

CONCLUSION

The initial, and basic, question I have tried to answer with this work, and that has led it, was whether or not the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* could have been predicted. It was an arrogant effort. I have tried to understand and, even worse, to predict the political future of a country I do not know enough, and whose language I do not even speak. However, in my defence, I can argue that not only does any scientific research attempt to answer a question but also, and most importantly, any kind of research is limited by the researcher's knowledge and ability, by the time he/she could spend on researching, and by the resources (money, book availability, etc.) he/she can use.

In this case, however, the difficulties one had to face were, I would add, more specific. On the one hand, Lebanon is a not really a suitable country to use as a model – arguably, like other Middle Eastern countries. It is not a matter of Middle Eastern, and certainly not of Islamic, 'exceptionalism'. The problem is more general, and it could be experienced when analysing non-Western countries and regions as well. Again, it is not a matter of 'Western-centrism'. More simply, in general political models and categories have been defined in order to explain, or understand, Western countries and political actions, which are based on cultural premises. Applying them to other culturally grounded areas of the world makes a researcher feel slightly uncomfortable. They do offer some hints (after all, all human beings share a common nature), but almost never grasp perfectly the phenomenon one is trying to explain, or understand. In 1967, Michel Hudson was able to describe Lebanon as 'a case of political underdevelopment'; according to the political change approach he could be right, but I have some doubts if the definition actually grasps the Lebanese political system.

On the other hand, the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* was, *ex-post*, a paradoxical political phenomenon - it brought political change, without bringing political change. During its deployment, there was little doubt it was a historic moment of nation-building. 'History is not made by ifs', but if it had happened somewhere else, I would argue that it would have represented a 'constitutional' moment. It is true that democratic pacific revolutions seem to require more time than violent revolutions to introduce the new political order, for they do not establish a neat cleavage with the previous order but create the new one step by step, by advancing

in some areas and certain issues while regressing in others. Yet, even sceptics saw it as a foundational event, which was going to have a long-term effect on Lebanon political future. From another perspective, then, the paradox was that, at least for Lebanon, the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* was an epochal event without being an epochal event.

The following year, in fact, saw a political repositioning that has only very roughly followed the new political polarisation. And, of course, the July-August Israeli-Hezbollah war started a new political phase that does not fit particularly well with the hopes, even if maybe already feeble, of a strengthening of the Lebanese state and of reaching a new and 'more effective' national consensus. Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement supporters, who had been enthusiastic and active supporters of the *Intifadha al-Iqtad*, are, at the time of writing, still active, even if maybe no longer so enthusiastic, participants in the new peaceful democratic wave of demonstrations, led by Hezbollah and joined by formerly pro-Syrian supporters. This new wave, which employs strategies and symbols that had been used successfully during the *Intifadha*, doubtlessly has different goals, aimed at obtaining, as a main and cohesive goal, a 'new' (but actually old, because it would represent the perfect implementation of Taëf) governmental power-sharing. And the coalition that led the *Intifadha* finds itself in the position of its former, pro-Syrian, adversaries; the government, the expression of their parliamentary majority, is 'barricaded' inside its building, refusing to quit. In Lebanon, things change in a year - on the other hand, things do not change much.

However, this thesis was not about predicting the future; it was about the possibility of scientifically predicting it. In order to this, firstly it tried to check if a theoretical knowledge exists that would have allowed us to frame the whole political phenomenon. The theories that have been tested were those proposed by participants and observers during the shaping of the event. At the end of the analysis, two definitions seemed to fit relatively well: 'Political Independence Revolution' and 'Peaceful, to Some Degree, Democratic Transition'. They are not elegant definitions and, most of all, they both are too specific in their generality. The problem, it was suggested, could be two-fold: on the one hand, the political event did not clearly fit into any theory of social and political change; on the other hand, social science, exactly because of its nature as a science, is excessively specialised and conservative. As a consequence, it was argued that it is necessary to adopt a framework that could allow for the combination of all the different approaches. During this work, in fact, I have tried to employ definitions and models in order to understand the political event

under consideration, or politics in Lebanon. Always, definitions and models needed some qualifications. The effort was deliberate, because it aimed to show that ‘foreseeing’, the activity of anticipating political future, does not easily, and understandably, accept definitions and models but admits better processes and a flexible framework of incentives and disincentives according to which agents can choose which course of action to pursue.

The second chapter dealt with the criteria of scientific knowledge, as seen from the perspective of predicting the future. Science can clearly predict, this goal being one of its essential aims. The question was epistemological. At the end of the theoretical analysis, I suggested that the thought concerned with criteria of scientific knowledge has shifted from focusing on rationalism to being worried about power. The possibility of scientifically predicting the future could be found, therefore, in a separation between rationalism and power within science. By rooting the anticipation of a human event, because this is what political change is, in human nature and responsibility, I have argued that anticipating the political future combines two different activities: on the one hand, ‘proscribing’, which is the scientific anticipation of what cannot or is not likely to happen according to conditions and judged by methodological criteria; on the other hand, ‘predicting’, which is the activity of ‘producing’ a ‘creative intuition’ rooted in a common human nature, shared by the researcher and the object of knowledge, and which is not a scientific but a ‘free’ effort. The two combined activities create ‘foreseeing’; as a whole, ‘foreseeing’ is not scientific, it is the positive anticipation of the future, and is powerless. Refusing to classify it as a completely ‘free’ activity, it was argued that ‘foreseeing’ could necessitate a framework, which could accept some comparisons, and it would need to be both complex and elegant.

The necessity of including many different theories means the framework needs to be able to accept different epistemological premises. In order to do so, theories and approaches were grouped according to their basic epistemological assumptions and ‘deconstructed’ in their basic categories, which were re-arranged in inclusive macro-categories. Finally, they were positioned on three levels according to the direct and actual involvement of the human being. From this perspective, the framework tries to include the human being’s multi-faceted role in making history. Categories and macro-categories are just analytical devices: the relationships and cross-interactions among all of them are so complex and multi-faceted that is sometimes difficult to disentangle one from another. In addition, it includes both diachronic (trends) and synchronic (actual shaping) relationships, and is able

to accommodate foreseeing long, medium and short-term futures, according to the researcher's aim.

The first level includes 'structures', which are analytical concepts characterised by being 'constituted' by a plurality of human actions along time, and are therefore perceived as 'external' by agents. In addition, they 'channel' and 'frame' agents' actions. There are three of these: the economy, institutional arrangements, and the technological level. The second level is systemic, and political and social groups mediate human beings' actions. The first macro-category on this level, that of 'logic', behaviourally traces the dynamics of the rationales of the political system, which are understood as not being characterised by a necessary equilibrium. The second 'systemic' macro-category locates 'points of contact' among 'cultural groups'. 'Cultural groups' are an analytical category that embodies cultural and identity power struggles happening phenomenologically (regardless of their being framed according to capabilities, interests, values, expectations, norms, etc.) among individuals, and resulting from interpersonal exchange. The analytical interaction among 'cultural groups' is focused on certain time-determined issues; from these, political change is more likely to arise. The third level, that of 'agents', is where human actions are at their maximum level. Agents are not necessarily individuals, they can also be groups; however, in both cases, they are analytically regarded as single units. Agents are the main protagonists of change (the framework, it can be argued, is elitist – but only to a certain extent). Yet, they are limited in their autonomy by structures and systems. They could, theoretically, not care about limits, but are likely to face some consequences. In order to foresee how agents are going to shape the future, the analysis should consider their psychologies, histories, goals, internal factions, interests, capabilities, etc. However, it is here, at this level, that the researcher's ability to create an 'empathetic' bond with the object is more relevant. Objectivity, and scientific possibility to proscribe decrease from the level of 'structures' to that of 'agents'.

Finally, the framework has been applied to the case of Lebanon, as it could have been analysed before the start of the Political Independence Revolution. The exercise did not aim to place the analysis in that time, and therefore to foresee political change. It was simpler: the effort wanted only to understand if foreseeing could have been possible. Epistemologically, to pretend to go back in time would have been nonsense. On the contrary, it checked if the facts and data available at that time could have made it possible

to foresee, if it had been attempted through the proposed framework. As a result, some features of Lebanon in 2004 were granted more attention, in an effort to identify the presence of the conditions required by the theoretical explanations.

To finally conclude, if we want a short answer: is it possible to scientifically anticipate political change? No, because science can only 'proscribe', while 'foreseeing' also needs to involve 'predicting', which is not scientific knowledge. Could the *Intifadha al-Iqtad*, in terms of its beginning, dynamic, and results, have been foreseen? Yes, it was not impossible. However, to foresee the event, and especially the timing of the event, would have been difficult indeed.