edde's National Bloc both of which shared the cross-sectarian appeal.

The next phase, from independence until the civil war, was characterized by the proliferation of various parties because during this period there were a plenty of regional issues which facilitated the establishment of some parties such as Nasserite parties and the Ba'th Party as well as the PSP (Progressive Socialist Party which was mostly Druze in membership and led by Kamal Jumblatt) all of which were leftist in ideology. The PLO's settlement in southern Lebanon radicalized some parties which were against PLO presence in Lebanon while others joined them in their struggle but the watershed event that transformed Lebanese political parties into militias was the conflict between the Lebanese army and PLO in 1973 and set the stage for the civil war. This transformation was possible also because of the already established hierarchy and party organization (but not all were well organized) as well as foreign supporters. (El-Khazen 2003, 608-612) During the civil war, parties such as the Kata'eb, the Lebanese Forces, the PSP and Hezbollah managed to entrench themselves deep enough into politics and society that enabled them in the post-war period to play a major role especially Hezbollah (the party of God, formed in 1985). These parties, except Hezbollah which falls under the mass-based party category, since their establishment and subsequent periods perfectly fit the description of „elite-based parties" as defined by Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther in their study on new species of political parties (2003). Their common feature is their deference to founding elites such as the Jumblatts in PSP and Gemayel's in the Kata'eb as well as the reliance on established patronage networks while Hezbollah has since its official establishment in 1985 maintained the same ideological platform in whose center lay the idea of establishing an Islamist Republic in Lebanon following the Iranian example from 1979. As the war came to a close in 1990, all these militias had to return to the post-war political order as political parties and disarm which was formally announced by the government in 1991 and stated in the Ta'if agreement. (El-Khazen 2003, 612)

## 6. Lebanese elites

The most important provisions of the Ta'if agreement which foreshadowed Lebanese politics until the Cedar Revolution in 2005 were those that allowed Syria to deploy its military forces in Lebanon with preceding compromise with the Lebanese government and Syria was allowed to respond to perceived threats to its security from inside Lebanon. This was a mask under which Syrian involvement was cemented and institutionalized and would define all major aspects of Lebanese politics for more than a decade. In 1991 this fact was further institutionalized through a succession of bilateral agreements between Syria and Lebanon (the Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation, Defense and Security Agreement) which gave a decision-making monopoly to Syrian authorities in the most important aspects of Lebanese politics, security, foreign policy as well as economy. (El-Husseini 2012, 17) There are a variety of reasons for Syria to retain control over Lebanon. Some of them are of strategic nature such as the wish to use Lebanon as leverage in dealings with Israel, compensate the loss of the Golan Heights with Lebanon as well as support military activities of a Syrian close ally, Hezbollah. (Fakhoury-Muelbacher 2009, 178-179) The economic dimension also bears significance because of Lebanon's liberal and free banking system which facilitated economic measures in Syria. What is most important in this study is that Syrian influence greatly contributed to the composition of post-Ta'if political elites in all governmental branches whose existence in the postwar period became almost entirely dependent on Syria's acceptance. Iliya Harik's study Mann Yahkum Lubnan (1972) is considered to be the first overall study of Lebanese political elites where he showed that political elite's composition is a direct consequence of elections and factors that accompany them such as political parties and electoral lists, kinship ties as well as political inheritance that persist even in present day Lebanese politics.

### 6.1. Elections and elites

Since the first postwar elections are the most important because they are the institutionalization of the postwar order and signify the beginning of democratic consolidation, their importance is visible in terms of establishment of a new political elite in postwar Lebanon. The vacated 40 seats in the Lebanese parliament (due to deaths in the civil war) had to be filled in 1991 and also 29 more seats (Ta'if stipulated an increase in parliamentary seats). All of them were filled with pro-Syrian candidates and in 1992 when the first postwar elections were held, most of them retained their seats and were again reelected in 1996 (25 MPs) and 2000 (21 MPs) elections. This in turn enabled Syria to control all government appointments, policies and most importantly the President and Cabinet of Ministers. (El-Husseini 2012, 18)

However, the 1992 elections had no widespread legitimacy since the Christian side called for boycott because they were not fairly represented by these new pro-Syrian MPs. However, they understood that this strategy would lead to their further exclusion and political marginalization so they decided to participate in the 1998 municipal elections thereby recognizing the new political reality. This situation partly resembles Highley and Burton's (1989) argument about elite transformations from disunity to consensual unity in a two-step process which consists of electoral collaboration between some opposing factions in the first step (1992, 1996 legislative elections) and then the other major factions opposed to the status quo and tired of exclusion (Maronite Christians) eventually engage in the elections and participate in power-sharing which is their only way to challenge the status quo (resembles the 1998 election participation of Christians after years of boycott). (Higley and Burton 1989, 21) Besides being the product of the civil war, the new postwar political elite was being manufactured by a superior force (Syria) with the intent of homogenizing and keeping the elite under its influence. This notion of elite manufacturing was first introduced and described by Farid El-Khazen. (El-Khazen 1993, 64) Elite circulation was very high if we compare the 1992 legislative elections with those in 1972. There was an increase from 40% to 80% of new deputies which can be explained by the absence of elections for two decades, the Christian boycott, vacated seats after the war which had to be filled and the increase from 99 to 128 parliamentary seats after the Ta'if agreement. In addition to this, most established political families from each sect managed to fill those new seats and later pass them to their children or relatives while competition was highest among the Shi'a community in the south driven by the increase in parliamentary seats. The deputies from notable families have kept their presence in parliament stable and continuous with their representation not being too much affected by the civil war. They've made up 44% of the 1972 parliament, 43% in 1992, 41% in 1996 and 42% in 2000. The number of businessmen in the new parliament increased which is an important change with wide-ranging consequences in future elections and in relation to the overall composition of the political elite while also in 1992 the number of lawyers decreased by around 20%. Also, the increase in the educational level of MPs increased in 1992 with 77% of them holding a university degree, in the 1996 parliament it was 87% and in 2000 it reached its peak with 90%. The Christian boycott of the 1992 elections has made it easier for fundamentalist and Islamist parties to gain in representation with Hezbollah emerging as one of the strongest political groups in postwar Lebanon. (El-Husseini 2012, 102) (El-Khazen 1998, 49-51)

The 1996 parliamentary elections were characterized by voter fraud, adoption of an unequal electoral law tailored by pro-Syrian officials, freedom restrictions and many other flaws which resulted in a victory of pro-government (pro-Syrian) lists (90% parliamentary seats) while the opposition was further weakened and marginalized. Half of the seats were filled with business elites and their lists such as that of Rafiq Hariri (also elected in 1992) and Michel Pharaon with the former building the largest parliamentary bloc thereby turning the focus away from traditional Sunni politicians. The 2000 parliamentary elections most importantly are characterized by the new opposition victory despite the absence of participation of major Christian parties (Hariri's comeback since his resignation in 1998), government efforts to curb opposition media activities by allowing only pro-government media to report but despite this, Hariri used his own Future TV as a tool to criticize government incompetence and particularly then prime minister Salim el-Hoss's incompetence. Although parliamentary elections saw competition and some freedoms this was not the case with presidential elections which were completely engineered by Syria. In the first instance, president Elias Hrawi's mandate was extended for three more years (despite the constitutional 6 year term limit) and in the second, military-general Emile Lahoud became president in 1998 (also in opposition to the constitution) and was also awarded three more years in 2004 under questionable justifications. (Fakhoury-Muelbacher 2009, 204-206) The 1992-1998 period was characterized by authoritarian traits personalized in the rule of the so called Troika which consisted of President Elias Hrawi, prime minister Rafiq Hariri and speaker of parliament Nabih Berri. The Troika regime was subservient to the Syrian establishment and undertook various measures to the detriment of civil liberties thereby resembling more an oligarchy than a democracy with entrenched patron-client relations. The fact that elite turnover in parliament was significantly lower in 1996 parliamentary elections than in 1992 implies that those elites managed to consolidate their power and further persist by following the interests of the Troika which in turn was subservient to Syrian demands. The regime was perceived to benefit only a small group of people in the highest echelons of power which was mostly true since the Troika managed and dispersed state funds to their sectarian followers and government offices were regular bargaining objects or rewards to loyal followers. This period also witnessed the politicization of the judiciary, the media and civil society organizations which were in opposition to the regime were threatened and intimidated which further led the country into authoritarianism and ironically, to stability. Hariri was most adept at pragmatically using authoritarian means to achieve his economic aims (the reconstruction of Beirut is one example). (Fakhoury-Muelbacher 2009, 211-218)

The Troika rule was over in 1998 when Emile Lahoud became president while Hariri, not being able to form a cabinet, stepped down and was succeeded by Salim el-Hoss while Nabih Berri remained speaker of parliament. However, the new cabinet formed by Hoss was short-lived and after the 2000 electoral victory of Hariri and his followers he was again called by the president to form a new cabinet and this time he managed to do it. The period from 2000 to 2004 was not successful either because of the bad relationship between Hariri and Lahoud with the former being liberally minded and economy/business-oriented with many international ties (the one with the US detrimental in the eyes of Syria) while the latter cemented the Lebanese-Syrian relationship and monopolized security and foreign affairs, all in accordance with Syrian preferences. This led to frequent stalemates between the two as well as the breakup in the Sunni-Christian coalition and ultimately resulted in Hariri's resignation in late 2004 at a time when Syria was orchestrating a three-year term extension for Lahoud. Although parliament approved the term extension an unprecedented coalition of opposition formed around Druze leader Walid Jumblatt together with various Christian political groups with minor Muslim supporters. It was called the Bristol opposition (named after the hotel Bristol where the opposition met) and it is one of the internal factors that led to the 2005 Cedar Revolution (set of popular uprisings that called for regime change) which completely changed Lebanese politics because it resulted in Syrian military withdrawal and practically the collapse of the Syrian-sponsored political elite in Lebanon although Syria did maintain ties to politicians favorable to their agenda in the aftermath of 2005 events. (Knio 2005, 225) It should be noted that international factors, mainly the US pressure on Syria after 9/11 and the Iraqi invasion as well as UNSC resolution 1559, which called for Syrian withdrawal and disarmament of Hezbollah, stimulated and precipitated change that swept Lebanon in 2005. The final spark that ignited the fire (mass protests) was the assassination of Rafiq Hariri on 14 February 2005 which led to major anti-government, anti-Syrian demonstrations since most of the people blamed Syria for Hariri's death. (Bosco 2009, 353-354) (Choucair 2005, 1-5) Opposition's protest on March 14 gathered almost a million people from all classes and confessions and clearly sent a message to everybody that Syrian presence and interference must end. After the Syrian withdrawal concluded in April, everything was set for the May-June 2005 parliamentary elections which carried much importance since those were the first ones without direct Syrian interference. Electoral lists of Saad Hariri (son of late Rafiq Hariri) achieved a large electoral victory and together with Jumblatts Democratic Meeting, Qornet Shehwan, Lebanese Forces and others formed the large anti-Syrian coalition with 72 out of 128 sets won in total while Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and allies took 21 seats.

Pro-Syrian parliamentary bloc included Hezbollah and Amal with 29 seats plus six others that joined them in their coalition totaling 35 seats. (Haddad 2005, 217) FPM and Hezbollah shorty after the Cedar Revolution formed a coalition which fits into Horowitz's notion of "coalition of convenience" – formed solely because of the necessity to form or partake in government. (Horowitz 1985, 366) The elite turnover was 48% and 61 new parliamentarians were elected which signaled a departure from pre-2005 politics and Syrian guardianship as well as the inability of incumbents to be reelected since their legitimacy disappeared with the withdrawal of Syrian troops and the fact that they hadn't their independent base of power among the Lebanese population. (El-Husseini 2012, 102) The replacement of the former parliamentary elite was, beside the Syrian withdrawal, a consequence of other factors too. In the case of Maronites, it was the result of Aoun's comeback from exile while intra-party decisions was the case with Amal and Hezbollah and in the Sunni community it was Saad Hariri's monopoly over the selection process of deputies. The 2005 transitional elite was very important since its task was to democratize Lebanon and chart a new course in Lebanese internal politics after three decades of Syrian interference. (Haddad 2005, 331) The political divide created in 2005 was among the March 14 alliance (led by Saad Hariri and his Future Movement, pro-Western, anti-Syrian) and March 8 alliance (led by Hezbollah, pro-Syrian). The period preceding the 2009 elections didn't result in major change towards democracy and prosperity as expected when the new prime minister Fouad Siniora headed the cabinet. Political polarization ensued amid the new reality which was not free from Syrian influence as many thought and the country witnessed a severe political and economic crisis during the 2007-2008 years.

### 6.2.   Types of Lebanese elites

The post-Ta'if political elites that stem from each sect can be identified precisely by their political capital, that is, from what sources and power bases do they derive their political capital. Most of them emerged as the result of the civil war with the exception of notables whose influence from pre-war times was maintained although in lesser amounts than before. Rola el-Husseini's (2012) study made a great contribution by outlining the main types of Lebanese political elites and providing for each a remarkable example which will be here further extended with other works and examples. She distinguishes between the categories of new businessmen, notables, technocrats, former warlords-turned-statesmen and clients of Syria. All these types are not exclusive and some persons may fit into multiple types. The category of new businessmen is best described by the example of Rafiq Hariri. He was born in 1944 in a Sunni

family of modest background (his father was a fruit-picker) in the city of Saida and migrated to Saudi Arabia in 1964 to look for a job.

He worked there as a schoolteacher and accountant before making his own company in 1969 which was not successful but in the 1970s he succeeded in his second venture and managed to earn enough wealth with his Saudi Oger company to buy the French mother company and started gaining large royal contracts in Saudi Arabia due to his friendship with a Saudi engineer Nasir al-Rashid who was in good terms with the royal family which granted Nasir a great contract which he was unable to finish in 1976 and then turned to Hariri who then managed to persuade an Italian company to finish the contract for which he got a large commission. This initiated a start of a good friendship and business relationship with the royal family which granted these two men more lucrative contracts while in 1980 Hariri also got Saudi citizenship that further made business easier while the connection to the royal family later proved crucial for Hariri's ascendance to the Lebanese political elite. (Baumann 2016, 24-26) In the 1980s, Hariri went back to Lebanon and dedicated his time to philanthropic activities starting in his native Sidon where he made a significant contribution to his former school as well as established his own foundation and branch of his Oger company (Oger Lebanon) and later on a national level as well. Instead of undermining the influence of local za'ims he co-opted them through patronage and made them his allies. He offered help with his company to clean up the rubble in Beirut after the 1982 Israeli invasion no matter the cost and also engaged in civil war diplomacy, initially in minor roles but later in the 1980s (when Saudi Arabia and the US turned their attention to the Iran-Iraq war) he had greater sway over Lebanese civil war politics and peace efforts which earned him great political capital among the Lebanese population. By the late 1980s he had established himself as the „Saudi man" in Lebanon with his previous diplomatic activities that culminated in the participation in Ta'if negotiations as a member of the Saudi delegation and could be considered at that point as an elite aspirant. (Picard 2000, 317-318) This enabled him to further make contacts with all major Lebanese political stakeholders. (El-Husseini 2012, 95) He became prime minister in 1992 a held that position until 1998, then again from 2000 until 2004. His premiership was the official entrance into the Lebanese political elite and was characterized by major reconstruction plans, integration of Lebanese economy into the international economy and markets and was also criticized for administrating the country as one of his several businesses whereby only the chosen ones from his close circle were benefiting from the postwar economy alongside the remaining two of the ruling Troika. Therefore, Hariri's entrance into the political elite, then dominated by former warlords, can be attributed to his vast personal wealth and international business connections alongside the ability, derived from enhanced powers of premiership, to appoint loyalists and friends from business circles that were cross-confessional.

This initially loose group of wealthy businessmen was in 2000 turned officially into a political party – Almustaqbal (Future Movement-FM).

This party was the institutionalization of this business elite and instrument for converting their economic into political power by various strategies such as patronage, providing favours (scholarships to students, job opportunities) which resembles clientelism but also using their wealth to buy votes. (Marei 2012, 233-242) After Hariri's assassination in 2005, this business elite continued to operate through the Future Movement headed by Rafiq's son, Saad Hariri using the same tactics as before. Saad was also prime minister from 2009 to 2011 and then again from 2016 until 2020. Between his father's death and his 2009 appointment as prime minister, the cabinet was headed by Fouad Siniora who was loyal to Rafiq Hariri and himself a wealthy businessman. Figures like Siniora, Bassel Fleihan (minister of economy and trade in Hariri's 2000 cabinet) and Bassem al-Sabeh (former member of parliament) were all members of the business elite that entered the political elite. There is a number of studies that made a remarkable observation and conclusion about the role of migration in the formation of the Lebanese political elite. Traboulsi (2002) was the first to note the role that migrant capital plays in acquiring political power and lists Rafiq Hariri as the best example. Baumann (2002) wrote about a new bourgeoisie that migrated to Gulf countries mainly and accumulated wealth which enabled them to play significant roles in Lebanese politics. He lists also Rafiq Hariri but also Najib Mikati, Issam Fares and Mohammad Safadi. However, these studies didn't go deep into detail when describing these routes to elite status via migrant experiences until Maalouf's study (2018) which provided detailed biographies and career paths of migrant businessmen-turned statesmen and their activities which enabled them to enter the political elite in Lebanon. According to him, possessing delegated political capital (defined by Bourdieu as political power delegated by an organization or institution) is the key to acquiring elite status.

Najib Mikati is a significant example because he made it to the position of prime minister twice (headed a caretaker government in 2005 and later from 2011 until 2013). He was born in a prominent merchant Sunni family in Tripoli, earned degrees from the American University of Beirut and Harvard University but it was his brother Taha's wealth accrued in Abu Dhabi that enabled both of them to open a telecommunications company called Investcom with business interests in various parts of the world. Later they opened a foundation that provided health and social services in Tripoli while Najib was elected in parliament in 2000. Another Hariri loyalist whose migrant economic capital enabled him to enter political elite status was Farid Makari (although he had some prior political capital before migrating due to this father's political legacy) whom Hariri appointed as manager of Saudi Oger company which enabled Farid to

accumulate significant capital and provide jobs for people from his native region (Koura) as well as donate to money to various social services and education. (Maalouf 2018, 50-58)

The second elite type are notables or descendants from prominent political families which inherited their elite status, political capital and za'imship. The prominent Sunni families, as stated in one of the previous sections, throughout history were the Solhs, Yafis, Karamis and Salams out of which the Karamis had their representative in postwar Lebanon in the office of prime minister which was Omar Karami. The Karamis are a prominent family from Tripoli while their founder Abdel-Hamid Karami was appointed prime minister in 1945 and his son Rashid Karami was first elected to parliament and later too became prime minister in 1955 from which he went on to form multiple cabinets. Since Rashid had no children to inherit the za'imship (leadership) of the family, this role fell on his brother's shoulders Omar Karami. He was appointed prime minister the first time in 1990 and held this position until 1992 when he was succeeded by Rafiq Hariri. Starting from the 1992 elections he was elected to parliament two additional times in 1996 and 2000. After Hariri's resignation as prime minister in 2004, Omar succeeded him for a short while until April 2005. Syria often used Omar Karami as a counterweight to rising Hariri influence and practically maintained him in power since Omar didn't have the skills and charisma of Rashid Karami and was often, due to his use of proverbs and specific accent, ridiculed. (El-Husseini 2012, 97-98) However, Omar managed to transfer the family's political capital to his son Faisal who became minister of youth and sports in Najib Mikati's cabinet and in the most recent 2018 parliamentary elections won a seat. As for the other prominent families, notable examples are the Arslans and Jumblatts from the Druze community. Talal Arslan is a long-serving member of parliament and Walid Jumblatt was also a member until 2018 when he was succeeded by his son Taymour Jumblatt that was elected in the 2018 elections. Earlier in 2017, Walid announced in a public statement that his political heir will be his son Taymour. (Middle East Eye 2017) As for the Maronites, some of the notable families are the Aouns, Gemayels, Mouawads all of which were represented in the Lebanese parliament in many convocations. Sami Gemayel, member of parliament since 2009, is the grandson of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the Kata'eb party (Phalanges), and son of Amine Gemayel who was president of Lebanon from 1982 until 1988 while his cousin Nadim Gemayel also holds a parliamentary seat since 2009. Michel Mouawad, member of parliament since 2018, is the son of former president-elect Rene Mouawad who was assassinated in 1989 and Nayla Mouawad which served in parliament continuously from 1992 until 2005. (National Democratic Institute 2018)

The technocratic elite comprise politicians who attained, through prestigious and often Western universities, specialized knowledge in some particular areas which enables them to be perceived as problem-solvers and those who are not driven by ideological or political affiliations. Usually these people enter high government offices in times of crisis or when popular dissatisfaction forces traditional politicians to initiate reform with the help of technocrats. David Kenner in his article „How to Be a Middle East Technocrat" (2010) gives examples of technocrats and their common characteristics such as impartiality in politics, focus on specific issues instead of general political/national foreign policy issues such as the relationship towards Israel and all of them are on favorable terms with Western politicians and businessmen. El-Husseini (2012) lists Salim al-Hoss as the classic example of a Lebanese technocrat who served three times as prime minister and on every occasion appointed ministers with expertise, many of which were first-time appointees for which he believed that they could solve Lebanon's budget deficits, implementing administrative and other reforms. One of the most notable technocrats in government was Ziad Baroud who served as interior minister from 2008 to 2011. He is a lawyer by profession and known for his expertise in decentralization and electoral law reform as well as allowing Lebanese citizens not to list their religious affiliation on their identity cards and ensured that the 2009 elections ran without incidents. He was awarded multiple times by foreign governments as well as international institutions such as the UN award for public service in 2010, medal of national merit from the King of Spain in 2011 and many others. (Middle East business intelligence 2010)

However, we need not go as far back to find examples of Lebanese technocrats since in the most recent cabinet formed by Hassan Diab in January 2020 there are many (if not all of them) technocrats. The new minister of industry Dr. Imad Hoballah was the chairman and CEO of Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in Lebanon as well CEO of multiple international companies in Dubai, Africa and the US. He holds a master's degree from Columbia University in business administration and a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Syracuse University and he's not a member of a Lebanese political party but an independent minister. (Telecom Review 2020) The new ministers of economy and trade and foreign affairs, Raoul Nehme and Nassif Hitti, are well known for their successful careers in the banking sector (Nehme) and academia (Hitti). At first look, the new cabinet is promising in many areas but it remains to be seen whether this time expertise will prevail over traditional Lebanese sectarian politics.

Former warlords turned statesmen refer in our case to sectarian militia leaders whose establishment in the civil war brought under their control territory, parts of the state economy such as ports on which most of Lebanese import/export depends and which were able to

mobilize a significant amount of fighters and followers along confessional, patrimonial and kinship ties. After the civil war ended, some of these warlords benefited from their involvement in the war and became politicians during that time (Nabih Berri) while others such as Walid Jumblatt returned, because of their pre-civil war political careers, to being politicians again. There exist a variety of definitions of warlords and warlordism. According to Giustozzi (2003), a warlord is a „*self-appointed military leader with armed followers and a more or less willing constituency – for whom the war is not only a source of enrichment but also a basis of political power*" while Vinci (2007) stresses their political independence accrued through military means. Other definitions and descriptions are that of Sheridan (1966), Charlton and May (1989). Prominent examples include alongside Jumblatt and Berri are Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea with the former heading the Lebanese Army (LAF) during the civil war which during that time had no widespread cross-confessional legitimacy and later holding a parliamentary seat and is the current President of Lebanon while Geagea was the leader of Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia, which was disarmed after the war and became a significant Christian political party with representation in parliament. Because of popularity among their communities and a large patronage network, these men were able to turn their warlord legacy and capital into political capital in the postwar period.

The category of Syria's clients is vague and without clear boundaries since it is sometimes hard to qualify a member of the political elite as truly pro-Syrian. However, the number of those that fit into this category is great even after the official withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005. As we mentioned earlier, the elite turnover in the 2005 elections was very high which testifies to the fact that many pro-Syrian parliamentarians have lost their seats since they have not been able to establish their own independent power base. Their membership in parliament was backed by Syria and they sustained it by means of corruption, clientelism and patronage. (El-Husseini 2012, 106) This is also the numerically largest elite type and we can easily identify many examples of its members. One of the prominent examples was former President Emile Lahoud whose election to the post of President couldn't happen in 1998 without a constitutional change and then in 2004 his term was further extended also due to Syrian interference. Syria encouraged the militarization of Lebanon which Lahoud was pursuing alongside his authoritarian practices of monopolizing power thereby making it easier for Syria to rule through a proxy. Lahoud, alongside Michel Aoun, can also be considered part of the military elite whose influence and existence goes beyond state institutions. Lahoud used the army and security services to intimidate political opponents and opponents of his Syrian patrons as well as arrested many civil society activists and students whose 2000 demonstration acquired a violent turn when the police intervened.

Many of the students were sentenced, not by standard criminal courts, by military courts and detained if deemed threatening to the regime. The involvement of security services such as Surete Generale (General Directory for State Safety), Securite General (General Directory for State Security), Deuxieme Bureau (Military Intelligence), Internal Security Force and the Presidential Guard in politics and their operation ranged from arbitrary detention to surveillance including the tapping of Hariri's phone prior to his assassination. (El-Husseini 2012, 137-138) The role of religious leaders in Lebanon has not been very strong and continuous in terms of politics, therefore they don't fit into the category of politically-relevant elites or quasi religious elites although examples in Lebanese history can be found which closely resemble the elite status. These include the role of Imam Musa al-Sadr which, due to Shi'a community's lack of strong political leadership, managed to establish himself as the prime Shi'a cleric and political leader in Lebanon. His arrival in Lebanon in 1959 and rapid establishment as a leader was made possible because at that time the Shi'a community was divided between few traditional families whom al-Sadr managed to unite.

He met on a regular basis with other confessional leaders and in 1967 established the Supreme Shi'a Council which served as the highest instance for personal status issues such as marriage and inheritance and was granted by law the role of defending the social, economic and political rights of this sect. (Traboulsi 2007, 177) Later on, he established the so called „Movement of the Deprived" (cross-confessional) and its military wing – AMAL which continues to play a large role in Lebanese politics to this day. As for the Maronites, the influence of the Maronite Patriarch on politics carried significant weight in the Pax Syriana 1990-2005 period due to the absence of strong political and secular Maronite politicians which were either in exile (Michel Aoun) or in prison (Samir Geagea). Also, the fact that Lebanese Christians greatly outnumber the total number of Arab Christians and their Western and Vatican connections as well as the traditional political engagement of Maronite clergy in politics (their role in the creation of Greater Lebanon and good relations with the French mandatory authority) gave some clout to the Patriarch. Because of the above situation, Patriarch Sfeir had to adjust his role as religious leader and politicize it in order to voice the needs and griefs of his community which needed a unifying cause in these hard postwar times where their status was significantly marginalized due to the half-implementation of Ta'if. Sfeir has used Sunday sermons, Easter and Christmas messages and trips abroad to speak about the major issues with which his community is dealing but he has also met with leading politicians such as Lahoud and Berri and tried to convince them of the need for Syrian withdrawal, but mostly unsuccessful. This situation lasted until the 2005 Syrian withdrawal and the return of Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea to the political scene which sidelined the role of the Patriarch.

Therefore, we can conclude that his role was great in times of crisis and divisiveness of the Maronite community and marginal when strong political leaders are present. (Baroudi and Tabar 2009, 195-230) The same can be said about Sunni Muslims and the role of their Grand Mufti which was mostly marginal due to the strong charisma and leadership of Rafiq Hariri and the appeal of his Future Movement. As for the Druzes, the leadership role of their community was always in the hand of traditional notable families, either the Arslans or Jumblatts. Some of the above mentioned elites can be grouped into other, new, provisional or as El-Husseini calls them, emerging elites. For instance, those would be the academic elites who make their way into politics due to their academic credentials, the category of civil society activists best described by Ziad Baroud whom we mentioned and put into the technocrat category.

Also, because of its increased political relevance, it is possible to distinguish the Hezbollah elite because of its distinct paths towards political relevance and leadership which in most cases originate from the lower middle class and share a common Islamic, liberation ideology. Their ascendance into the political elite is conditional upon their abilities and performance but sometimes also on acceptance from the highest echelons of Shi'a leadership in Iran or in some cases Syria. Although we can extend the above list of elite categories it would lead to confusion so perhaps it is better to outline the largest, general and most visible categories and describe their membership. What is common to all types of Lebanese elites is the patron-client relationship or the neopatrimonial character of elites which means that any aspiring individual, in order to have chance to enter the political elite, must attach himself/herself to an established member of the political elite, a Za'im and pledge allegiance to him and in return he can expect to be appointed to a ministerial or other high government position based on his expertise or capital. This is not something new in Lebanese politics but a continuation of an established recruitment practice and few or no alternatives for this practice exist. The 2000 elections are a good example when Rafiq Hariri's electoral list achieved a major electoral victory and he brought 17, by then unknown, candidates into the political elite which are completely dependent on their patron but don't lack skills and personal abilities whatsoever. This recruitment practice can be explained in part by Lebanese tradition and entrenchment of clientelism, certainty of success but also lack of modern elite recruitment practices and institutions such as elite schools/universities as well as developed political parties which don't resemble the Western type of political parties with its youth branches and better organization, without being centered on one individual which is often the case in Lebanese parties.

## 7. Historical and geographical background of Syria

Although a rich, diverse, long history and magnificent landmarks are good for tourism, it is not good in the case of state, national identity formation which plagued Syria for most of its history which is the subject of this section. We will briefly explain the main developments in Syrian history with particular focus on the period from 1970, the year Hafez al-Assad ascended to power, until the present times which are characterized by deep divisions, civil war, displacement of people and continuous violence in some areas such as the Idlib province in which foreign state as well as nonstate actors play a significant role. Roots of violence in today's Syria as well as other Middle Eastern states can be traced to the colonial period and the British and French mandatory rule in the 20th century.

### 7.1. Geography of Syria

The modern Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) has a strategically important location as a land bridge between three continents and covers a coastal area in the eastern portion of the Mediterranean which is divided by a double mountain range from larger eastern portions that also include other mountain ranges, deserts and the large basin of the Euphrates river. This constitutes 185, 170 square kilometers including the Golan (Jawlan) Heights in the strategically important southwest (35 km from Damascus) which Syria lost to Israel after the 1973 Yom-Kippur War. It borders Turkey to the north along the Taurus mountains, Iraq in the east, Jordan in the south and with Lebanon and Israel on the west/southwest. The word Syria is, according to many scholars, derived from the name of the pre-Common Era Assyrian Kingdom or from the word „Suri" from Babylonian language. This region was also known as the *Fertile Crescent* because of its rich, arable land, the *Levant* (the point where the sun rises) and, called by medieval Arab geographers, as *Bilad al-Sham* which means the area north (shamal) of the Arabian Peninsula and later the word Sham stood for Damascus. (Lesch 2019, 2) (Reilly 2018, 4) The country is has twelve provinces and most of the population lives in the bigger cities in the western part of the country such as Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs. During the French rule over Syria after the Second World War, they called this western part „useful Syria" because the other parts are mostly desert and semi-arid areas with large and frequent droughts. Much of Syrian economy relies on agriculture which is dependent upon sufficient rainfall because Syrian authorities have only recently made irrigation projects to loosen this rain-dependence which resulted in continuous droughts in the previous two decades.

According to some observes, this fact played a major role in the increasing number of people moving from agricultural villages to cities which influenced the character of the 2011 uprising. (Lesch 2019, 2-4) (Collelo 1987, 45-47)

The capital city Damascus is considered to be one of the oldest, continuously inhabited places in human history and has often been the focus of economic activity which can also be said about Aleppo which was significantly under influence of its close neighbors and its people such as Turks, Kurds and Armenians but it served as a major transit station in the silk trade route that stretched to Central Asia. These characteristics enable one to understand the formation of various loyalties, identities such as religious, tribal, ethnic that have added weight to the complexity of Syrian politics and society. Since the war in Syria is ongoing as of this moment, population estimates are hard to make. Therefore, statistics from the pre-war period will be more than relevant. The population of Syria is very diverse and composed of multiple ethno-religious communities whose peaceful coexistence is crucial for regime stability. Shortly before the 2011 uprising, Syria was home to twenty two million people out of which a large proportion (forty percent) was under the age of fourteen. A young population is also typical of other states in the Middle East that shared the same experience of uprisings in 2011. For instance, two-thirds of Egypt's population is under thirty years old. (Elhusseini 2014, 17) Arabs constitute the majority of the population (around ninety percent) and Arabic is the most widely spoken language. Depending on the source, seventy to seventy-five percent of the population are Sunni Muslims and constitute the majority of population in most provinces, except for the provinces of Latakia and Suwayda where Alawites and Druzes are the majority. A more detailed analysis of Syrian population will be the subject of the next subsection.

### 7.2.   History of Syria

Multiple and diverse Syrian religious and ethnic communities, their monuments, of which many were destroyed in the ongoing civil war, testify to the fact of its position at the crossroads of history. Because of its strategic location and geography Syria was exposed to large migration of people and many empires wanted to subordinate these people, some of them were persecuted while others managed to assimilate into the changing political and social systems of its superiors. Usually the term Greater Syria is used by historians to denote all areas at the eastern end of the Mediterranean that connects three continents until the post-World War I period when this area was artificially carved out among the British and French imperialists. (Collelo 1987) The territory of Greater Syria was ruled throughout history by various empires and kingdoms, among others, by the Seleucid, Roman, Persian and Byzantine and it was the latter which

eventually lost it to a new emerging force – successive Islamic empires which introduced the crucial feature of these areas and that is the Islamic religion in the seventh century. Damascus fell in 635 to a great Muslim general called Khalid ibn al Walid and later became governed by Muawiyah who later proclaimed himself caliph (successor) and established Damascus as the capital of the new Umayyad Caliphate. Among the successive ruling caliphates and kingdoms were the Abbasids, Fatimids, Ayyubids (whose founder was the great warrior Saladin – famous for reconquering Jerusalem from the Crusaders) and Mamluks which ruled this region from 1250 until 1516 when the region of Syria fell to the Ottoman Empire which would maintain control until the end of the First World War and it is them to which we now turn our attention because of their lasting legacy in every sphere of life in Syria. (Collelo 1987, 16-22) (Shoup 2018, 38-60)

Upon their conquest of Syria, the Ottomans recognized its diversity in terms of people and religion and therefore organized this area into specific administrative units, provinces called Vilayets which were then divided into districts or sanjaks whose leaders had the title of *pasha* were directly responsible to the Sultan. Alongside the governor or pasha, the second most important administrative figure was the chief judge or *kadi* which settled legal disputes in accordance with *sharia* – Islamic religious law. (Reilly 2018, 8-12) Present day Syria was practically established back then from the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut. It was the changing power of the Ottoman Empire that defined the level of autonomy of these provinces in which the Ottomans used established local elites and notables under the Mamluks, to govern effectively. However, in the far eastern territories autonomy was greater and Ottoman power only symbolic because of the distance and way of life of those people such as Bedouins whose chief or *emir* was recognized and integrated into the Ottoman hierarchy which was a sign of administrative continuity from the Mamluk authorities. The *millet (nations)* system was the horizontal division of the empire that applied to the non-Muslim communities which, when it came to personal, religious and family law would turn to their religious authorities for adjudication. (Lesch 2019, 10-13) Local groups such as merchants/traders/manufacturers (organized into guilds), notables like the *ashrafs* (descendants of the Prophet), non-Muslim elites like the Christian and smaller Jewish ones served as intermediaries between the Ottoman authorities and local population in the way that they presented their interests or grievances as well as fulfill Ottoman requirements in terms of taxation. The system of allocating tax farming rights, the *iltizam or iqta* system was the same as in our previous discussion in the case of Lebanon and was further upgraded to the *malikane* system which only extended the tax farming contract for life in opposition to a one-year contract in case of the *iltizam*. Village clan leaders would obtain authority to collect taxes for the Ottomans and what was common for all of these

tribal or clan leaders was their militarization in order to defend the interests of the empire as well as their village, clan or community. Another feature of this period which would persist until modern times was the urban-rural tension and antagonism that often pitted rural populations against the policies and practices of urban nobility, landowners which, due to their economic might and good connections with the Ottoman military or governor, would exploit these rural populations for personal gain for instance through deliberately raising taxes. Syrian communities such as the Alawites or Druzes were settled mostly in specific rural regions while the Sunnis lived mostly in the urban cities which added a further dimension to this urban-rural tension and establishment of local power centers and strong regionalism that is even today visible in Syria. (Farouk-Alli 2015, 28-35) As the challenges to Ottoman rule rose on many of their frontiers and as their territorial expansion, which provided the resources, came to a halt they were preoccupied with preserving what is left and therefore had to increase the devolution of powers which would result in the rise of prominent local families or governing elites. This was the case in the eighteenth century when the military Azm family rose to prominence and their members became governors of the Syrian province which then enabled them to make and maintain large patronage networks and connect with other powerful families through marriages. This Azm elite is the result of their founder's (Ibrahim Bey) good military background because he was a strong commander in the area between Aleppo and Hama and later their connections to the central bureaucracy in Constantinople. In opposition to this military elite a new type in this period also emerged, the *ulama* (prestigious, noble families) elite such as the Kaylani family. These two families are mentioned because some of their descendants were politically relevant to the mid-twentieth century Syria whereas the military and ulama elite formation as a pattern persisted as well beyond the Ottoman rule. (Meier 2010, 353-369) The nineteenth century was mainly characterized by the increasing engagement of European powers in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire which led to further decline of Ottoman power and authority in the Middle East that culminated with the outbreak and end of the First World War.

European legal and educational practices were visible in the last decades of Ottoman rule with many new schools out which new *nationalist* elites would emerge that would try to define the distinct Syrian identity which would transcend all other loyalties (to tribe, clan, confession). (Reilly 2018, 124-127) The next important milestone in Syrian history is the period following the end of the First World War which also meant the end of the Ottoman Empire since it ceased to exist. The new political setting that encompassed the whole region of the Middle East and therefore Syria was one dictated by the British and French, which emerged victorious after the war.

The basis for the division of the Middle East were the Sykes-Picout agreement from 1916 and the San Remo 1920 agreement as mentioned in the previous sections on Lebanon. Syria thus became officially part of the French Mandate in 1923 after some armed resistance around Damascus and then a new era in Syria began. The French, noting but underestimating the increasing influence of Arab nationalism which they perceived as a threat to their authority, did everything to subdue the appeal of Arab nationalism by various means.

One of them was to partition Syria into multiple states where ethno-religious minorities constituted the majority of the population. Therefore, they created the states of Damascus, Aleppo, the Druze and Alawite state with a special status for Alexandretta which had a significant Turkish population. (Khoury 1987, 52-55) This minority preference was best seen in the administration and army where the French preferred to employ Christians as well as Alawites and the Druze thereby perpetuating inter-communal and urban-rural animosities which persisted throughout modern Syrian history. It wasn't until the end of the Second World War when the political situation in Syria significantly changed with the French withdrawal and Syrian independence in 1946 with Shukri al-Quwatli (the founder of the National Bloc during the French Mandate as the main anti-French political movement in 1927) as president and Jamil Mardam Bey (descendant of the popular Bosnian-born Ottoman Grand Vizier Lala Mustafa Pasha) as prime minister of a fragile parliamentary democracy. The post-war period was characterized by many military coups and countercoups starting in 1949 and ending with the final one in 1970 that brought Hafez al-Assad to power. (Lesch 2019, 61) (Reilly 2018) His ascendance to power and 1971 election as president signaled the beginning of an almost three decade long authoritarian rule which made him and his close associates, primarily fellow Alawites, the main powerbrokers in the country's affairs. The post 1970 period had its ups and downs politically as well as economically. The first serious political crisis happened in the early 1980s when Hafez al-Assad suffered a heart attack which raised hopes among the political elite members, primarily his brother Rifaat's, to succeed him as president.

However, this did not happened and Hafez al-Assad recovered and immediately went to consolidate his grip on power by isolating and marginalizing his brother from politics. There remained some opposition mobilized against the Assad regime as well as armed confrontation for which the 1982 incident in Hama is the bloodiest example when government forces crushed the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency with death estimates ranging between 10,000 to 25,000 people. Other important events during Assad's rule were the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the intervention in the Lebanese civil war which started in 1975 and subsequent tensions with the Israelis after the latter's intervention in Lebanon in 1982. The 1990s saw a slight improvement of relations with the US after the Syrians joined the anti-Iraq coalition which had the goal of

ousting Saddam Hussein's forces outside of Kuwait and Syria's efforts to make peace with Israel which lasted until Hafez al-Assad's death in 2000 but without success.

Hafez was succeeded by his son Bashar in a pre-arranged succession scenario in 2000 and set out to promote and initiate liberalization and reform measures in Syria. (Leverett 2005, 67) Shortly after taking office, a major foreign policy issue came to the fore after the 9/11 attacks after which the US started its war on terror that resulted in a military quagmire in both Afghanistan and more importantly for our discussion, Iraq. Although Syria provided the US with military intelligence in the hope of warming relations between the two countries, Syria was subjected to a set of sanctions after the passage of the Syrian Accountability Act by US Congress in 2003. (Lesch 2019, 118) Another foreign-imposed burden on Bashar's Syria came after his move to extend the presidential term of Lebanese president Emile Lahoud in 2004 after which the UN Security Council passed resolution 1559 co-sponsored by the US and France that stipulated the withdrawal of all „foreign forces" from Lebanon indirectly pointing to Syrian troops. As for the Arab-Israeli peace process, Syria continued under Bashar to pursue talks and a solution to this long conflict with a similar policy strategy of his father's, that is, „Syria first" policy even at the expense of other Arab countries. (Zisser 2007, 168-169)

## 8. Political system of Syria from independence until the 1970 „Corrective Movement"

This period of Syrian history is very important for the understanding of the post-1970 Assad period since it was during these times that a constitution was drafted, political parties with long-standing and crucial influence in regime formation, such as the Baath and Arab Socialist Party, were formed and the emergence of military coups and countercoups that initiated the period of military influence on which the initial Assad regime would rest upon. A general overview of constitutions will be presented and then the focus will be switched to main political developments in the 1950s and 1960s, the rise of the Baath Party and conditions that enabled Hafez al-Assad to seize power after a series of military coups.

Inspired by various European constitutions, Syrian politicians drafted the first constitution in late 1920s during the French Mandate which specified that Syria was to be an indivisible political entity with a republican form of government. The government would include a President (elected by the parliament) who appoints the prime minister, unicameral parliament (the Majlis or Chamber of Deputies), Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers. The constitution also included a Bill of Rights and specified that the religion of the head of state would be Islam. The French had some reservations about this draft constitutions but after some modifications the constitution was promulgated in 1930 and would last until 1950 when, after the initial few military coups, a new constitution was adopted. The 1950 constitution did not include any changes in the structure and form of government but provided a more detailed Bill of Rights, expressions and aspirations of the Syrian nation and new articles on education and land resources. (Khadduri 1950, 137-160) The first signs of Syrian polity fragmentation and pluralism were seen in the 1947 parliamentary elections. It was in this year that the National Bloc, by then the main nationalist political organization in Syria, split into two parties, the Damascus-based Nationalist Party and the Aleppo-based People's Party. This split is important because it enabled the emergence of more radical and leftist parties in the near future. The split occured as a result of the lack of common vision for Arab unity and integration. Not long after the elections, in 1948, the Arab-Israeli War greatly influenced the course of internal politics of Arab states and would serve as a pretext for the Syrian army to intervene in politics starting in 1949 onwards. (Lesch 2019, 63) The army's officer corps after Syrian independence was in large part filled with people from ethnic minorities and rural background since the urban Sunni elite traditionally disliked the army recruitment and military academies, seeing these as for the backward and less affluent people.

## 8.1. The era of military coups

The long series of military coups was initiated by General Husni Zaim in March 1949 who was after just a couple of months overthrown by Colonel Sami Hinnawi which had the support of Britan and Iraq. It was this support and orientation that cost Hinnawi power and therefore in December 1949 Colonel Adib Shishakli together with his proteges and out of fear of a Syrian-Iraq union led this coup and after seizing power he set out to govern the country for the next four years as a military dictatorship. At the outset, Shishakli had the support of many ideological parties such as the Baath and radical SSNP but ultimately lost it due to his policy of disbanding political parties and his wish of creating a single political party formed around the military – Arab Liberation Movement. His military dictatorship was overthrown by army officers in 1954 which initiated a four-year return of constitutionalism and elections that saw a new political balance of power with the Arab Baath Socialist Party (called like this since its merger with Akram al-Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party) winning fifteen percent of the votes and twenty-two seats since it was the best organized party and with significant army officer's support which was led by Colonel Adnan al-Malki. (Reilly 2018, 186-187) Malki's assassination in 1955 by a SSNP member led to the crushing of all SSNP elements in Syria and leaving the Baath with the strongest ties with the army. Found in 1940 by two teachers with Western education, Michel Aflaq (Greek Orthodox Christian) and Salah al-Din Bitar (Sunni Muslim), the Baath (Ressurection) Party was an opposition and response to French imperialism and traditional Syrian politics run by mostly Sunni notables and large landowners. It has at its ideological core to notion of Arab nationalism and unity as well as its secular character which differentiates it from other parties that put Islam as a core component of Arab nationalism. Aflaq recognized the importance of Islam in Arab nationalism, which he saw as a cultural Arab heritage, but stresses that it must be subordinated to the secular movement. To avoid confusion with communism, Aflaq wrote many differences between his party ideology and communism concluding that the latter couldn't succeed among the Arabs because the Arabs cannot renounce their nationalism in favor of communist internationalism. (Torrey 1969, 447-450) Alongside Arab nationalism, the second core component of the Baath ideology is socialism which would develop the Arab nation, distribute its wealth among people which indirectly entails opposition and a call for destruction of the wealthy landowner elite as well as the establishment of a classless society. (Perlmutter 1969, 833)

These socialist ideas became attractive to the poorer and rural populations in the countryside than to the urban population of big cities like Damascus and Aleppo where a combination of merchants and landowners held political powers.

The initial members were mostly students from the countryside educated themselves in the cities and later came back to their villages to work. The logical development was that, due to this secular, nationalistic and socialist party appeal to specific rural populations, most of the members and supporters of the Baath were from religious or ethnic minorities which were mostly living outside major urban cities that saw a way out of their marginalized position in Syrian society. This also enhanced the party in terms of openness since it cut across religious/ethnic lines. (van Dam 2011, 15-17) It also had an appeal beyond Syrian borders, branches in most Arab countries. In organizational terms, the Baath Party has a central committee (the National Command) which is elected by representatives from branch national parties that are headed by their own Regional Command. (Torrey 1969, 459) The period 1954-1958 saw the establishment of closer relations between the Soviet Union and Syria but also Egypt which at this time was led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who consolidated army rule in 1954 and whose natural allies were the Syrian Baathists. In this uncertain Cold War period, the Baath Party saw its security and idea of Arab unity through the lens of some kind of union with Egypt which eventually was achieved in 1958 but on Nasser's terms. The newly created union state was called the United Arab Republic (UAR) and was structured as a centralized, unified state which upset the regional balance of power with many actors feeling shocked such as the Iraqi Hashemites who had their own plans with Syria. Full control of the new state was in the hands of charismatic Nasser who completely subdued Syrians and ruled them from Cairo through security services and his proconsul in Damascus, Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj who became known for his ruthless behavior towards opponents and was replaced by Nasser's close aide Abdel Hakim Amer. Syria was therefore part of a police state and had no control over its economy which became nationalized by Nasser's decrees in 1961. (Hinnebusch 2001, 40-41) (Perlmutter 1969, 833) It was in the early 1960s that rumors started to circulate about a possible breakdown of the UAR. At that time, an ambitious and capable young captain, a member of the Baath Party and Alawi called Hafez al-Assad, which would soon become engaged deeply in Syrian politics, together with four other officers created the secret organization called the Military Committee in Egypt 1960 where he was transferred for further military training.

Wary about the bad situation in the Baath Party and Syria in general, these officers' goals were to rebuild their party, bring it back to power, save the union from breakdown and marginalize the old Syrian political elite while working in parallel on greater minority inclusion and political relevance. The founders of the Military Committee were all from minority sects. Hafez al-Assad, Lieut. Colonel Muhammad Umran and Major Salah Jadid were Alawis and comprised the core of the committee while Abd al-Karim al-Jundi and Ahmad al-Mir were from the Ismaili minority sect. (Seale 1988, 60-64)

The dissatisfaction with the UAR culminated in the 1961 military coup by conservative Damascene Sunni officers, which during the union established a strong position due to their military command of Syrian military districts, that initiated the so called Separatist Period (Fatrat al-Infisal) that lasted until 1963. (van Dam 2011, 29) The goal of the coup leader Lieut. Colonel Abd al-Karim al-Nahlawi and his followers was to restore the traditional, conservative regime run by notables that were deposed in 1949 and denationalize industries, banks as well as return the expropriated land to old Syrian landowners. This coup lead to great confusion and further division because many Baathists at that point did not know whether to continue to endorse Nasser and seek re-union with Egypt or to chart a completely new course in Syrian politics. The division inside the Baath was intensified when one of the founders, Salah al-Din Bitar, co-signed a manifesto that welcomed the military coup and denounced Nasser. Membership and support for the Baath decreased since at that point they had lost their Sunni middle class, pro-Nasser supporters and ended up with its initial rural and minoritarian support base. (Hinnebusch 2001, 41-42) (Seale 1988, 68) The members of the Military Committee returned to Syria and were quickly cashiered and most were awarded unimportant jobs in the government. This situation led them to devise a strategy with the aim of overthrowing the separatist regime, a strategy of co-opting specific officers, some Nasserites and Independents, strong enough to overthrow the regime. (Hinnebusch 2001, 42) They co-opted pro-Nasser and high positioned officers, Colonel Rashid al-Qutayni (head of Military Intelligence) and Colonel Muhammad al-Sufi (commander of the Homs brigade) as well as Colonel Ziad al-Hariri who was an Independent. Encouraged by fellow Iraqi Baath members which, on February 8th, successfully overthrew the Iraqi dictator Abd al-Karim Qasim, the six-member coup plotters successfully overthrew the Syrian separatist regime on March 8th 1963 with great ease due to their good organization and planning.

In the following days, the coup leaders created a National Council for the Revolutionary Command that was to exercise power, purged the army officer's corps and important government ministries and replaced them with people from their own minoritarian background and sect, mostly Alawis, Druzes and Ismailis. This enabled them to quickly consolidate power and marginalize all political and military opponents while appointing a Sunni Amin al-Hafiz as their front man, minister of interior and later prime minister. (Seale 1988, 75-80) (Perlmutter 1969, 838) (Reilly 2018, 193) (van Dam 2011, 31-32) However, things have not gone the way they were supposed to because shortly after the 8 March coup, a power struggle inside the Military Committee developed between radical and moderate members with each having their own support base made through sectarian, kinship or regional ties and by appointments to government and military posts thereby creating a small but compact patronage network.

A struggle emerged between Sunni Amin al-Hafiz and Alawi Salah Jadid which was most visible in the officer corps that became divided in two rival camps, each filled almost exclusively either by Sunni's or officers of minoritarian backgrounds (mostly Alawis but also Druze and Ismailis). The reasons for the resulting division between radicals and moderates was ideological in a way that the moderates challenged the radicals' idea of a Leninist-type state and the necessity of a social revolution while the moderates wanted to appease the opposition and adopt a liberal Arab unity project. This division was further exacerbated by the above mentioned personal rivalries on a sectarian and personal basis. (Hinnebusch 1982, 182-183) The civilian party institutions were not spared the rivalry and a divison became evident between the party's National Command (headed by al-Hafiz and old Baathist moderates such as Michel Aflaq) and the Regional Command (that was fully under Jadid's control). The struggle ended in another military coup on 23 February 1966 when the radicals, headed by Jadid, deposed President Amin al-Hafiz and his closest associates and in the following days purged mostly Sunni officers and government officials from important positions thereby effectively putting the key levers of power into the hands of Alawis and setting the stage for the final political showdown between Salah Jadid, who at this point held the position of assistant secretary-general of the Regional Command, and Hafez al-Assad who was then Minister of Defence. (van Dam 2011, 34-47) The Arab defeat in the 1967 Six Day War was the key turning point in Syria's internal political struggle because it split the ruling elite over the way how to deal with the great military loss and its aftermath. While Jadid and his close associates insisted on the implementation of the socialist transformation in Syria, denounced pro-Western regional regimes and embraced Soviet help, Hafez al-Assad was emphasizing the importance of the armed struggle against Israel and the postponement of the socialist transformation/revolution in Syria. These diverging policy views were articulated at the Baath Party Congresses in 1968. (Hinnebusch 1982, 183-184) (van Dam 2011, 62-63)

From this point onwards, both Jadid and Assad started tightening their grip over civilian party institutions in the case of the former and over the military in the case of the latter. Both men created almost homogeneous support bases in these bodies through purges and appointments of close friends, people from their home region and sect. A further regional event that affected Syrian internal politics was the Syrian failed intervention in the Jordanian civil war known also as Black September fought between the regular Jordanian army and Palestinian guerillas which ended in the latter's expulsion from Jordan with many people losing their life. Assad didn't commit full support to the Palestinians as expected (Syrian air force was not deployed) but he aimed at a limited strategy of protecting them from being slaughtered.

At the end, Israel benefited the most since it showed itself to be an indispensable regional player and „strategic asset" to the US because of its intervention on the Jordanian side. The final event came when Jadid called an emergency Baath National Congress to try to strip Assad and his close associates of their positions and establish himself as the sole powerbroker. However, the congress broke up and the day after on 13 November 1970 Assad started an arresting campaign, putting Jadid to jail while those considered less dangerous were given ambassadorships in faraway countries while Assad's associates in the military ensured that there would be no resistance. It was a bloodless coup, not even a coup but a „*corrective movement*" (Seale 1988, 157-164)

### 8.2. Post-2011 Syria: A brief overview

The Middle East witnessed a dramatic change in the period from late 2010 onwards that led to the removal of many established autocrats and violent conflicts with most of them lasting up until this day. The self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 was the spark that set the region on a new course in its modern history. The subsequent unfolding of events like uprisings, protests, civil movements and civil wars with diverse instigators and goals came to be known as the "Arab Spring". (Elhusseini 2014, 11) The wave of protests and uprisings quickly spread to countries like Egypt, Libya, Yemen and, surprisingly to Bashar al-Assad, to Syria as well. The Syrian people , watching as the events of the uprisings unfolded, broke the wall of fear and went to streets in the southern city of Dara'a to protest (initially as a response for the regime's heavy-handed approach to teenage children that wrote anti-regime graffiti on walls). Although Syria, in contrast to Egypt, Libya or Yemen, had been a fairly stable country on the eve of the uprising and Bashar and his wife Asma enjoyed a high degree of popularity domestically because of their modest living style and generally because they were seen as being "in touch" with people and their needs. His regime's shrewd policies during previous decades like cooptation of many Sunni classes to widen his regime's support base, playing the "minority card" successfully whereby the regime would use fear of radical Islamist groups taking power to show Syrians that the alternative is much worse and that minorities pay the price in these situations. Bashar, after the events in Tunisia, even ordered a security study to assure himself that Syria would be safe from such violent events and the studies concluded that Syria was indeed safe. This partly explains the fact that Bashar was shocked when protests spread to Syria in mid-March 2011 and waited until March 30 to address the public in his National Assembly speech.

To the surprise of many, Assad's speech was not conciliatory (many expected that he would somehow punish his cousin Atif Najib, the governor of Dara'a because of his responsibility in the violent crackdown on the protesters) but defiant where he blamed foreign-sponsored terrorists and enemies of Syria for the uprising and offered few concessions to the people. (Lesch 2018, 128-133) Today, many observer argue that this speech was a turning point in Syrian history and think that if Bashar had only somehow punished his cousin or put them to trial and made some conciliatory gestures to the protesters, the civil war would be evaded. But having in mind the nature of Bashar's regime, the influence of security services and taking notes from past events when the regime was faced with domestic threats (Hama uprising 1982), Bashar and his inner circle simply switched to "survival mode" and decided to forcefully suppress the protests. In the months following Bashar's defiant speech, Syria witnessed an increase in violence and the protests shifted from being peaceful to violent that led to the formation of armed opposition groups in the summer of 2011 (Free Syrian Army) whose fragmentation (and differing foreign sponsors) suited the regime's forces. By mid-2012 violence between regime and opposition forces could be described as an all-out civil war that also had its "international" dimension. Bashar's regime was supported by Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Shia militias from Iraq while the opposition gained support and assistance from the USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar (among others). The following years saw the conflict tilting sometimes in favor of the regime and at other times of the opposition forces whose military effort in early 2015 pushed observers to think that it was a matter of time for Bashar's regime to fall. However, things changed when Russia, with its air force, intervened in the fall of 2015 and turned the tide of war into its allies' favor which continued throughout the following years. Diplomatic activities to end the conflict were pursued simultaneously but with little progress (mostly because of lack of coordination due to multiplicity of negotiating tracks and changing circumstances on the battlefield). At the time of this writing, the conflict still goes on but on a lesser scale than before with the outcome still uncertain. The regime suffered immensely both in terms of manpower and resources but most significantly to our following discussion, the previous patronage networks that sustained regime elites (and the regime itself) are mostly broken which signals additional uncertainty in the post-war period. (Droz-Vincent 2016, 168-169) (Hinnebusch and Imady 2018, 1-10) (Lynch 2015)

## 9. Syrian elites

The ascendance of Hafez al-Assad to power initiated a new phase and type of political system in Syria that was set to last to this day. He managed to centralize the most important decision-making processes and rule for his and the benefit of his close cross-sectional group. In order to understand the composition of the Syrian elites starting from 1970, one must understand the key pillars of power that maintained the Syrian regime. Those are the Baath Party, the military establishment and the Presidency. It is out of these institutions that most elites' power flows and enables them to persist while membership in any is not exclusive and sometimes overlaps. The Syrian „presidential monarchy" established by Assad has not changed in essence despite major international and regional developments as well as domestic threats to regime maintenance which often took a violent turn such as the suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama in 1982 and the ongoing civil war.

Hafez al-Assad's ascendance marked the change of Syrian *raison d'état* from building, in the radicalistic fashion, a Leninist type of state to stressing the need to stabilize the regime and concentrate on recovering the lost territories lost to Israel in 1967. The post of prime minister and the parliament were not enjoying any autonomy but served only to implement the president's policy demands. The constitution was revised in 1973 to give Assad more powers and abilities to circumvent the parliament as well as reserved the position of Secretary-General of the Baath Party to the President which gave him membership in the most important levers of power alongside the military. The Baath Party's values and ideology were the driver of Syrian politics and to undermine them would undermine the regime so it was not easy sometimes to circumvent the Baath's advice on policy making. (Dawisha 1978, 346-347) The politically relevant elite in Syria or the core elite was composed of mostly military officers which were related to each other by kinship or sect. We will call this core elite the **„Jama'a elite"** (the group), a patronage network of Assad's closest associates that were appointed to top military and government posts. Initially, it included Assad's brother Rifat who was in charge of the Defense Detachments, his cousin Adnan al-Assad lead the Struggle Companies which controlled access and command posts around Damascus while his son-in-law Adnan Makhlouf commanded the Presidential Guard. (Hinnebusch 2015, 114) Ali Haydar headed the Special Forces, Ibrahim al-Ali the Popular Army (militia) and Ali Duba headed Military Intelligence. Common feature of these people was their Alawi identity which made many observers to name the Syrian regime as an Alawi regime but this was not the case.

It is true that many important posts were headed by Alawis but Alawis as a group didn't rule Syria (because of their internal differentiation) nor did Hafez al-Assad tried to promote some sort of Alawism. Instead, the Alawi sect, kinship ties and alliances have been instrumentalized by the regime to rule more effectively. (Sadowski 1988, 164) The argument that justifies this is that there were some important Sunni members of the Jama'a elite such as Mustafa Tlass (served as Defense Minister and his term extended into the presidency of Bashar al-Assad), Abd al-Halim Khaddam (served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and later as vice-president), Abd al-Rahman Khleifaw (appointed Prime Minister in 1976) and Abdullah al-Ahmar (served as Assistant Secretary-General of the Baath). There were more Sunnis included but they didn't have such significance and influence as the above mentioned ones but were members of second or third tier elites. (Dawisha 1978, 343) Hafez al-Assad understood well that in order to have a wider support base, he had to reach out to the rich Sunni bourgeoisie and include them in policy-making but still the most important positions, from which one would be able to build a coup to threaten the regime, were held by Alawi generals, relatives of Assad or coming from his native province Latakia. (Hinnebusch 2001, 66) At this point, we can observe the main outlines of post 1970 elites. They included urban elements, one particular sect (Alawi) was overrepresented at the core functions at it was cross-sectional in composition. This elite composition raised its appeal among the majority of Syrian population that were members of the middle and lower middle class but on the other side, its heterogeneity made instances of intra-elite rivalry more frequent. (Hinnebusch 1982, 181) The Jama'a elite over time increased its cohesion and solidarity due to their need to protect privileges that these positions brought. These benefits were conferred upon them by way of patronage with Assad as the patron dispensing privileges, money, lucrative state contracts and international business ties. However, no member of the Jama'a elite had an independent power base except Assad which greatly contributed to regime durability as well as the fact that privileged status meant a strong commitment to regime maintenance in times of crisis because, out of fear of losing their status and consequences such as reprisals by those without privileges, members of the elite mobilized quickly to defend the new status quo. One of the best examples for this would be the cohesion of the elite during the Islamic uprisings which didn't result in Sunni members' defection and shift in allegiance except in the case of General Naji Jamil who was dismissed after falling out of favor with Assad at the time of the Islamic uprising. (Hinnebusch 2001, 69)

However, there was an instance that challenged regime cohesion and Hafez's rule an it came from his brother Rifat – a member of the Jama'a elite but also having the benefit of being closely related to Hafez in 1984 when Hafez fell seriously ill and rumors about his succession started.

Rifat did have a modest power base in the praetorian guard unit which he personally headed as well as connections to some elements of the urban bourgeoisie which he controlled through patronage. Eventually, this effort to take control away from Hafez failed because the rest of the important security services and army elements were against Rifat and in the meantime the president recovered and quickly subdued Rifat's ambitions by marginalizing and later sending him into exile in Geneva. (Hinnebusch 2001, 70) It is also possible to detail the inner core circle in which membership is given to those with closest ties to both Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. This closeness ranges from family, tribal/communal ties, friendship and ties developed as a consequence of working long time together. Family ties during Hafez's era included the influence of his brothers, Rifat and Jamil which was curtailed in the mid 1980s after the mentioned attempt at power seizure by Rifat while Jamil's influence banished because he didn't oppose Rifat's actions while Hafez was ill. Therefore, the elite military formations that both Rifat and Jamil were heading were disbanded or merged into the regular army. Next in line of influence are his wife's family the Makhloufs and Hafez's sons Basil and Bashar being the foremost while the third son Mahir was not prominent as the former two. Adnan Makhlouf took command of the Republican Guard Unit which was basically the successor elite unit of the Defense Companies (headed by Rifat and disbanded after his „coup") while simultaneously grooming Basil al-Assad for the event of succession. (Krieg 2017, 55) After Basil died in a car crash in 1994 the focus shifted towards Bashar who at that time was in England doing his specialization in ophthalmology. He was summoned by his father and quickly underwent similar training that his brother Basil did as well as took over some foreign policy issues such as Lebanon to better prepare himself. (Zisser 1998, 17-21) Among Hafez's fellow tribesmen, for our discussion the name Ghazi Kan'an is important because he was employed chief of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon which granted him practically large executive powers to control Lebanon but under the policy guidelines of Hafez and later Bashar as well.

The second elite circle is not clear-cut as the first, core, Jama'a circle since it includes a combination of persons that have multiple sources of influence. This elite encompasses people that occupy high government posts – the council of ministers and ministerial bureaucracy, seats in the highest Baath Party organs – the National and Regional Commands and military posts that are of lesser importance to the ones occupied by the Jama'a elite „barons" as they were often called. The Regional Command formally nominated the president and recommended members for the council of ministers but was in reality subordinated to the president under whose guidelines its members defined policy. Hinnebusch's (2001)

Description of an Alawi member of the Regional Command Izz ad-Din Nasser greatly fits into our second elite circle because due to his personality traits, connections to the military and public sector (through the trade union federation) he managed to have significant influence. This example also tells us that occupying a high party or government office doesn't necessarily confer a large amount of power *per se* but various other sources and connections are needed in order to wield influence. Henceforth, this greatly contributes to blurring the dividing line between elites of lesser importance due to their complex relationships with middle-level state or military officials. The council of ministers also belongs to this elite circle due to its importance in running the day-to-day government duties with some ministers having more influence than others due to the importance of the ministry they lead. In this respect, ministers of defense held a very important portfolio but also ministries of petroleum and electricity were important from the economic perspective of regime durability while the common feature of most ministers was their membership of the Baath Party through which they were controlled by higher instances of authority. (Hinnebusch 2001, 74-75) It is clear that presence in three core power institutions – the military, government (state bureaucracy) and the Baath Party ensured and defined one's elite status in decisive measure.

Occupants of high office in the Baath Party „institutionalized" their patronage networks through party control of various corporative organizations such as trade, peasant and teacher unions but this control also facilitated party links with its support base. In order to sustain his ambition to recover lost territories from Israel, Assad needed financial resources and for this goal, he initiated some liberalization measures, opened up the economy to foreign capital but also benefited from the Cold War rivalry by receiving substantial aid from the Soviet Union as well as from conservative Arab countries in return for halting the export of revolutionary ideas among Arabs. All foreign capital ran through the state bureaucracy which encouraged bureaucrats' to corrupt practices and establish their own micro patronage networks with the private sector and urban bourgeoisie that sought corrupt officials to get large contracts or use their wealth and contact to the state bureaucracy to turn their economic capital into political influence such as the Lebanese example suggested. These activities, new and unconventional alliances between state officials, military officers (usually Alawi) and private businessmen which were further strengthened by marriages resulted in the creation of a new hybrid, third elite circle in Syria that stood on the edge of both the state and private sector while deriving its ability to wield influence from a combination of financial resources and contact with low to mid-level state officials. The core of this third elite circle would be what Sadiq al-Azm called the „military-mercantile complex" or as Hinnebusch puts it, an „Alawi-Damascene" connection. (Hinnebusch 2001, 87) (Seale 1988, 456)

It is obvious that this elite circle is largest in membership and hardest to clearly define because of various and complex interconnections and actors but another development is interesting. It is the fact that Alawis greatly enriched themselves and at this point had much to defend which naturally meant a great commitment to regime maintenance but also the new alliance between previous enemies (Damascene Sunnis and Alawis) that gave the regime a wider base among the population. Damascene Sunnis and their attitude towards the Alawis were the reason why the Alawis in part became so resentful of the pre-Baath Syrian political system and hard-pressed to overthrow the old Sunni landowning elites with whom they now formed an important alliance, both in terms of regime durability and inter-sectarian cohesion.

### 9.1. Changes in elite circles during Bashar al-Assad's presidency

After the death of Hafez al-Assad in June 2000, his son Bashar assumed the presidency in a quick and prepared manner which was also in the interest of the core elite that sought to preserve their status and prevent an intra-elite struggle. Their judgement about Bashar was also reinforced because of their perception of Bashar as non-threatening and keen on continuing to rule in his father's fashion. The succession was convened in such a way that Bashar after his father's death was quickly promoted as general secretary of the Baath Party, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and even the parliament amended the constitution to lower the required presidential eligibility age from 40 to 34 (to suit exactly Bashar's age) and all this was confirmed in a July 2000 referendum and on the 17th July Bashar made his inaugural speech in parliament. (Reilly 2018, 240) Bashar was perceived to be a modernizer, West-oriented head of state with a true interest in reforming and opening Syria to the world through his policies of limited economic and political liberalization. This policy outlook was visible in his inaugural speech which instituted a sense of hope in the minds of many that were forward-looking and tired of the political and economic situation during Hafez's rule. However, the long sought change and radical departure from his father's policies didn't happen because most people forgot the fact that Bashar's worldview was not shaped by the 18 months he lived in London but by the Arab-Israeli conflict, civil war in Lebanon and by his father Hafez. The so called „Damascus Spring" in the early 2000s that followed Bashar's succession was marked by political openings, pluralism of opinion, amnesties of political prisoners that his father kept in prison for decades and the establishment of some privately-owned enterprises such as banks. It didn't take long for the regime elites, especially the core military officers, to warn Bashar about the potential consequences of his liberalization measures which in their view meant a clear threat to their elite status and privilege as well as the maintenance of the regime. (Lesch 2019, 115-117)

The most important feature of Bashar's presidency important for this discussion are his maneuvers to sideline the traditionally strong power center – the Baath Party and displace the „old guard" meaning old security and military elites that served under his father's regime and put in their place new, younger people that formed a new type of elite both in its composition and resources. Bashar used his wide presidential powers to appoint and/or retire people whom he deemed necessary and these were mostly used to alter the composition of the military and security services as the main pillar of the regime. An example would be the promotion of his brother-in-law Asef Shawqat to top positions in the Military Intelligence and the strengthening of ties with Bahjat Sulayman, one of the top Alawi generals that was necessary for Bashar to maintain his hold on power. Sulayman was also one of the most controversial figures in the regime because of his vast fortune that he acquired through his many companies that were not registered under his name but his relatives' while his son Majd counts as one of the prominent Syrian businessmen with interests in many sectors. (Syrian Observer 2014) However, Bashar didn't have such wide powers when it came to changing the composition of the Baath Party – its Regional Command, the government and the state bureaucracy. During the period between 2000 and 2005 a struggle was evident between Bashar and the Baath over the appointment of persons in four governments. While Bashar sought to bring in young reformers and technocrats into ministerial positions the Baath wanted to preserve the conservative composition and status quo. However, a group of modernizers were put into office led by Ghassan al-Rifai as minister of economy and foreign trade who was later replaced by Abdallah al-Dardari who became the main thrust for transforming Syria into a market economy, Muhammad al-Atrash as minister of finance and Isam al-Zaim as minister of industry.

Office reshuffles also happened inside the ministry of defense which was led for decades by Mustafa Tlas that was replaced by Hassan al-Turkmani. Alongside the usage of vast presidential powers, Bashar employed other strategies to replace the old guard. These included decrees stipulating that appointments to government posts must be based on merit not party affiliation, officials over the age of 60 were retired and the anti-corruption campaign that deterred the corrupt old-guard from opposing such measures knowing that this was a decent approach by Assad to let these people retire „in silence" without imprisoning them for which he had reasons and evidence. (Hinnebusch 2015, 28-32) The Tenth Baath Regional Congress in 2005 was to be the culmination of Bashar's intent on replacing the old guard and approving major reformist legislation that would set Syria on a new liberal course. The changes approved at the congress were not radical as expected but modest and limited in essence with few provisions on political and market liberalization which fell short of the ultimate radical reform intent.

However, the congress resulted in a major turnover of prominent political figures of which the resignation of First Vice President Khaddam, who has been a close associate of Hafez and in power for three decades, was most important while many more members of the core elite were removed from the Regional Command such as former Prime Minister Muhammad Miro, Mustafa Tlas, Zuhayr Mushraqa – one of the most loyal people to Hafez al-Assad and longest serving Vice President and Sulayman Qaddah and Abdallah al-Ahmar – Assistant Regional Secretaries of the Baath. Bashar's brother Mahir and close friend Manaf Tlas were elected to the Central Committee of the Baath Party. (Haddad 2005, 8) This turnover at the very top of the regime in fact weakened the regime. The exclusion of the old elite from their traditional roles and posts broke the decades-long and entrenched patronage networks and with them many Sunni, rural and poorer elements of Syrian society on which the regime legitimacy heavily relied. Bashar's inclusion of new reformist-oriented people that formed the new core elite didn't bring such popular support and patronage networks that were present before the replacement of the old elite. This way, the necessary cross-sectional and more importantly at this point cross-class support base was significantly undermined which automatically led to regime weakening. On the other side of the coin, Bashar concentrated even more power into his close and extended family and kin thereby creating an even more elitist core of the regime and therefore it was logical to assume that this would lead to more criticism and questioning by the Syrian people. (Zintl & Hinnebusch 2015, 6)

## 10. Elite influence on regime durability in Syria and Lebanon

This section will synthesize the previous chapters and come up with conclusions and practical examples that show how elites influenced regime durability in Syria and Lebanon by connecting the historical record with contemporary events like the civil war in Syria that has been raging since 2011 as a consequence of the Arab Spring and the recurring civil protests in Lebanon that continue to threaten the regime's fragile legitimacy. New elite actors will be presented and their roles discussed in a wider politico-economic context that is not statist but subject to change due to external or internal shocks that threaten state authority. We will start by explaining the strategy of cooptation of economic/business and religious elites and then explain military elites through the strategy of repression during both Assad's terms, provide the context in which these elites operated and use it as a starting point for explaining elite behavior/change/defection in the periods of crisis like the Syrian civil war and Lebanon's protests.

### 10.1. Syrian business elite: emergence and stratification

While much attention has been given to international/exogenous actors and/or developments such as that of Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, Iranian and to a lesser degree Chinese support to Assad's regime, it is necessary to switch the focus on internal/domestic regime characteristics and dynamics that are also important for understanding regime durability in Syria during both Assad's eras and the civil war. In order for a regime to last, it needs to have a significant level of popular legitimacy hence the fulfilment of this criterion is of utmost importance for authoritarian systems.

They differ in ways how they achieve popular legitimacy with some in the Middle East distributing wealth coming from oil/gas rents thereby buying legitimacy (allocative cooptation) while other, more modest countries in terms of natural resources have to find other ways like the inclusion of social groups and actors which they wouldn't otherwise include as well as widening the ruling coalition's membership by including or even creating new elites like religious and economic elites.

The cooptation is institutionalized since it is through institutions like parliaments, religious bodies, officer corps and NGOs that such cooptation is conducted. (Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004, 383) By cooptation we mean the strategy that seeks an individual's acceptance of rule and providing incentives/benefits to ensure its realization. This can be done via formal (party rule) and informal (patrimonial rule) strategies. (Josua 2011, 5)

After the seizure of power by Hafez al-Assad an unwritten „social contract" characterized his presidential monarchy whereby the regime, in order to persist, created legitimacy by presenting itself as a front-line state in the fight against Israel for which it received significant amounts of external rent mostly from Gulf countries and especially after the 1973 Yom Kippur War but Hafez also made use of the superpower rivalry in order to receive support in weapons supply from the Soviet Union. During the eighties, Gulf aid was reduced due to lower oil prices and replaced by Iranian aid. In this period of economic crisis in Syria, the Assad regime understood that ongoing state control over the economy should give way to the private sector and some liberalization measures that resulted in the emergence of a private business elite that operated within regime guidelines. (Hinnebusch 2001, 102) The Sunni businessmen were the majority of this new entrepreneur class which benefited Assad's regime by widening its constituency to the once despised (by minorities), Sunni community. The regime didn't allow them autonomy to prevent them from trying to increase their power and threaten the system but gave them some space for maneuvering in dealings with their constituencies through bureaucratic or party channels and contacts with government officials. Hafez's limited liberalization, *infitah* (open door) policies in the 1990s enabled big businessmen to enter parliament, chambers of commerce and industry as well as the guidance committee, bodies that were the link between state and private business. However, the above institutions had only symbolic power since all important decision making was conducted elsewhere (Assad's inner circle) thereby neutralizing any potential political threat by big business. One significant example when this cooptation proved important for regime resilience and durability was during the Islamic/Muslim Brotherhood uprising that resulted in the regime's violent response in 1982 when it killed thousands of Hama residents and crushed the MB insurgency. Since it was a high risk regime operation, the president of the Damascene chamber of commerce Badr ad-Din ash-Shallah pledged loyalty and support to the regime in the name of big business thereby also cementing their allegiance to the status quo which will later in the civil war prove to be critical. (Sottimano 2016) Bashar's succession to the Syrian presidency brought with it, as noted in earlier chapters, significant political and economic reforms that sought to open Syrian politics and economy but when he saw that too much of it would threaten the regime and core elites itself, Bashar slowed liberalization down and business-regime ties, established by his father, were further cemented. Economic reforms included the opening of private banks, stock markets, foreign investment, external trade and generally speaking, a shift from a socialist planned economy to a social market economy that would expand on the already good standing private sector. (Bruck 2007, 5)

Syria, due to isolation resulting from the US invasion of Iraq (which also led to large Iraqi refugees populating Syria), was suffering economically and that created a need for the regime to look for opportunities to secure new rents, allies in order to maintain its support base satisfied. At this point, Iran and Turkey helped Syria to overcome this isolation by providing Bashar's regime with new financial resources while another external shock came after the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in 2005 that rid the Syrian regime off important resources. Domestic economic conditions were deteriorating simultaneously since Syrian modest oil reserves and agricultural land (due to low rainfall and drought), became exhausted and brought the rural population into urban cities (Donati 2013, 37-38) (Haddad 2012) This is the context where the liberalization measures took place and resulted in the expansion of regime alliances with businessmen that benefited from their close relations to the regime through acquiring former state-led enterprises, privileged access into new markets such as communications, partnerships with western countries and companies. However, these connections to the regime were not *organic* or blood ties but pragmatic while these businessmen were politically dependent clients and at the mercy of Assad's regime and fit greatly into the **„dependent"** business elite category devised by Samer Abboud (2013) which had no decision-making power (doesn't fit into our politically-relevant elite) and was constantly under threat of regime seizure for which he mentions the wealthy Sanqar and Nahhas families as examples with the former losing importing licences to Rami Makhlouf which forms the part of the most important business elite in Syria. New regime officials, introduced by Bashar, that replaced the „old guard" were the prime benefactors of Bashar's liberalization measures. „Awlad as-sulta" or „the sons of the powerful", were leading (most of them still lead) the Syrian economy that included sons of former top-ranking officials like Abdul-Halim Khaddam, Mustafa Tlass, Bahjat Sulayman, Ali Duba but also the Shalish family (Bashar's close cousins), Shawkats, Najibs – to name the most noticeable. (Sottimano 2016) The most popular and richest of these businessmen was and still is Bashar's maternal cousin Rami Makhlouf who apparently held approximately 60% of the Syrian economy on the eve of the 2011 uprising. His business interests span from owning Syriatel – the largest mobile network company in Syria, transport, media (Al-Watan, Promedia), import companies to interests in tourism and oil (Makhloufs invested in British oil/gas exploration and production company – Gulfsands Petroleum) (Donati 2013, 39) (Semenov 2018) Factors that, beside kinship/sect/religion ties, facilitated the creation of this regime-business elite were marriages between its members that added a deeper dimension to the already strong cross-sectarian elite.

The above characterized elite is best described by Abboud (2013) as the **„integrated elite"** – one which is a result of Hafez's and Bashar's liberalization measures, the regime's economic backbone whose privileged access to wealth was a result of their close kinship/sectarian/religious ties to the Assad family while their interests and survival are undistinguishable from the regime. When the 2011 Syrian protests signaled the start of an ongoing civil war, both subtypes of the business elite – the dependent and integrated were in differing measures committed to the regime from which they benefited and enriched themselves, so that betraying the regime would make not much sense. The integrated elite's organic connection to regime survival was pivotal in their decision and effort to finance the war effort on the side of Assad and pro-regime militias because their own survival rested upon the regime. (Haddad 2012) An example of institutionalizing the link between regime and its integrated and dependent elites are the Syrian two largest holding companies, Al-Cham (led by Rami Makhlouf) and Al-Sourya, both of which holding hundreds of million of capital but equally important is the role as access points for other businessmen to generous state contracts, privileged licenses and foreign business connections. (Donati 2013, 41-42) One of the determining factors visible at the outset of the civil war in terms of regime support or defection was the potential effect of international sanctions imposed on many Syrian businessmen with the aim of increasing the costs associated with supporting Assad's regime. However, no one individual from big business under sanction defected from the regime but produced the opposite effect by aligning wealthy businessmen even more closely to the regime thereby proving that sanctions are not powerful enough to create a regime-elite rupture in Syria largely because of decade-long and organic connections created. (Abboud 2013) A 2011 event, the „Syrian Conference for Change" was organized in Antalya, Turkey by three wealthy Syrian businessmen Ammar Qurabi, Ali and Wassim Sanqar proclaiming their opposition to Assad's regime and calling on other businessmen to join their effort in supporting the opposition but ended unsuccessfully. (Williams 2011) Wealthy businessmen invested in regime survival have committed large financial resources to form and fund various pro-government militias like the „Shabiha" and Popular Committees (lijan sha'abiya). (Chapman 2014, 102) The most well-known such militias were financed through the Al-Bustan association – initially set up as a charity organization by Rami Makhlouf who soon began to use it to fund various smaller militias like the Liwa Dir' al-Watan (Homeland Shield) and Fahud Homs (Homs Leopards).

Other prominent businessmen include Ayman Jaber who financed the Desert Falcons and Sea Commandos that proved important in operations against ISIS during the war and George Haswani who financed militants organized as the Qalamun Shield close to the Lebanese border.

Haswani was also one of the first to be put under US sanctions in 2011. (Sottimano 2016) (Donati 2013, 40) Due to difficulties for importing basic goods during the war, the Syrian regime and business elites had to develop new ways and ties to import food, fuel as well as aid by creating a parallel economy that would also compensate for the losses of big business companies caused by the war. (Saul 2013) This relates to regime durability positively since it showed to people who fell hostage to rebel forces that at the end of the day, it is the Syrian state that can provide basic goods, help and services that range from issuing travel documentation to property rights as well as employing more than million people into the state bureaucracy. Portraying the state as the only way out of difficulty raises its appeal among the population because the alternative (being under rebel-held areas and authority) is much worse. (Aston-Ward 2017, 11-12)

### 10.2. Is religious elite cooptation underestimated?

After reading the previous chapters, one can grasp the complexity of both politics and society of Syria but also learn that to name this regime an Alawi regime as some do, is a mistake. It is true that many (not all) important regime posts are led by an Alawi, especially the security and military positions that are crucial for maintaining the regime as resilient and durable as possible. But also it is true that there exists and comments could be heard in the pre-2011 era of an Alawi opposition to the regime because of the misery that struck many places populated by Alawis except the most important ones in Latakia and Assad's home village Qardaha and Kalbiyya tribe. The development of other Alawi areas remained limited and many of their inhabitants died in the post 2011 period from fighting and being under siege from rebels. (Goldsmith 2012) There is also the misconception about Alawis being united and cohesive which in fact is a mistake and trap where many Alawis that do not strongly identify with Alawi tradition and religion find themselves in. The truth is that Alawis are all but cohesive as a religious group, have different and often conflicting interests that are visible in their tribal differentiation, geographical concentration and historical experiences (the Alawi urban-rural divide). However, these misconceptions drew targets on heads of all Alawis and worse, simplified the nature of Syrian politics and post-2011 events by amplifying sectarianism. (Shakman-Hurd 2013) It was through cooptation of different segments of Syrian society that the regime became what it is now. It included cooptation of people from all religious and ethnic backgrounds (Sunnis, Christians, Kurds), economic interests (wealthy Sunni merchants) and political views (Nasserites, Syrian nationalists, Arab nationalists) because Hafez and later Bashar understood

well that alongside repression, the element of legitimacy was an equally important pillar on which to build a durable regime.

Despite the large influence initially wielded by the Ba'ath Party, whose founders tried to marginalize religion in party ideology, Hafez, whose Alawi sect was considered by Sunnis as heretical, knew well the strength and importance of Islam not just in Syria but the whole Middle East. The seeds of religious delegitimation and resulting Sunni resentment and radicalism can be traced to Ba'ath takeover of power in Syria when former clerical elites and their most important representative, the Grand Mufti, were stripped of their autonomy and power first by replacing the popular Grand Mufti Abu al-Yusr Abidin with obedient Ahmad Kaftaru, withdrawing state financial resources for the development of Islamic educational institutions and depriving ulama of religious administration. (Pierret 2013, 85-89) After the Islamic uprising in the late 1970s, when the regime was in dire need to justify its repression especially after the Hama massacre in 1982, the Assad regime found religious legitimation for this in the words and actions of an Islamic scholar, writer Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti who did a lot to ensure good state-ulama relations thereby providing Assad with the ability to present his regime as tolerant and accessible for moderate Sunnis. After the MB insurgency that started in late 1970s and ended in 1982, it were those clerical elites close to the regime like Kaftaru and Sheikh Suhayb al-Shami in Aleppo where religious administration were delegated to him by Assad, that developed their own clientelist networks, financed in turn by wealthy Sunni businessmen (also close to the regime), from which personnel were appointed to "control" mosques, religious educational institutions and keep track of potential radical elements. Sign of patronization of the clerical elite by Hafez included raising salaries, providing financial assistance to the Ministry of Religious Endowments in the 1970s which was reduced after 1982 when many arrests of MB related elements took place. He also tried to reach out to opposition Islamists to prevent their radicalization, include them in government posts like parliament, release militant political prisoners in 1992 and allow some sort of autonomy for their activities as long as they don't conflict with state policy. (Hinnebusch 2001, 107) Bashar al-Assad, influenced by regional events like the US-led Iraq invasion in 2003, Lebanese crisis starting with Lahoud's extended term as president in 2004 to the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, was in the process of acquiring additional domestic support.

Therefore, he enacted similar measures as his father did like lifting the headscarf ban in public schools, supporting the establishment of more sharia high schools as well as increased salaries of religious personnel. Unlike his father, Bashar reached out to radical Islamist elements, some of them involved in the decades old insurgency like the Jama'at Zayd movement, created new and strengthened existing alliances with clerical elites.

Around 800 members of MB were released or brought back from exile and the narrative was switched to defense against foreign conspiracies and enemies.

Bashar also gained credit for facilitating the flow of fighters willing to fight against the US in Iraq. This policy again enabled religious elites more autonomy but immediately after Syria's international position was improved (especially after the Doha agreement over Lebanon and lowering of tensions in the case of Hariri's death) and after a bomb explosion in downtown Damascus killed 17 civilians for which the radical Islamist movement Fath al-Islam (based in Tripoli), the regime blamed domestic clerical elites for not preventing radicalism and used these reasons to bring religion again under close state scrutiny and control. This state of affairs lasted until protests erupted in Tunisia in 2010 after which the Syrian regime reversed its secularist measures again and employed its appeasement strategy (Aston-Ward 2017, 14-16) (Pierret 2013, 98) Bashar's shrewd use of foreign and domestic events earned him credit among the Sunni population which explains the divided response to the 2011 uprising and clerical elites' support for the regime from which they benefited due to regime policies pursued since Hafez's takeover. A further reason that ensured Sunni clerical but also businessmen support was the financial factor since they had much to lose by siding with, as they perceived them, poor and mostly rural Sunnis in the March 2011 protests. The clerical elite's behavior also signaled to the opposition, radical armed movements that mobilizing Sunnis won't be straightforward as initially thought. Apart from the clerical elites, Sunnis supported the regime from 2011 onwards for all sorts of reasons ranging from the above explained business elite interests to the often overlooked fact that most rank-and-file members of the Syrian armed forces (which enables them benefits and privileged services) are Sunni. (Zambelis 2015, 8)

### 10.3. Military elites and militarization as backbones of Assad's regimes

In the context of military elites and the overall role of security services, military as such on regime durability, an autocrat usually employs the strategy of repression which refers to the usage of violent or less violent means and activities that infringe upon personal integrity or liberties. (Escriba-Folch 2013, 546) From the previous chapters, one could see the pivotal role of the military and military officers throughout Syrian history, especially in the establishment of the Assad regime in 1970 when his own connections and authority among the most important officers was key to taking power. This is not only the case in Syria, but in the wider Arab world where militaries traditionally constitute the core of the decision-making elite and whose advice in matters of foreign and defense policy is far more important than that of government

ministries. (Dawisha 1975, 349) The importance of the military in Syrian regime maintenance was not only limited to domestic threats and security but was, in large part, influenced by regional and international events with the former being the fight against Israel (especially the 1973 war) and the Cold War superpower rivalry in the latter case.

It is in this context that Syria constantly developed its military with the overarching aim of achieving strategic parity with Israel which it later found impossible to achieve. However, this anti-Israel rhetoric and the resulting war preparation was a big enough reason to justify increasing military spending that in turn increased the importance of military elites and military as an institution as well as influenced the type of economy Syria was developing. The militarization of society was also visible through education of Syrians from primary school to university whereby everyone was set to develop a distinct identity that contained elements of Syrian nationalism but also Arab nationalism because of Syria's frontline state against Israel status. This enabled the regime to quickly shift the focus from domestic issues to those pertaining to their survival resulting from Israel's threat, receiving external aid in the name of its frontline state status which it then distributed domestically and tied many segments of society into this whole military narrative. (Perthes 2000, 152-160) Domestically, Assad created multiple intelligence (Mukhabarat), security services with none of them having large autonomy which, beside the regular security tasks, watched over each other. (Valter 2018, 54) They were, in most cases, headed by people from Alawi descent and we have already provided some of their names and backgrounds in the previous chapters. At this point, we will discuss the link that was created between high ranking military officers and the business elite as well as the overall importance of military institutions in Syria.

Defending its citizens from all sorts of threats is the prime characteristic of any military but the second mission of the Syrian military also includes the provision of social services (ranging from health to education) and helping the country's development in terms of socioeconomic infrastructure which necessitated the establishment of military institutions to accomplish the latter mission. These included the MHI (Military Housing Institution), MATA (Institution for the Execution of Military Construction which finished several infrastructural projects of wider importance such as roads, bridges, dams and various military and civilian facilities) and Institution of Defense Factories, to name only the most important and extensive ones. These military institutional networks were important because they employed a lot of people, both of military and civilian background, had access to foreign goods which they acquired at a privileged price (which enabled them to sell those goods for higher prices elsewhere) and generally could be seen as a regime instrument used to promote the official regime economic policy, that is, a socialist-planned economy. (Said 2018, 59-60)

We've already mentioned the notion "military-mercantile complex" which perfectly describes this three-fold interaction between the regime-military-market where each link was made up of people (mostly Alawite officers and wealthy Sunni merchants) whose interconnectedness and privileges put them in a privileged position in Syrian society thereby committing them even more to regime survival.

The military officers used their position and leverage in those military institutions to establish themselves as brokers between the institutions (which distributed wealthy contracts) and private businessmen who, in order to acquire a contract, payed large commissions/bribed the officers. Other examples of military officers' involvement included illegal arms/drugs smuggling especially during the Lebanese civil war that enabled them to accumulate large sums of money which sustained their clientelist networks as well as family members that succeeded them and their practices. It is important to note that these illegal practices were tolerated by the regime because they knew well the importance of the military elite for regime survival and therefore provided the military with resources such as fuel and electricity at low prices as well as the evasion of bureaucracies for acquiring specific import licenses. (Said 2018, 62) In this context, it was easy for military elites to extend their business ventures and increase wealth after the regime announced liberalization measures which opened the economy to foreign markets and opportunities. This opening had also negative effects during Bashar's presidency since the regime could not allocate large resources to the military which reduced the importance of former military institutions in Syrian politics.

Said (2018) made a good comparison between the Egyptian and Syrian scenario during the Arab Spring. In Egypt the military was more autonomous from the president (Mubarak) and its economic interests were not beyond the military's corporate interests unlike in Syria where the military elite has established itself in the economic elite through their military status and was an instrument of Assad who appointed loyal officers to high positions while lower ranks were filled according to merit with the intention to show to the public the professionalization process of the military. When protests began in Syria's southern city Dara'a in 2011, Assad decided to use force against protesters because he feared the Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian scenarios where autocrats were ousted and the military didn't employ such force on its fellow citizens but also remembered the Hama scenario when his father was faced with a similar scenario (Droz-Vincent 2016, 168-170) (Brownlee 2002, 42-43) This quickly escalated into a full-scale civil war by 2012 and many observers were caught by surprise of the particular development that took place during the war, which is the fact that the military remained (mostly) committed to Assad's regime and did not defect, most importantly in the case of high-ranking officers but also rank-and-file conscripted Sunni's, some of which still enjoyed benefits like military

housing best described through the largest military housing complex Dahiet al-Assad meaning "The President's Gift" or simply "Dahia" ("army of sandal-wearers" is the derogatory term used for its residents). The Dahia complex is a state-subsidized housing project run by the military which grants housing to middle and low-ranking officers whose low financial status does not allow them to own a home in Damascus suburbs.

In this way, they are tied closer to the regime, that grants them and their children (through education in the capital for instance) this sort of benefit, but they are also differentiated from the rest of society which is able to literally locate and label these communities of officers and their families. Other effects include the cohesiveness of these communities of officers, not because they were from same ethnic/religious group but had common interests to protect, which was important when the civil war erupted. (Khaddour 2015) The above examples explain the behavior of top military elites, middle-ranking officers for their choice to support the regime with the main reason being the sectarian/religious/kinship affiliation and large economic fortunes in the case of the former while state-subsidized privilege like housing, fear of the alternative as well as economic ventures (albeit to a lesser degree than in top military elites) explain the behavior of the latter group.

Perhaps the most important defection that took place was that of Manaf Tlass (Republic Guard's general and son of former defense minister and member of Hafez's inner circle Mustafa Tlass) in July 2011 which fueled the narrative that the regime is about to fall. Other members of the top military elite are still supporting the regime since many of them now see potential in the country's post-war reconstruction period.

### 10.4. *Lebanese elites between domestic and international affairs*

Building on the previous chapters' historical framework and extensive elite differentiation, this subsection aims to explain the behavior of all types of Lebanese sectarian elites in the context of main internal and external shocks since the Ta'if Agreement and the resulting influence on Lebanese regime durability. Lebanese politics since the Ta'if Agreement can be divided into three main periods: the first one since Ta'if (1989) until the Cedar Revolution in 2005 that initiated a second post-Syrian withdrawal phase which lasted until the signing of the Doha Agreement in 2008 thereby initiating the third period marked by the spillover effects from the Syrian civil war, internal economic and political crises that culminated in anti-government October 2019 countrywide protests (in opposition to the Beirut-based 2015-16 protests) whose end is still not in sight since the country is descending into a serious economic malaise, amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Mackinnon 2020)

The first phase was characterized by Syrian hegemony over Lebanon that could be seen through Syrian appointments into Lebanese institutions' most important positions and these people had the role of implementing Syrian strategic, political and economic interests as well as making sure that no significant, autonomous center of power emerges that would counter Syrian policies. The first postwar parliamentary elections filled the parliament with pro-Syrian politicians which capitalized on the Christian boycott of elections that lasted until 1998.

We've seen in the case of Syria, but also in the wider Arab world, that the military plays a significant role in regime durability. Therefore, Syria spared no time to ensure its control over the Lebanese military and security services. One of the first instances of this was Damascus's opposition to the appointment of General Fahim al-Hajj as Lebanese army commander which resulted in the appointment of pro-Syrian General Emile Lahoud who later became president followed by the policy shift whereby Lebanese army officers no longer trained in France or the USA but in Syrian military academies which had the wider goal of indoctrinating Lebanese soldiers along Syrian, Baathist lines. (Salloukh 2010, 208) The Lebanese Armed Forces (not to be confused with Lebanese Forces – a Maronite Christian political party), was therefore completely subordinated to Syrian intelligence agencies and every appointment into sensitive positions in the military and security services had to be vetted and approved by the Syrian regime and its proconsul in Lebanon, Ghazi Kan'an who was after 2002 replaced by Rustom Ghazaleh. Lebanese intelligence/security services were greatly reformed into effective institutions especially after the appointment by Lahoud of Michel Rahbani (as Director of Military Intelligence) and Jamil al-Sayyed (as Deputy Director of MI) which effectively penetrated every important aspect of Lebanese politics and society thereby enabling them to keep close watch to potential opposition from any sect. (Nerguizian 2015, 126-127) Most of sectarian elites during this first phase were therefore Syrian puppets which were developing their clientelist networks which was most clearly visible during Rafiq Hariri's first term as prime minister when Lebanon underwent through a reconstruction period, followed a neoliberal economic doctrine and his shrewd use of financial means to buy support or coopt notable families and being the main dispenser of Saudi patronage in Lebanon. Nabih Berri, the Speaker of Parliament, didn't follow the same logic but instead relied heavily on the state to dispense patronage among his followers, mostly through job provision in the public sector while the same could be said for Walid Jumblatt (Baumann 2016, 26-33, 83) The first phase was put to an end after Hariri's assassination and the Cedar Revolution with Syrian troops withdrawal as the end result that was supposed to initiate a democratic transition in Lebanon. However, due to this internal shock, things went the other way since the sectarian elites' balance of power changed as well as their interests which were closely aligned with those of the US, France,

Saudi Arabia (in the case of the 14 March alliance) and Syria, Iran and Hezbollah (in the case of the 8 March alliance). The political scene was further complicated with the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war and UNSC Res. 1701 that can also be interpreted as a call to disarm Hezbollah that was seen as an Iranian proxy committed to fight against Israeli occupation and support the Palestinians.

Lebanese sectarian elites were throughout history prone to balance against domestic opposition by aligning themselves with regional/international patrons while they used Lebanon as a battlefield for their own geopolitical interests (it was seen as a confrontation between US and Saudi Arabia against Iran and Syria). (Salloukh 2017, 66) (Geukjian 2014, 532) The issue of Hezbollah's weapons arsenal, which was a recurring theme since the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, coupled with disagreement about the international tribunal that was set up to try Hariri's assassins and the stalemate over finding a presidential candidate escalated in 2008 when the government dismissed the head of security at Lebanon's international airport Wafiq Shouqair (associated with Hezbollah) and announced an investigation into Hezbollah's illegal communications network. This resulted in street clashes in Beirut with Hezbollah fighters occupying a large part of the city and surrounding Future Movement's leaders residencies. These events humiliated Saad Hariri and his Future Movement, proved to everyone Hezbollah's role in issues like war and peace but soon the confrontation came to an end with the signing of the Doha Agreement whose arrangements included providing Hezbollah veto power over important government decisions in the newly formed cabinet of Saad Hariri and more importantly conditioned any talk about Hezbollah's disarmament by the requirement that it must be done under a consensual "national dialogue" which basically prolonged indefinitely Hezbollah's weapons arsenal. (Salloukh 2017, 67-68) (Stel 2009, 25-27) The events during these years between the Cedar Revolution and Doha Agreement changed the balance of power between Sunni and Shia political elites and created deeper divisions between them that further undermined the stability of the already fragile Lebanese regime which apparently couldn't rely only on domestic actors to facilitate stability in its power-sharing system. Because of reasons like common history, geographical proximity and decade long interaction on political and security matters, it was expected that the civil war in Syria would resonate in Lebanon. This was visible through pro and anti-Syrian alignments, supporters of Assad and those looking forward to Syrian regime collapse but also assassinations of anti-Syrian prominent figures of which the notable one is that of Wissam Hassan (the Lebanese security chief), arms smuggling, Sunni radicalization, a refugee crisis and minor border clashes (between Syrian regime armed forces and Sunni rebels). (Salem 2012, 10) (Khashan 2013, 75)

The alignments closely resembled and were along Sunni-Shia lines and reflected the pre-war sentiments toward Assad's regime. A notable development that happened in the context of the Syiran civil war in Lebanon were the actions of the LAF in northern Lebanon that were criticized and seen by Sunnis as an alignment with Hezbollah which resulted in Sunni elite fragmentation and influence decrease of Hariri's Future Movement. (Gade & Moussa 2017, 41-42)

The LAF were purposefully kept underdeveloped and underfunded because it was in the interests of sectarian elites not to have a strong national army out of fear of interference in sectarian politics and the fact that there should be a sectarian consensus underlying any important security decision further downplays the effectiveness of not just the LAF but every security service in Lebanon. Here, the Hezbollah advantage is clear since they translated their weapons arsenal/security outlook into political power which is in opposition to other, both Muslim and Christian, sects that disarmed after the civil war and successfully transformed their war militias into political parties/movements. The mixed membership of security services and LAF puts decision making into the hands of sectarian elites that patronized its co-sectarian clients thereby ensuring that its interests are represented in all components of the security apparatus. (van Veen 2015, 15-18) This weak organizational capacity of the security apparatus derives strategic value and realization of specific sectarian elite interests which include their use of violence on a small scale without fear of state retribution or persecution that is the consequence of an inherent structural weakness of the security apparatus, it enables sectarian elites, through their sectarian representation in the security structures, to be well informed about any threatening development. The above mentioned border confrontations during the civil war in Syria are a great example of the ability of sectarian elites to rely on their co-sectarians in the security apparatus in smuggling activities such as the weapons supply to either side in the Syrian conflict. They only need to be stationed in the right place on the border. Karim el-Mufti (2012) rightly noted in his article that the whole sectarian political elite relies extensively on security services whereby each sect can even be identified with a particular security service in terms of its influence that further enables them to prevent state judicial organs from prosecuting them. The same issue happened is Syria whereby the regime itself even encouraged this state of affairs because it is in the regime's interest to keep the security apparatus satisfied since it is one of the rare actors that can threat regime survival. This paradoxical situation whereby the successful realization of sectarian elite's interests relies on a dysfunctional organization capacity of the security apparatus is visible throughout Lebanese history since independence. The 2010s were marked by political instability best seen through the frequent postponement of elections and a

vacant presidential office as well as an economic crisis that was set to culminate in October 2019.

***"Kullun ya'ni kullun"*** – "All of them means all of them" was one of the main slogans during Lebanese protests that demanded the complete overthrow of the establishment, started on 17 October 2019 after a ministerial austerity measures proposal as well as a proposal to tax Internet voice calls after which some called the subsequent uprising as the "WhatsApp revolution" – after a popular voice-and-text platform owned by Facebook. (Kraidy 2019, 361)

But the protests should be seen through a wider perspective and economic malaise that Lebanon was undergoing for years before the uprising.

It included state corruption, environmental degradation, dysfunctional public services, mishandling of the October wildfire that burned a great amount of cedar trees (the national symbol of Lebanon), rising public debt and the bad economic model stood at the heart of the crisis whose main characteristics included large imports/few exports, state spending not covered with revenue coupled with the inability to finance the rising budget deficit and fixed exchanged rates which necessitated a constant inflow of funds. (Crisis Group Middle East Report 2020, 12) The above slogan reflected the fact that these protests started as a cross-sectarian, leaderless, bottom-up uprising against the system that the corrupt sectarian political and economic elite represents. Most protesters were under the age of 30, from lower and middle classes that don't remember the pre-Ta'if period which means that their experiences relate to the fairly prosperous and stable years in the 2000s without having strong traditional/sectarian loyalties like their parents and grandparents. When the protests entered its second week and after the government led by prime minister Saad Hariri failed to come up with a reform proposal, Hariri resigned on 29 October saying that he will listen the voice of the people and that it takes a great shock to fix the crisis. (Dadouch & Kattab 2019) After many weeks of consultations with the president Michel Aoun, Hezbollah and its allies appointed university professor Hassain Diab to form a new government with only 69 parliamentary votes in Diab's favor without the support of Hariri's Future Movement and Lebanese Forces parliamentary bloc. (Azhari 2019) It took some time for Hezbollah candidate Diab to form a new technocratic government whose composition we've discussed in a previous chapter and that received a vote of confidence in parliament on 11 February 2020. However, despite its technocratic character, the new government ministers were still easily identified with particular sectarian elites and ironically some of them were even responsible for the state of affairs (economic crisis) that ignited the protests in the first place. An example includes the new Finance Minister Ghazi Wazni appointed by Nabih Berri who has participated in shaping Lebanon's fiscal policy that brought the country to crisis as well as the Energy Minister Raymond Ghajar who is a protégé

of FPM (Free Patriotic Movement) leader Gebran Bassil (Michel Aoun's son-in-law). (Chehayeb 20) The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the agony of Lebanese people and as the lockdown measures started to ease, people again went to the streets protesting in an even worse economic situation than in October since the Lebanese pound lost a lot of its value while the government used heavy-handed tactics to counter the protesters. (Mackinnon 2020)

In the context of consequences of Lebanese 2019/20 protests on regime durability, a few patterns of elite behavior can be discerned. The first one relates to a section of the Christian elite represented by Lebanese Forces (LF) led by Samir Geagea and the Kataeb party which, with the aim of benefiting from protests politically, called on its members to go out on the streets and protest with other citizens which they did thereby politically benefiting on FPM's account. The main opposition to the protests and government resignation was Hezbollah since it was the major winner of the 2018 elections and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah was quick to put the usual blame on "political operators  in service of foreign embassies"  and imply the possibility of a scenario similar to the civil war. (Crisis Group Middle East Report 2020, 3-5) The external dimension is also of great importance since the Lebanese government initiated talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to try to rescue its economy which was also criticized by Hezbollah which perceives this as a potential tool in the hands of the US that would attach conditions relating to its "maximum pressure" campaign in relation to sanctioning Iran. (Tharoor 2019) Having in mind that Lebanese elites in general are characterized by high continuity and low permeability, their rooted patronage networks that extend deep into state bureaucracy, military and economy as well as resilience especially during serious crises (like the Cedar Revolution), it would be naïve to expect that the recent protests and economic downturn would lead to a complete displacement of Lebanese elites. One must keep in mind that elite's resources coupled with a sectarian regime, vulnerable by default, enable them to buy loyalty among their followers even if those resources are shrinking due to crisis and elites have difficulty financing their clients. If the state completely collapses, it will be the elites and their informal structures and service provision (financed by foreign patrons) that will again decide about society's future. In Lebanon, there is no better example than Hezbollah that is often described as a "state within a state" since it acts like one where the official Lebanese government cannot reach and where Hezbollah provides services ranging from education to health care. (DeVore 2012, 87)

**Conclusion**

This thesis utilized the theoretical works on elites and regime durability to show how do they interact practically in Syria and Lebanon and to what extent can one use these theories to explain outcomes with regards to regime durability in these regimes. We have started by presenting the foundational works on elites by Mosca and Pareto whose descriptions differ on some points but both agree that elites are an inevitable phenomenon in any society and both recognized the existing gap between a minority governing elite or political class and nonelites. Next we went on to extend our research on elites to other works that added further theoretical puzzles to the elite concept by introducing notions of elite circulation, elite typologies, size, attributes, cohesion, interests and level of power or influence they wield in society which showed that elites are not static groups of people with specific traits but are subject to change both in relation to other elites and to wider political/social changes in a state. In order to persist, elites need to establish a consensus with regards to their interests and their realization while ensuring that no threats to their status and privileges emerge. With the aim of extending the classical, narrow definition of elites, we have used the more encompassing concept by Perthes (2004) called the "politically relevant elite" that includes individuals with the largest decision making ability in that they participate and formulate decisions on a national and strategic level.

Of equal theoretical importance was the concept of regime durability where we took off by defining and differentiating regimes and then switched to characteristics that make a regime more or less durable. Here we found that a wide set of strategies, ranging from cooptation to repression, and instruments, like financing patronage networks and appeasing specific segments of society by providing them with state sponsored benefits, are employed by leaders to prolong their time in power and positively affect regime durability.

By describing the geographical and historical backgrounds of Syria and Lebanon, we can outline some main conclusions that are equal to both case studies in this regard. The collapse of Ottoman authority in the region after the Great War, posed serious questions and challenges about the region's future political/administrative organization which also implied the question of identities and ideologies that were supposed to provide new sources of legitimacy and distinctiveness. Three main concepts were put forward by Middle Eastern intellectuals: Arab Nationalism, perhaps the most inclusive one, with Arab unity at its ideological core followed by various forms of Islamist ideologies that were more exclusionary and traditional. Finally, there appeared all country-specific nationalisms from Lebanon to Syria with the SSNP the prime example of the latter's nationalist ideology, limited both in scope to Syria and Syrians, whatever this meant at that time.

The region's outlook in general and that of Syria and Lebanon in particular was shaped by a combination of imperialism and colonialism that left a permanent negative mark on its people of every background. Many people of these newly formed countries found themselves on the "wrong" side of the new border that resulted later in irredentism and confrontation. The sectarian nature and complexity of Syria and Lebanon aggravated the process of identity and state formation whereby the issue of sub-state identities such as ethnic (Arab and Kurdish), religious and sectarian (Sunni, Christian, Alawi, Druze) surfaced and became starting points of any political dialogue. The most important development for this thesis that happened during this period was the transformation of previous large land-owning families into new governing elites in both Syria and Lebanon, a great example of elite continuity. However, from the end of the Second World War and due to reasons such as the Arab defeat in the first Arab-Israeli war, poor state of the economy led to increased frustration among the majority people and resentment aimed at these wealthy Sunni governing elites. As a consequence, the military as an institution became more important especially in Syria while Lebanon entered its most prosperous years after the end of the Second World War that lasted until 1975 when the civil war broke out.

Syria on the other side, became largely influenced by regional and international developments especially by the Cold War superpower rivalry that further polarized Syrian society. Syrian politics drastically changed after the Baath took power by military means in 1963 which completely reduced the former Sunni elite's influence and paved the way for the emergence of new actors, mostly from minoritarian Alawi background. After a brief period of intra-Baath rivalries and purges, Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1970 and initiated a new, mostly stable period in Syrian history that lasted until the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The way Hafez came to power (through a military coup) influenced elite formation and stratification in Syria that lasts, with small changes, to this day. The top military and security officials were naturally part of the core, "Jama'a" elite that also included Hafez's brothers and many cousins to which point to the shrewd instrumentalization of kinship/sectarian/blood ties to consolidate power. In order to tie the survival of this elite to that of the regime, Assad provided them with many benefits and privileges and basically created a patronage network of loyalists which were also encouraged by the regime to further develop their own patronage networks as long as they are under Assad's regime guidelines. To avoid criticism of leading an Alawi regime and conscious of the need to widen his regime's support base, Assad used cooptation strategies to include the representatives of the majority Sunni population in decision making. Wealthy businessmen that increased their wealth even more after Assad's liberalization measures and opening up of the economy started to play an important role in Syrian regime durability especially during the rule of Bashar al-Assad

The other regime pillar was the Baath party through which patronage networks were institutionalized and headed by top party officials in the Regional Command which, together with top government officials composed the second elite circle of the Syrian regime but this circle as we argue in the final chapter, lost some of its former importance due to the reduced role of the Baath party which gave its place to the business elite composed of the so called "sons of the powerful" with organic ties to the Assad family and the regime as such of which the prime example is Rami Makhlouf, Bashar's close cousin. The third elite circle is the largest in size and complex to delineate but few characteristics are noticeable like their dependence on the regime for survival, contacts with regime officials from all ranks but mostly those are ties to mid-level officials in the state bureaucracy (which implements policy, provides services and therefore derives power). Under Bashar's term, the most significant change in terms of elites was his decision to replace the "old guard" with younger and closer (by way of kinship or family ties) individuals that resulted in the narrowing of the top elite circle and concentration of power in an even smaller group of people. Another change includes the cooptation of the religious elite closer to the regime than his father did by way of providing them with financial resources and more autonomy which was at times (after the 2008 bombing) reduced. All these structures initiated by Hafez in 1970 and upgraded by Bashar have mostly remained in place after the start of the Syrian civil war. Those elites that benefited from the regime for decades and had much to lose, were firmly supportive of Bashar's handling of the war while other people such as regular soldiers and public sector employees had also much to lose from defecting since the regime provided them with free housing, subsidized goods in the former case and job security in the latter case. It is visible throughout the thesis that Assad's combination of patronage, appeasement, repression and cooptation coupled with sectarian/blood/kinship ties as well as external support positively affected and prolonged Syrian regime durability and we can also conclude from the above analysis that scenarios without Assad in power are only possible by eradicating this complex structure of interconnected elites (which the civil war significantly did but not completely because Assad is still in power) and increasing the cost of their support and commitment to Assad's regime.

This thesis has in a similar vein outlined the main types of Lebanese elites and their behavior during events that were a threat to regime durability. After the Ta'if Agreement that ended the civil war, former warlords were transformed into members of the new political elite and their wartime militias into new political parties. The time period under study was divided into three phases - the first one lasting from Ta'if until the Cedar Revolution which was the first important event that displaced the, until then, most important political elite which was a group of Syrian clients (and militia leaders-turned-statesmen) whose status and degree of influence throughout

the first phase was determined entirely by the degree of connection to the Syrian regime. Lebanese political elites are grouped by and follow sectarian lines which means that every sect has its strongest political representative elite. The Lebanese business elite came into being with the election of Rafiq Hariri as prime minister where one could see that the elite status can be bought with a combination of large financial clout and foreign connections (Saudi Arabia in Hariri's case) Hariri's entrance into the political elite enabled him to appoint individuals with backgrounds similar to his own that was later in 2000 institutionalized by the establishment of the Future Movement which converted these people's wealth into political power. However, this particular elite's influence was limited by the fact that those elites associated with Syria held the ultimate power (until 2005). Notables in Lebanon also constituted a distinct elite type and the best example of their influence in politics is their presence in it for hundreds of years, best example being the Druze Jumblatt and Sunni Karami families. Individuals with foreign education constitute the technocratic elite whose influence is defined by the leading sectarian political elite and therefore limited to drafting and implementing national government policies. The role of Lebanese religious leaders was significant in times of crises to mobilize people but limited on a regular basis. We have showed through the examples of Lebanese security services and the military that their organizational weakness facilitates regime durability since it is in the interest of sectarian elites, that all represented unequally in these institutions, that no autonomous center of power emerges that could threaten their conduct of everyday politics a more importantly, not to meddle in issues of strategic importance such as war and peace. The sectarian elites dispense patronage among its loyalists, as the Assad regime in Syria does, to keep them committed and tied to a specific sectarian political elite. It is the sectarian elites and their regime, both in Syria and Lebanon, that are the ultimate providers of both security and services with the exception of Hezbollah which is autonomous enough from the Lebanese state and, in areas that it controls, functions like a state itself. However, this is the point where the international dimension is visible in terms of foreign financial and ideological support from Iran. After years of economic mismanagement and political instability, a new internal shock struck Lebanon with the October 2019 protests that were aimed at the ruling political elite and demands were voiced for their complete removal. We have shown elite behaviours of Hezbollah which opposed the protests and government resignation and later installed their preffered prime minister candidate while a part of the Maronite Christian elite joined the protests in order to raise their appeal among the general population which was a successful move. The Sunni political elite led by Saad Hariri opposed the new government that was proven to be associated with sectarian elites, prime minister Diab was pro-Hezbollah while finance minister Wazni was appointed by Nabih Berri.

This clearly showed the inevitable and underlying influence of sectarian elites on every matter in Lebanon and the fact that they have been resilient for decades and survived threats and pressures ranging from Syrian tutelage, Cedar Revolution, Hezbollah and the most recent protests makes observers believe that any displacement, if it happens, would probably lead only to a transformation (a la Ta'if) of sectarian elites in accordance with the new "rules of the game" co-sponsored by regional/international actors. The continuous presence and complex, entrenched patronage networks coupled with international support provide sectarian elites with enough clout to always assert themselves as prime political brokers in Lebanon.

This analysis will serve as the most recent upgrade and contributiton to the existing literature on Syrian and Lebanese elites and provide new insights and answers to puzzles relating to regime durability in these countries by facilitating the role of their top elites in decision making. Also, this theoretical framework could well be utilized in other case studies with regards to elite influence on regime durability in authoritarian countries which don't have to resemble Syria nor Lebanon in terms of the nature of the political system or location. The very presence of a ruling minority monopolizing levers of power continuously is enough of a lure to attract scholars' attention into research on this topic.

Any future research on politics and society in Syria and Lebanon must take into account the overarching influence of elites especially during events that threaten to change the political landscape. Until then, reading the analysis in this thesis will be a relevant point of departure for any scholar interested in underlying dynamics of regime durability in Syria and Lebanon.

The answer to our research question: "How did specific types of elites in Syria and Lebanon influence the durability of their regimes?" lies in the complex but discernible behaviour of elites whereby they monopolize the most important levers of power such as the military and security services, state bureaucracy as well as political parties and top government institutions such as the Cabinet or Council of Ministers. The ability of elites to use these institutions and channels for financial or material gain provides them with the necessary resoucers to buy loyalty among their followers and widen their support base as well as institutionalize these patronage networks so that they appear completely legal and inherent in the nature of the regime. This applies to our Syrian case study and proves our first hypothesis: "Regime durability in Syria rests upon the elite's successful monopolization of important levers of power". As for the Lebanese case, we have showed that in its complex, power-sharing sectarian political system, Lebanese sectarian political elites have clear guidelines through which they can act politically, set in the Ta'if Agreement provisions. This fact pushes them towards achieving a compromise on most important issues such as security, stability and economic welfare.

On the other side, it leaves them no other option but to form cross-sectional coalitions for important issues to have a certain degree of legitimacy and resist regional/international pressure that stems from the country's geopolitical location and vulnerability. Therefore, our second hypothesis: "The ability of Lebanese elites to achieve a cross-sectarian compromise over their power-sharing political system is crucial for regime durability" is viable enough but can be extended to include a compromise on limiting foreign interference in domestic Lebanese politics because regional/international power's interests strongly resonate in Lebanon.

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Naziv odsjeka i/ili katedre:  Politologija

Predmet:

## IZJAVA O AUTENTIČNOSTI RADOVA

| | |
|---|---|
| Ime i prezime: | Kenan Kadić |
| Naslov rada: | Elite influence on regime durability |
| Vrsta rada: | Završni magistarski rad |
| Broj stranica: | 105 |

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