

## 4.

### LEBANON. Foreseeing the Political Independence Revolution

*“La société est toujours la même, nous sommes l’antithèse d’une société moderne. Nous pensions que la mainmise syrienne faisait barrage à cette modernisation, or il s’est avéré que non, que la mentalité était toujours la même, à savoir le féodalisme, le clientélisme, le ‘primitivisme’.”*

Dayana, Free Patriotic Movement’s supporter on Independence Political Revolution’s results  
(Sleiman, 2006, 12)

Lebanon is sometimes depicted as a pluralistic, democratic, unitary, religious but without religions, and a sovereign state. This image generally carries a positive nuance: Lebanon is a ‘miracle’, a land of paradoxes (as a Belgian economist visiting the country during the 50s said about its economic structure and performance: ‘I have no idea how you do it, but keep it up!’) or, as Pope John Paul II remarked, “*Le Liban est plus qu’un pays, le Liban est un message*” (quoted in Baroud, 2003, 6). All of these definitions, and images, convey an idea of inexplicability, a sort of ‘in spite of reason, and against all odds, Lebanon is, it exists’. Also, they suggest a distinctive positive attitude: Lebanon is an example; Lebanon is teaching us that anything is possible. The 1975-1990 war(s), accordingly and with some reasons, were not civil wars, but the wars of others on Lebanese soil (Tuéni, 1985).

Yet, this is not the full story: the latest and all the other conflicts and ‘troubles’ that have routinely shaken Lebanon during all of its history were moments during which some of the basic features of Lebanese political system shown their full potential dangers: on the one hand, the political and social prominence of communities, their tendency to attempt to ‘réaliser «son Liban»’ (Menassa, 2003), and the congenital weakness of the central government; on the other hand, the existence of communities’ non-Lebanese protectors and their influence on Lebanese political life. Explaining, understanding, even describing Lebanon has been attempted by many scholars, with results never fully convincing: the difficult challenge is indeed to conciliate stability and coexistence with war and destruction within a single model.

However, as it has been pointed out in the previous chapters, foreseeing includes modelling, but it is not focused on it. Attempting to foresee a specific political event, in this case the Political Independence Revolution, means positioning the analysis of structures, systems, and agents (and of their interplay) in the period preceding it – in this case, in the months before August 2004. In the first chapter, I outlined the shaping of the Independence Political Revolution, as happened from the end of August 2004 till January 2006, in order to understand whether the overall political event (in terms of dynamic, causes, goals, and results) could have fitted a theoretical or comparative definition. The exercise aimed to check whether theories of political change could have anticipated the event - the focus was very much on theories. On the contrary, this chapter is not about theories, but about facts and data. What it tries to understand is whether, in August 2004, an analysis of facts, ‘signs’, trends, and data could have been able to foresee the political future. In order to do that, it analyses Lebanese political, social, and economic situation as it appeared before the beginning of the dynamic that was going to compose the Political Independence Revolution according to the framework outlined in the last chapter. To express the point again: the analysis does not aim to show how the correct foreseeing could have been done by positioning itself in the time before it, but only to understand if the event could have been foreseen by a researcher that decided to employ the outlined framework.

Therefore, the analysis does not aim to sketch all features of that time Lebanese political, social, and economic situation. The exercise is not about history. The focus is much more on understanding if some ‘signs’ of the future were discernible; hence, to a certain extent, it consciously analyse the past according to the future. The analysis here is mostly about conditions, or ‘reasons’ without which the negative future cannot be anticipated, but it cannot be confined to them: conditions concern ‘proscribing’, and therefore the negative anticipation of the future, while ‘foreseeing’ requires to accommodate ‘predicting’ also. The resulting outline is consequently not obsessed with objectivity; on the contrary, it reclaims the subjective mediating role of the researcher, who is relatively free not only to define the analytical ‘borders’ of the Lebanese system, but also to choose the very facts, ‘signs’, and even data that, according to his/her knowledge and judgement, are the most likely to lead to foresee what was going to happen; in other words, to foresee the future. As suggested in chapter 3, this last part will therefore attempt to sketch Lebanese situation in 2004 at a

relatively general level, so to include all theoretical approaches and their related more specific theories, while at the same time looking for specific data or facts.

Preliminary, it is necessary to define the appropriate 'borders' of such an analysis. More precisely, the question concerns the 'nature' of Lebanon in August 2004 (from an analytical point of view) and whether its political system could have been analytically considered as delimited by the borders of the Lebanese state. If Lebanon could have been considered as a state at that time, no matter its character (for instance, weak or strong), then non-Lebanese agents, dynamics, and factors should have been placed on other analytical levels (international and sub-state), and therefore assessed according to the effects they had on agents, dynamics, and factors placed on the state level. In addition, the existence of a (sovereign) state is a pre-requisite to democracy (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 17-19) and, more in general, to any institutional, political, social, and economic arrangements.

On the contrary, if Lebanon could not have been considered as a state at the time, then the framework's analytical 'borders' needed to be modified; as a result, the political system to consider could have been 'smaller' than that delimited by the Lebanese state or, on the contrary, could have required to involve non-Lebanese agents, dynamics, and factors. The problem refers in fact firstly to the ability of the Lebanese state, as a government, to place itself as a mediator between the external and the internal; and, secondly, to the existence of a national identity.

By following the most minimal requirements, the modern state can be defined, legally, as formed by three elements: territory, a group of people living within that territory, and sovereignty. A bit more politically, it can be sketched as a political organization that, internally, "claim[s] [...] to monopolise the use of force" (Weber, 1964, 156) and is the only user of legitimate violence inside a defined territory while, externally, is recognized as such by the other states and a member of the 'international society' – Tilly (1975a, 70) provides a more internally focused definition: "an organisation which controls the population occupying a definite territory is a state in so far as *i*) it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; *ii*) it is autonomous; *iii*) it is centralized; and, *iv*) its divisions are formally coordinated with one another." However, for what Lebanon and this work's aims are concerned, it downplays a bit excessively the external profile of statehood, and elaborates un-necessarily its internal profile. Therefore, I will follow the five

criteria above to value whether Lebanon could be considered, analytically, as a modern state.

The first two of the above five elements do not appear particularly problematic. Lebanon was certainly a defined land with clear borders (with the partial exception of the Sheeba Farms, which are a contested territory), and the people living inside those borders generally accepted the Lebanese state. Sovereignty was a more doubtful case. Internally, Lebanon did not control all of its territory: firstly, members of two internal groups - Hezbollah and the Palestinians – had, even if not the formal right, the practical capacity to carry weapons in confined areas, and therefore they politically control some parts of Lebanese territory; and secondly, it was the Syrian army that assured stability and peace within the country.

Syrian ‘occupation’ appears a bit problematic from a formal point of view. From the one hand, the 1990 Agreement of Taëf and a handful of security and cooperation agreements where the two states are treated as separated and autonomous entities, the first of which signed in 1991, legitimated it. Yet, from the other hand, given the constitutional level of the ‘Document d’entente nationale’, the legal validity of those treaties depended on their accordance with it. By maintaining the Syrian army in Lebanon after the scheduled outlined in it, the cooperation agreements should have been considered as illegal – clearly, the legal quality of those agreements did not matter much, because the constraints imposed on the Constitutional Council, and the whole Syrian control of the political process and judiciary apparatus, prevented the issue to even be considered. However, even if one could have doubted the legal character of Syrian army presence in Lebanon, nobody could have argued that, as a matter of fact, its presence helped militia disarmament (Hezbollah excluded; the acceptance of Palestinian armies was confined to their camps) and it was the last guarantee of order.

Externally, Lebanon formally enjoyed the status of a state, but practically was not entitled to any autonomous foreign policy (both for an internal and external informal agreement). More in general, and concerning the fifth constitutive element of the state, Lebanon was very much characterised by the internal meddling of foreign states. In the whole Lebanese history, that appears to be more than an accidental feature: traditionally, internal communities enjoy particularly strong relationships with international states that ‘by-pass’ the state; as a result, the share of power they are entitled is internally recognised also according to their external support. It is in fact in base to relative power, jointly with other

criteria such as the communitarian relative demographic size, their historical importance, and their willingness to compromise or fighting, that the whole state apparatus is organised and 'split' among communities. The feature is so essential that a few commentators consider the Lebanese political system of communitarian coexistence as requiring a 'arbiter', in the sense of an outside power able to 'enforce' its decisions when required (for instance, the Ottoman Port, France, and Syria). The arbiter is necessary to maintain communitarian balance in equilibrium and help the political process to get moving when it gets blocked because of internal or external opposing vetoes (for instance, Ziadeh, 2006, 175). From another perspective, the meddling of external powers can upset the communitarian balance so easily that it can be suggested the state is 'structurally' not able to mediate between the internal and the external realm. On the other hand, and as a confirmation, a general agreement among regional and international powers not only helps Lebanese stability, but it is required by it. To put it a more bluntly, the existence of Lebanon as a state needs the international agreement and the according behaviour of outside powers. Without that agreement, Lebanon becomes a territory, and not a state; the very existence of Lebanon as a state is a function of external support to it as a state or, at least, of their acquiescence. Lebanon is, hence, a state of 'structurally suspended' sovereignty – a definition only highlighted by the fact that generally external powers were invited to intervene in Lebanon by the governments or, when not invited at least welcomed, by specific communities.

Hence, to sum up: in August 2004 Lebanon was, at best, a state of 'structurally suspended' sovereignty. As I said above, analytical primacy could be assigned to the state level only if it, as a 'government, is able to place itself as a mediator between the external and the internal. Such a mediating role is greatly helped by the support of the people (even if only during certain moments, when they are required to 'rally around the flag'), which is in turn greatly helped if they share a common (national) political identity. To express it very roughly: a modern state is such as long as people are willing to die for it. It is doubtful such was the case of Lebanese people.

From an identity point of view, Lebanese people could have been considered as sharing certain characteristics. For instance, Nassar (1984) a few years before had defined Lebanese political culture – and, therefore, identity - as Arabic, liberal, and pluralist. Despite the nice image, however, the primary identity was the communitarian (Azar, 1999). The presence in

Lebanon of eighteen recognized communities commanding primary loyalties was not a problem in itself; Lebanese individuals could have been sharing maybe not a 'civic national identity', but something that could be named as a 'communitarian national identity'. The former is (inclusive) group identity composed by commitments to the political creed of the nation; race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and language are not relevant in defining inclusion within the polity, because they are pushed downward civil society and removed from the political arena. On the contrary, in nations with a 'ethnic identity', participation to the polity is linked to some inherited characteristics (Smith, 1986). It could be therefore suggested that Lebanese national identity is peculiar because it is a shared understanding of it as a 'imagined community of communities'. However, against this idea it could be argued that all communities did not share such an image. In fact, Lebanese religious communities did, and still have, different political goals, diverse political myths, opposite understandings of the past, and hardly reconcilable expectations about the future. Also, even if their statuses are formally recognized as equal, they are not so in practice. To employ the probably clearest example, Jewish community does not hold much political power. And in more general terms, political power is shared by basically only four communities: Sunnis, Shiites, Maronites, and Druses. I will deal with the problem of Lebanese national identity later; here it is sufficient to regard the national bond as shaky.

To sum up, the recurrent weakness of central authority, the inability to control all Lebanese territory, the 'structurally suspended' sovereignty, Syrian occupation, the 'brother-state's' ability to control Lebanese internal political processes, the uncertainty concerning national identity, and some of the very features of Lebanese political organisation and processes could have strongly suggested the necessity to analytically not confine the framework to the 'borders' offered by the Lebanese state. In other words, Lebanon political system could not have been confined to Lebanese agents, dynamics, and factors, but it could have needed to include within its 'analytical borders' non-Lebanese agents, dynamics, and factors – such other states, such as Syria, the United States, France, Israel, Iran, the whole European Union, Saudi Arabia, and their meddling in Lebanon; the process of globalisation and the relationships among Lebanese agents and the diaspora communities; the new technologies, etc.

Therefore, in order to foresee political change, the Lebanese system should have been considered as composed by Lebanese and not-Lebanese agents, dynamics, and factors

belonging both on sub-state, regional, and international levels. These latter could have been at least as relevant as those placed on the state level. However, the Lebanese state is internationally recognised, and it actually exists, at least as a matter of fact. In addition, intra-Lebanese and non-Lebanese agents generally aim to control or influence the state. As a result, the place of the state (understood as ‘a system’) remained central.

Foreseeing political change in Lebanon, on the onset of August 2004, requires applying the general framework sketched in the previous chapter. The analysis will therefore outline the features of structures (economic, technological, and institutional), systems (‘logics’ of the political system and ‘points of conflict’ among cultural groups), and agents. As it was pointed out in chapter 3, macro-categories and categories are reciprocally inter-related, creating a multi-faceted web of relationships and influences. For this very reason, it is sometimes difficult to disentangle one category from its relationships with all the others. Economics, for instance, is shaped by punctual political decisions, and influence them, and they in turn shape and are shaped by social organisations, etc. Sometimes, it is almost impossible to present a category without its relationships to all the others. That said, it is time to attempt to sketch the categories’ features, as they could have appeared in August 2006.

In general terms, Lebanese economic structure is traditionally marked by the predominance of the sector of services, while agriculture and industry remain residual. For example, according to the 1999 *Rapport de la Délégation européenne au Liban*, which is based on 1995 data but offers a roughly valid idea for the following years, the service sector accounted for 61% of the GNP, while the primary and secondary sectors contributed to it for the 12.4% and 26% respectively (quoted in Coulibaly and Wtterwulghe, 2004, 110-111). Such a traditional characteristic is the result of a precise strategic choice, the ‘mercantilism’ advocated among others by Micheal China, one of the ‘fathers’ of the Republic. The strategic economic effort to establish Lebanon as the main financial and commercial regional mediator, and as the most likely financial hub from where capitals could move from East to West and vice versa, allowed a first period of relatively sustained economic growth, from the 1940s to 1975, which was destroyed by the fifteen years civil wars. The reconstruction aimed, first of all, to go back to the pre-wars situation by focusing on regaining its main economic ‘merchant’ role. However, if one had to judge the whole

Lebanese economic history, the choice, along with other factors and events, created a 'structurally unbalanced' economy, marked by four sources of disparities: firstly, by neglecting 'productive' or 'real economy' sectors, the traditional feature of agriculture, which is characterised by few large landowners that employ some modern techniques and a majority of small landowners and poor peasants, was maintained. Secondly, bank and commercial activities had grown at higher rates than other sectors, and their contribution to the Gross National Product (GNP) was markedly higher compared to that of other sectors. Thirdly, the concentration of services in Beirut (the 'Merchant City') had reinforced disparities among Lebanese regions and among communities. And, finally, even if it was starting to create a large middle class - according to Labaki (1987), disparities between socio-economic strata started to diminish in the early 1960s -, the war and the 'mercantilist' economic policy followed since its aftermath had polarized the distribution of wealth between a larger and growing low income group (61.9% in 1999) and a smaller middle income group (29.3% in 1999) (Nasr, 2002, 155).

The above disparities, especially among sectors and territory, were to a certain point due to long terms trends (Blanc, 2005-2006, 118-125), to existing social structures and actors' predominance (for instance, large landowners economic and political power began before the creation of the Republic), and to conjunctural events out of reach or not well controlled by the Lebanese governments (for two examples, Israeli occupation in the South pursued the advantage of Israeli agricultural goods and destroyed Lebanese production, and the Cooperation Agreement with the European Union exposed Lebanese goods to more competitive goods). Yet, mostly, disparities had been determined by political decisions, which of course were heavily influenced by the communitarian political game. It can be useful to quickly outline the three different general periods of Lebanese economic policies, because 2004 (and today's) Lebanese economy was (is) very much marked by a stratification of political economy policy courses.

After an agricultural and manufacturing period (based on production of silk goods for meeting European demand) centred on the Mountain during the eighteen-century, which modified communities relationships and Lebanese political and social structure (Firro, 1990), from the 1940s onwards Lebanon was able to establish itself as the main financial and commercial mediator of the Arab Middle East. Beirut was the main beneficiary of such a choice; to put it a bit more strongly, from then onwards, Lebanese economy is mainly



Beirut's economy. Such a strategic economic choice allowed a period of sustained growth (from 1950 to 1972, real GNP grew at an average ratio of more than 5%, with a positive payment balance, because the surplus of the balance of services and capitals compensated the commercial deficit), helped by the in-flowing in of external capitals coming from Arab Middle Eastern states – in the region, that period was regionally marked, in fact, by the establishments of 'socialist' regimes, for instance in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, which resulted in capital out-flowing that found their first safety gate in Beirut's banks. The Lebanese currency remained stable, and inflation was maintained low. State intervention was quite limited, basically confined to building the necessary physical infrastructures, to providing the juridical and institutional framework, to pursuing the some productive activities, and to operating some minimal capital transfers. More in general, the general framework was liberal oriented: freedom of production, prices and exchanges were limited only by the objective of maintaining a general economic equilibrium. The Central Bank, established in 1963, followed monetary policies, in particular for fixing interest rates and managing exchange rates, based on following market mechanisms.

With the starting of the 1975-1990 civil wars, Lebanese economy lost its principal function, its '*raison d'être*'. Especially after 1984, when the situation started to strongly deteriorate and the war touched the whole territory, it unbalanced Lebanon's general economic equilibrium, destroyed its productive capacity, and experienced an exodus of its labour force and capitals - for a few data: during the period, 3% of the population was killed, 2% displaced, and 28% emigrated; physical capital losses are estimated between 10-12 billions US dollars, and losses in income at more than 50 billions. Downtown Beirut, Lebanon's economic heart, was shattered, and economic activities moved firstly towards the safest regions of the country, and then abroad. Real GNP regressed, investments within the country practically stopped, with the two exceptions of militia support and remittances, which helped avoid economic collapse. However, public debt rose to the unprecedented level of 2 billion US dollar between 1988 and 1990, and kept augmenting, inflation initially rose and after 1986 degenerated, and the Lebanese lira strongly depreciated (Labaki, 1995).

The third period was marked by the attempt to go back to the ('good old') pre-wars times. After 1990, and particularly after 1992 with Hariri's arrival to the Government, the reconstruction effort started; it aimed to bring back Lebanon to the pre-wars situation and to recover its place as the principal Arab Middle East financial hub. The policy pursued was

based on a double estimate: that Lebanon could have been able to quickly regain its financial role, and that the region was on the onset on a future general peace. This economic policy required enormous public expenses (and the effect was felt in the public deficit, which augmented sharply), and concentrated in Beirut, because of the necessity to reconstruct Downtown Beirut, the country's financial heart, as quickly as possible. A spill over effect on constructions and other sectors related to public expenses was felt, but the other economic sectors did not receive any attention. Fiscal policy was characterised by a strong liberalism, with indirect taxes substituting direct taxes (and this latter were marked by very low progressive ratios) and basically no business taxation. Monetary policy focused on safeguarding national currency and stabilising its exchange rate with international currencies. As a result, inflation was reduced and the Lebanese lira slowly started a process of appreciation. In general terms, the policy produced a first period of high economic growth (till 1996) which slowed down afterward afterwards (1996 – 1998), and stopped from that year onwards. The problem was that the gamble had not paid off: Lebanon was not able to gain back its financial role as soon as expected, and the region did not experience the anticipated general peace. As a result, the high state deficit constrained general financing, because a large share of it was needed by the state in order to maintain refinancing the debt, and interest rates grew up (35% in 1995), making financing more expensive for privates and limiting growth and employment level. The results were relatively high unemployment of unskilled labour (coupled with the competition of cheap immigration labour – Syrian, Palestinian, and Asian) and emigration, especially of young and qualified people (see Kasparian, 2003). In a nutshell, without the fulfilment of the two conditions on which the sustainability of the policy was based on, expenditures became too high, and 'strangled' Lebanese economy. After 1998, economic growth basically stopped, while the public debt and the budget deficit kept growing, resulting in a related growth of unemployment and emigration. The "*bilan économique désastreux*" (Corm, 2005, 146-265) and the deteriorating economic results suggested a new economic policy, which aimed to redefine the economic role of the state and it can be summarised by the slogan "*moins d'Etat*" (Gemayel, 2004, 105). In other terms, the new policy tried to reduce social service employment level, cut public expenditures, and start some privatisation programmes. The result was that, in spite a very high debt, high public expenditures, and high budget deficit (respectively, more than 150%, circa 40%, and 20% of GNP), economic institutions became virtually non-existent and the state sector accounted for less than the 10% of the

GNP. The privatisations did not bring the expected results: their positive contribution to the state deficit was only roughly more than one year of public debt growth. In 2000, general elections ousted Sélim Hoss government, and a President was not even able to win a parliamentary seat for the first time in Lebanese history; the West, Saudi Arabia, and Syrian-backed Hariri is reinstalled as President of the Council of Ministers. Economic policy was back to the framework pre-1998 but this time no 'Hariri-effect' was felt, as it had been the case after 1992, and the economy entered in a recession. For a few general data on the slowdown of Lebanese economy during the 1990s, from 1995 and 2001 total annual expenditure practically doubled (98.67%), annual revenue rose by 50% (precisely, 48.37%), total annual deficit rose by 144.78%, primary annual deficit rose by 129.32%, and the annual debt service rose by 256.68% (Labaki, 2003, 189). Two conferences, called 'Paris I' (2001) and 'Paris II' (2002) gathered external support and bankrupt was avoided. However, situation did not get any better. In a nutshell, in spite of a relevant reconstruction effort, *"la crise économique due à la mauvaise gestion publique, monétaire et financière, a annulé les effets à court et moyen terme de la reconstruction, a freiné la croissance, et a fait que les Libanais ont repris le chemin de l'émigration"* (Labaki, 2002, 122).

As everywhere, even in Lebanon economy is very much tied to politics and to society. For this reason, data that could be very important for understanding political trends, such as those of economic performances and general economic situation according to intra-communitarian strata, are not available or hardly beyond question. Inter-communitarian equilibrium is due to a shared agreement based on relative power: official collection of data about communities is 'discouraged', because they could generate social and political demands that could potentially threaten coexistence. However, it is possible to indirectly gather some indications from the available and relatively reliable data. For instance, the last United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) available country report about Lebanon, named *Globalization: Towards a Lebanese Agenda*, which is dated 2002, offers some interesting insights by calculating the Human Development Index (HDI) within each *mohafazats* (governorates). Beirut and Mount Lebanon show a higher HDI (both 0.74) than the overall data (0.71), while the North (0.64), the South (0.68), Nabatieh and the Bekaa (both 0.66) remain below. The same can be said about poverty indexes, which range from the 14.3 in the North to the 6.3 in Beirut. However, the most interesting indications of the existing relationship between communitarian political game and society, and communitarian access to state power, is offered by the subjective evaluation of family's

basic needs fulfilment satisfaction. These data are in fact recorded at *caza* (district) level, while HDI is not; because smaller, some districts are more communitarian homogenous than the regions they are located in. These data record subjective satisfaction, and therefore they can just offer a hint of the level of state services and available economic opportunities. According to the country report, the districts of Akkar and Miniyé (North), Hermel (Bekaa), Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun (South) look considerably neglected and economically weak, because the percentage of unsatisfied families range from 60 to 70%. These *cazas* are indeed relatively communitarian homogenous: there is a strong Shiite majority in Hermel, Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun, and a strong Sunni predominance in Akkar and Miniyé, even if other communities, namely Christians, are present, especially in Marjayoun and Akkar. Pierre Blanc (2005-2006, 117-118) points out that this dissatisfaction could partially help explain the presence of Sunni radical Islamists (a presence particularly felt from December 2000 and January 2001, when some clashes between Islamist and Lebanese army broke out) in the *caza* of Miniyé, and the support Hezbollah receives in the South and in the Bekaa. Other data, such those on commercial banks and ATM geographical distribution reinforce the general impression (Ayoub, 2005-2006, 131-144).

To sum up, because of its political economic history, Lebanese economy is characterised by some unbalances, which are very much related to political decisions and existing social structures, which in turn shape it (Nasr, 2003, 143-158). The neglect of agriculture is not just an accident of history, but it is the result of the role played by large landowners within the political decision-making: any attention to the primary sector is likely of resulting in supporting small landowners and requiring a certain land redistribution. In the present situation, large landowners receive their political power from their social and economic status, and therefore have no interest in raising the sector's efficiency. The economic falling of Northern Sunni *cazas* after the end of the 1975-1990 wars is related to predominance of the Beirut and Sidon-based Hariri. The map of post-wars reconstruction expenditures across regions – which, from 1992 to 1998, shows a 54% of national projects, but a concentration of 27% of regional projects in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, 28% of which not implemented, against a for instance 5% in the Bekaa, 84.7% of which not implemented (Nasr, 2003, 154) – reinforces the idea. Other examples could be offered, but the point should be clear: the 'Merchant Republic' has advantaged some regions and not others, also because of the stake in power enjoyed by each community or family, therefore reinforcing cleavages and differences in expectations, interests, and perceptions among communities.

Social and economic cleavages are reproduced on allocation of technological knowledge. To recall what proposed in the previous chapters, available technologic shape and it is shaped by society, politics and economy; most importantly, its distribution across the territory and society can influence socialisation and therefore political change. However, technology shapes also identity. In general terms, the process of modernisation and the adoption of some technological devices enabling communication exchange, is supposed to create a modern or post-modern identity (for instance, Giddens, 1991), which on an aggregate level is more conducive to civic political culture and therefore democracy (the classic is still Almond and Verba, 1963). It could be useful, therefore, to understand if Lebanese technological level and allocation could have suggested the establishing of such an identity. Unfortunately, there are no univocal indications that Lebanese technological level was, on the onset of the Independence Political Revolution, creating a new social group characterised by a 'post-modern' identity.

For instance, the section of the UNDP *Arab Human Development Report 2003* that focuses on level of 'knowledge capital' in Arab countries as calculated through a series of indicators (ratios daily newspaper/people, radio ownership/people, number of cellular mobiles/people, internet access/people, scientist and engineers devoted to Research and Development/people, etc.), does not address Lebanon. However, Lebanese primary, secondary and tertiary education levels are slightly above average, in comparison to other Arab countries (UNDP, 2003a; see also UNDP, 2003b). A more focused study has been offered by the 2003 eReadiness Assessment, an enquiry undertaken by the Lebanese Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform and the UNDP in order to frame the governmental e-strategy for the following years. According this report, the digital divide run between rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated, and capital city and other areas – of course, being a governmental study, it did not address the communitarian divide.

The assessment's results were mixed: firstly, basic infrastructures were adequate but not those for broadband communication; secondly, there existed a good internet penetration compared to other Arab countries but not enough for 'bridging the digital divide'; thirdly, there was a bad high-technology governmental performance; fourthly, it existed a gap in the capacity of private and public education to offer high-technology knowledge and, more in general, a lack in formal training of high-technology sectors, which was also particularly

affected by brain-drain (for instance, in 1999, 70% of computer science graduates had left Lebanon); finally, the number of high-level research institutions was low. According to the same report, in 1999 23% of the Lebanese used computers at home, at work or in school, and in the 14% of households there was a computer. Of those using a computer, one third claimed that their computer literacy was good, 50% that it was average and the rest that it was poor. The proportion of computer users fell with age (from the 40% of those aged 15-24 years to the 10% of those aged 45 years or older) and rose with the level of education (1% of those with elementary degree and below used computers against the 62% of university graduates). Concerning Internet, the assessment report remarked Lebanese society had not totally adopted it, considering it as a 'tool' – Internet did not form part of Lebanese social fabric. However, its usage was growing. Confirming it, Al-Zubaidi (2004, 64) reported that the number of Internet users in 1998 had been estimated at 25.000; only four years later, in 2002, it had raised to 300.000. The increase is remarkable, according to her, because it means that Lebanese Internet users were the 15% of the overall population, which is a very high compared to the Middle East as a whole. The 2003 eReadiness Assessment's final overall comment was that Lebanon was "still far from being a knowledge society. Society is still involved with other problems that need to be addressed before the Internet can be used to resolve such problems such as education, health, environment, poverty, etc." (OMSAR and UNDP, 2003, 69). The Index of technological progress calculated by The World Bank, which is composed of indicators based on numbers of owned televisions, photocopies, computers, Internet users, and mobiles per people, reinforce that conclusion: in 1998, Lebanon appeared to be at the 45<sup>th</sup> place, below Western and rich Gulf countries but above other Middle Eastern countries (Saidi, 2004, 183).

In general terms, in 2004 Lebanon appeared to be relatively technologically advanced compared to other Middle Eastern countries (but below the small and rich Gulf countries), but there was not much to suggest technology level and its diffusion were enough to indicate a process of post-modern identity formation. There were other factors that could be arguably used to propose the creation of a 'post-modern' social identity but technology in itself was probably not - even if some tools, such for instance radio and television channels were widespread.

Institutionally, Lebanon is a parliamentary Republic that was created under France supervision in 1920 (the 'Grand Liban'), and gained independence in 1943. Even if a Constitution - inspired by Ottoman constitutional and governmental practices, French III Republic Constitution, and Lebanese governmental practices - was promulgated in 1926, Lebanese 'material constitution' had been more marked by a 1943 un-written covenant, named National Pact, and by the 1990 Taëf Agreement, which signature anticipated the end of the 1975-1990 civil wars. Formally, in 2004 the state apparatus appeared not different from that of any other constitutional parliamentary democratic mono-cameral unitary regime organised according to the principle of division of powers. Legislative power was located in the Parliament, whose members represented the country as a whole, while governmental power was concentrated in the Government and its bureaucratic apparatus. The Government was controlled by the Parliament through a confidence mechanism, while the President of the Republic held mainly honorific prerogatives (such as being formally the head of the Army, which however responded to the Government) and represented the unity of the country. The Army was subject to political control, state administration was divided according to competence criteria, judiciary power was formally independent and headed by the Constitutional Council, which was entitled to judge laws according to constitutional criteria, etc. If that was the formal institutional structure at first glance, things could have appeared differently if one decided to look a bit closer.

First of all, there were three institutional features that had an essential impact of the Lebanese political, social, and economic systems: firstly, 'historical communities' were recognised as autonomous in deciding their own organisation; secondly, in order to guarantee their members' religious freedom, they were recognised a juridical and legislative right on matters of '*statute personnel*', which constituted '*des parcelles de souveraineté*' (Rondot, 1979, 62-63); and, finally, the whole political and institutional state were constructed on a principle of communitarian power-sharing. Shortly, the whole social and political system was centred on 'historical communities'; as a consequence, its internal dynamics were specific. Their relationship to the state was complex, and also individual for each community, but they were part of the institutional structure of the state; not only, from many points of views they 'composed' the state, while at the same time they were able to remain outside its reach, 'pre-existing it'.

It was not easy to define what communities were - they have been defined as potential nations, ethnic groups, religions, sects, simple groups, minorities, religion-cultures, etc.; Salibi (1992, 39-51) recalled an American anthropologist calling Lebanese communities as 'clepts', in other words a combination of clan and sect that was kept together by communal 'non-volitional group identification, or *'asabiyya'* - 'clepts' flourished on 'tribal paranoia', being able to make their members feel equal, while the Lebanese state, organised according to the three major and not representing all communities equally, did not. In general, a 'historical community' could have been defined as a group of people who shared certain 'cultural' characteristics and it was recognised by the state according to some criteria, among which the far more important one is religious. Legally, 'historical communities' enjoyed a status of *'personnes morales de droit public'*, and were therefore part of the state and subject to its jurisdiction. Their very existence, and the basic rules on the Lebanese political system, pre-existed the 1920 creation of the state of Grand Liban. In fact, they originated in the 1845 Code of Sheik Effendi that instituted a council composed by a certain number of representatives for each community. After the Code, a plurality of legislative texts composed the legal web that placed communities at the very centre of Lebanese political system: the 1856 Hatti Homayoun of Gulhané that constituted the juridical chart of Christians living in the Ottoman Empire; the 1861 *Reglement Organique* and the institution of the *Medjliss* (or Council composed by representatives of each community); the 1876 Ottoman Constitution and its granting of equal status between non-Muslims and Muslims; the 1920 creation of Grand Liban and its institutive recognition of the existing communities; the 1926 Constitution and its articles 9, 10, and 95 (this latter later modified according to the 1990 Agreement of Taëf) concerning respectively freedom of belief and personal statutes, legislative communitarian rights concerning education, and communitarian proportional representation in the administration and ministries; the National Pact, which reserved the Presidency of the Republic to a Maronite and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to a Sunni, and fixed the proportion between Members of the Parliament to six Christians and five Muslims (proportion that was modified by Taëf in order to reach parity); and, finally, a number of laws concerning the state recognition of the 'historical communities' and their internal organisation: the *Arretés* of the 1936, 1938, 1955, 1967, 1962, and 1967 (Khair, 2003).

The 1990 Agreement of Taëf represents the latest Lebanese social contract among communities (it started the so-called 'Second Republic'), and therefore its brief analysis



could be useful to understand the Lebanese institutional structure, as entangled with its political and social systems. As everywhere, in Lebanon formal institutions are shaped by groups' concerns. I will outline Agreement of Taëf's features, while at the same time sketching how its dispositions have been implemented, or not, during the fourteen years passed from its signature (in other words, till 2004). At the same time, I will relate the institutional structure to social and political 'systemic' features in order to introduce the next, 'systemic', analytical level.

The 'material' institutional situation in August 2004 looked markedly different from the Lebanese formal arrangement, as modified by the dispositions introduced by the Agreement. A few dispositions were not implemented; others were given a new meaning by practice. In a book published in 2004 (Salam, 2004a), some prestigious Lebanese scholars addressed the, to their understandings, major problems Lebanon was facing. In the Preface, the editor hoped the book could help "overcome the multi-faceted political, economic, social crisis that continue to engulf Lebanon nearly fifteen years after the conclusion of the Taif agreement in 1989. Though remarkable in ending the cycles of violence that had ravaged this country since 1975, Taif dramatically failed to put Lebanon on the track of State-building". And a few lines below he pointed out that "with their growing disenchantment and frustration with the Taif process, large segments of the Lebanese people are increasingly feeling powerless and dismayed. [...] Politics in Lebanon [...] is] still dominated by parochial concerns and sectarian interests" (Salam, 2004b, xi).

However, and firstly, Taëf tried to solve the identity ambiguity of the 1943 National Pact by declaring Lebanon a "final homeland for all its sons" and by confirming its "Arab identity and affiliation". In a nutshell, Muslims were supposed to accept the final status of Lebanon as their final and not transitory homeland, while Christians were presumed to recognise the Lebanese state as tied to an undefined but common Arab destiny. However, the Agreement was not able to completely solve the ambiguity. The National Pact had been based on the two renounces expressed by the formula 'Neither West nor East', which was properly commented by L'Orient journalist Georges Nacchache with the sentence 'two negations do not make a nation'. Or, to see the other and bright side of it, it had represented the basement of a power-sharing system centred on the principle-slogan 'no victor – no vanquished'. The two interpretations represent the bulk of the two more

widespread models that have been proposed in order to explain the Lebanese political system: a consensual democracy or a polyarchy – I will briefly deal with both below.

However, it should be noted that the expression ‘national pact’ hid a contradiction: the ‘national pact’ was not a ‘social contract’, as the phrase aimed to suggest. The ‘national’ wanted to mean that the Lebanese people, by signing the pact, had agreed on creating a nation, on which the state could be based on. The ‘pact’ referred to the notion of contract, and therefore nationalist ideology pictured it as a ‘social contract’, consciously hiding the fact that it was not a contract among people, but one among communities and, more precisely, between the Sunni and Maronite communities. The National Pact was a bi-communitarian contract that, considering the communitarian plurality, could actually be more correct to describe as a hegemonic alliance (similar to international ones). Of course, contracts among groups can be one of the ways, and historically the most likely, by which a federal state can be created. Yet, in federal states people participate to the state as individuals, and not as communities. The case of multi-national state is similar – the recognition of a nation within a state determines specific rights that are nonetheless secondary to those derived by citizenship. In Lebanon it is the contrary: communities grant access to society and politics, limit individual careers and shape self-categorisation. The National Pact, as a constitutional agreement, provided the basement for the whole construction of the state. The state *summa divisio* among communities was in fact between Muslims and Christians: the Arrêté n. 60 L.R. of 13 March 1936 - the first text of the Republic recognising the social structure of Lebanon by naming the recognised communities, where they are called “*communauté historiques légalement reconnues, en tant que communautés à statut personnel*” (art. 1) - was organised as the social structure of the state was characterised by two communities facing one another. The leftover communities were forced within the *summa divisio* by its ‘pyramidal taxonomy’: Christians are therefore geometrically divided between Orientals and Romans, and so on going down the pyramid (Basile, 1993, 111); as a result, for instance, Druzes were forced into the Muslim category. The principal criterion of distinction among communities was religious (but others, residual, can be found). In any case, Lebanese citizens were assigned, at their birth, a religious identity according to the confession of their parents, which was signed in the civil registry. They could change it at the reaching of adulthood, but as a result of a religious conversion. Thanks to such a legal organisation, communities became the ‘hearts’ of the political system, and the main source of identity.

While, institutionally, federalism was ‘engineered’, as a political construction, in order to ‘cut vertically and horizontally’ any sort of power to safeguard individual freedom (and leadership autonomy in deciding policies), Lebanese communitarianism was thought to preserve (unequal) communities power, and specifically the power of communitarian elites (Picard, 2002, 70). As far as the National Pact had been a bi-communitarian pact, Taëf represented a tri-communitarian pact or, according to some, a bi-communal pact between the Shiite and Sunni communities with a Maronite acceptance.

However, the eighty years existence of the state, and its policies, had resulted in a growth of a national identity. 1996 Muhammad Faour’s survey (1998, 143-149), which focused on university students, showed a growth in individualism, and a decline in acceptance of authoritarianism, which allowed him to argue about the presence of the emergence of a Lebanese post-modern identity. However, individualism and low acceptance of authoritarianism co-existed with a strong familiar affiliation, even if intra-familiar relationships had changed (in a trend he judged “robust and irreversible”) towards a ‘more democratic’ pattern. For what national identity was concerned, “for the first time in Lebanon’s history, a majority of young Lebanese from various sects unequivocally subscribes to Lebanese nationalism.” However, national allegiance was mediated by familiar and communitarian identity: 66% of the interviewed indicated they were “strongly attached” to their community and a similar 66% preferred to marry a person belonging to the same community. On the other hand, a vast majority indicated they wished to see Lebanon as a secular state - in the sense that appointments to public positions should have been based on qualifications instead of religious affiliations. Similarly, a growing number (compared to older generations) of youth wished the introduction of civil marriage.

In general, the survey showed a trend of reduction in the primacy of communitarian social identity: for an example, a 1988 survey also covering university students from all Lebanese universities proved that, when asked about the religious background (as I pointed out above, communities are defined mainly according to the religion criteria) of their best friend, an overwhelming majority of the interviewed, which belonged to all religions, indicated that their best friend belonged to the same religion, with percentages averaging 90% (Khashan, 1992). The two identities were not incompatible, socially creating a ‘hybrid structure’ characterised by the division between the ‘traditional communitarian groupings’ and the civil society (Chaoul, 2005, 90). However, whatever the relationships between the

two at the social level, politically it was communitarian identity that mediated national identity.

In fact, and secondly, Taëf accepted the communities as the basic units of the system and, actually, augmented their constitutional legitimacy – the article j of the preamble reads: “constitutional legitimacy shall not be extended to any authority that contradicts the pact of coexistence”). In addition, it renovated the communitarian social contract and indirectly redefined the communitarian power-sharing by aiming to a more equitable communitarian representation – for instance, it established proportional parity between Muslims and Christians. In a nutshell, Taëf renewed the communitarian political game by updating its rules. However, on the other hand and paradoxically, almost schizophrenically, it planned the abolition of communitarianism by binding the first Parliament to create a competent committee but without setting its agenda and time frame – an implicit way to postpone the issue indefinitely. Accordingly, it established electoral district in the *mohafazats* or governorates, larger than *casas* and more communitarily mixed. In 2004, both of these latter dispositions had not been implemented.

In base to the new rules, the executive power was moved from the Presidency of the Republic to become firmly grounded in the Council of Ministers, which was thought to be a collegial body; there, communities were to be “represented in an equitable manner” (‘new’ art. 95, as emended after the Agreement of Taëf). The legal quorum of the Council was set to two-thirds of the ministries, its decisions were to be adopted by consensus, and only if consensus could not be reached the Council could decide by a simple majority; however, one third of ministers enjoy a veto power on some ‘fundamental issues’ (art. 65).

More in general, Taëf changed the balance among powers, and communitarian access to state decision-making. The President of the Republic, formerly the locus of executive power and compulsorily a Maronite, was basically stripped off his political prerogatives while maintaining only some limited political powers, such as being able to force Parliament and Council of Ministers to reconsider their decisions, and designating the President of the Council of Ministers; however, he did not enjoy a final veto power (but, if the President vetoed a bill, the Parliament would have needed an absolute majority to reconfirm it). In a nutshell, he became a representative head of the state. Even if the Council of Ministers was a collegial body, the power of President of the Council of Ministers, compulsorily a Sunni, was enhanced because some of his/her previously

traditional prerogatives were granted constitutional force; also, he/she set the agenda of the Council and was responsible for implementing its decisions (art. 64). The President of the Republic could assist to the meeting of the Council, but did not vote. The position of the President of the Parliament, traditionally a Shiite, was enhanced as well, and arguably more considerably. On the one hand, he was granted a relatively strong stability, in his/her four years mandate, and he/she enjoyed considerable powers in setting the Parliament agenda and leading its works. On the other hand, the Parliament was reinforced – the Council of Ministers was controlled by the Parliament through the confidence, but the former institution could not dissolve the latter – except in only four unlikely circumstances (see art. 77). In a nutshell, the predominance of the executive over the legislative was reversed in favour of the latter (Salam, 2003, 39-47).

Finally, Taëf attempted to strengthen the state, by reinforcing its division of powers, and sovereignty. On the one hand, it focused on improving the independence of the judiciary, to enhance administrative decentralisation, and to create a Constitutional Council and a Socio-Economic Council. On the other hand, it set a time-table for Syrian forces withdrawal while, as usual paradoxically, granted to it a constitutional legitimacy. Indeed till Taëf, Syrian presence in Lebanon was doubtless illegal (Maïla, 1990, 203).

To sum up the meaning of Taëf, it is reasonable to argue that it has *“jeté les fondements d’un pouvoir communautaire collégial. Or, en pratique, le régime politique libanais prend de plus en plus la configuration d’une polyarchie communautaire institutionnalisée. [...] Le communitarisme qui, à la base, est principe de répartition et de circulation du pouvoir dans les sociétés multiconfessionnelles devient facteur de blocage lorsque la dévolution institutionnelle des pouvoirs n’obéit qu’aux seules finalités de l’appropriation communautaire”*. The constitutional practice that characterised the post-Taëf period, the prominence of the so-called ‘Troika’, in other words the necessity of a consensual power-sharing among the three President (of the Republic, of the Council of Ministers, and of the Parliament), who became the institutional political leaders of their communities understood as pyramidal organisations, was maybe a violation of the constitutional law. However, it appeared to be the logical correction that the communitarian system brought to the constitutional system, due to the predominance of the communitarian principle of power-sharing over that of separation of powers (Maïla, 2002, 65-66). From this perspective, Syrian hegemony and its mediation were required by the system because impasses could happen, and actually happened quite frequently.

The Taëf's institutional setting of the Lebanese system was not the only factor that enhanced communitarian power. More in general, Lebanon had long witnessed a more general trend of 'communitarianisation', reinforced by the 1975-1990 civil wars and still strong fifteen years later, which produced institutional practices and led to Taëf interpretation, and partial implementation. According to Ahmad Beydoun (2004) the historic role of the Maronites "as an organized community had already been adopted long before the war by all partners in Lebanon as being the ideal type of organization", as shown by the pre-wars Shi'ite 'communitarianisation'. However, the Lebanese 'cantonisation', experienced during the fifteen years wars, was almost reabsorbed, but the multi-faceted general trend continued: firstly, in the reinforcement of the influence of religious authorities, or in the granting to religious people key-positions especially in the educational field, thanks also to superior material resources; secondly, in the weakening of some social factors that had traditionally compensated the communitarian character of the country, such as the reduction of mixed residential areas, the 'ghettoisation' of several institutions and public services, and the decentralisation of commercial markets; all resulting in curtailing the contacts between Lebanese of different communities (UNDP, 1998); thirdly, the confirmation of the rural bias in the Lebanese electoral system (cities' residents go back to their original village in order to vote), which turned cities to their origins; and, finally, the multiplication of communitarian practices, resulting in a reduction of the number of fairly public spaces.

The electoral system played an important role. According to Abdo Saad (2005-2006, 114), it was in fact the "*systeme electorale actuel qui a permis de cultiver et de perpétuer la classe Zu'aama*" (traditional notables and landlords following personal and communitarian interests). The majority system had been applied to Lebanon continually since the establishment of the Republic in 1920; its reforms had dealt with the size of electoral districts – generally by choosing between *caza* (district) or *mohafaza* (governorate), or by combining the two - and the number of seats in it, but without touching the bulk of the system. It is not necessary to outline the peculiar features of Lebanese electoral system, which is used just in a handful of other countries (I have sketched it in the first chapter); it should suffice to recall the opinion of Nawaf Salam (2004c, 1-15). According to him, the general shortcoming with its Lebanese formulation is that higher the numbers of candidates, lesser votes are necessary in order to win a parliamentary seat – of course this is a general characteristic of majority systems. However, when the majority system is associated to the adoption of small

districts, and “parties are absent or are very weak, as in Lebanon, traditional leaderships get favoured under such a system because the relationship of clientelism between candidates and their electorate tends to prevail over political principles. [... such a system] further leads to the precedence of sectarian and local interests over national issues and the considerations of public interests”. The effect of the majority system as applied in Lebanon was factionalism, not only communitarian (some candidates, despite obtaining more votes than those that went to elect some of the winners in the same district, could have failed to obtain a parliamentary seat only because they belonged to a sect different than their own), but also familiar, when the family, which belongs to a community, is territorially localised as it is generally the case in Lebanon. Data are quite clear: only considering kinship ties among members of the Parliament, in fifty years, from 1920-1972, 28% of all parliamentary representatives were unrelated to other parliamentarians, while 62% of them have had some kinship attachments to other past or present Members of the Parliament. Taëf did not change the system. There had been some new families entering in the system, such as the Hariris, but this was not a novelty - for instance, the Gemayels entered in the Parliament during the 1960s). However, accession to power by new families did not mean a change in a system where “virtually all the prominent political families manage to [...] perpetuate their re-election into the parliament” (Khalaf, 2003, 117-126).

The centrality of communities, and factions, in the Lebanese political system determined more general effects, and the not implementation of certain dispositions of the Agreement. Judiciary power was formally independent. Yet, practically, it was not. The head of the Higher Council of the Judiciary, Chief Justice Nasri Lahoud, only days after retirement from office, pointed out that “the independence of the judiciary in Lebanon is a mere illusion since the latter is not more than another administration open to the interference of politicians” (quoted in Suleiman Takieddine, 2004, 23). In fact, the judiciary was subject to communitarian quotas, and therefore to their influence (Takieddine, 2004, 23-49).

Political parties, at least the influential ones, were expressions of communities and/or families. Yet, their relationship was a complex one. On the one hand, institutionally communities were independent from parties; in general, political personnel were not involved in the governmental institutions of the communities. On the other hand, communitarian ‘policy-makers’ did not enjoy a formal political role – with the exception of the Maronite Patriarch, who politically represented the Maronites when abroad. Political parties were mediators:

firstly, between the state and the communities, they reformulated communitarian issues in a modern political language and, as an exchange, received political legitimisation; and, secondly, or from another perspective, between modernity and traditionalism. According to Nadim Souraty (2002), this role structurally brought parties to embody communitarian fears and research of guaranteeing survivals, pushing them a search for a political research of controlling the state, which was a search of hegemony. From this perspective then, militias did not represent a 'historical accident', but the logical outcome of an embodied tension. The tension, and the fear of centrifugal tendencies, was expressed also in the refusal of territorial federalism. Despite the dispositions included in Taëf, 'decentralisation' was not strengthened, resolving in a mere bureaucratic 'decongestion'.

On the other hand, the centrality of parties and communities within the Lebanese political and social systems concerned identity shaping. Firstly, communitarian intervention in education strengthened inter-communitarian divide, transmitting different values according to those of each community (Khalifé, 2005-2006), especially in teaching different histories.

Secondly, the control of media was firmly communitarian. I have addressed above the diffusion of technological devices in order to understand whether it could account for a formation of a post-modern identity. However, political identity can be influenced by the contents proposed by some technological tools; maybe better, identities are more directly shaped by the contents proposed by technological devices, which are tools that can assure social conforming behaviour and propose models and goals. Lebanese mass media – radio, newspaper, broadcasting channels – reinforced communitarian bonds, allegiances, and identities while, on the contrary, being tied to market mechanisms, they proposed certain more individualistic social values. Their very story reflects this ambivalence, which requires them to propose certain values and political ideas while having the goal of reaching the largest public. Of course, Lebanese liberal tradition of free press and freethinking is well known, and remarkable when confronted with other Middle East state. The role Lebanon has played as safe 'heaven' for Middle Eastern intellectuals, and as a forerunner for new ideas, was certainly well established - even if some legislative measures, under Hariri's governments, had introduced state control on ownerships, and a certain limitation of contents and freedom of expression, not anymore absolute; also, some episodes of governmental control of expression should be mentioned, the most critiqued of all being arguably to stop Murr Television (MTV) from broadcasting on 4 September 2004.



However, similarly as the printing press had started in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a competition among American Protestant missionaries, Catholics (Jesuit and Maronite) and Greek Orthodox, which had contributed to both improve literacy rates and communitarian bonds, in 2004 radio stations, newspapers and broadcasting companies were very much related to communities and to the most important politicians.

It is true that Lebanese television is unique in the Arab world since it was developed out of private initiative (Al-Zubaidi, 2004, 65). Yet, on the other hand, in 2004 there was almost no important community or politicians without a stake in a radio or broadcasting company. The example of television channels should suffice: excluding the state owned Télé-Liban, which was influenced by the state apparatus but it did not enjoy a relevant share anymore, the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) was close to the Lebanese Forces; Future TV was owned by the Hariri family; National Broadcasting Network (NBN) was owned by the Speaker of the Parliament Berri and represented Amal's positions; and Al Manar was direct expression of Hezbollah. The political game, and the political interests and conflicts raised by broadcasting channels was shown by the history of two relatively minor televisions: New TeleVison (NTV), founded by the Parti Communiste Libanais (PCL) and then bought by Mr. Tahsin Khayat, who continued its tradition of opposition to any form of political and economic power (including Hariri's and Syria's) had routinely experienced censorship, bans, and so on, till being forced to suspend all its political and informative programs on 16 December 2003. Similarly, Murr Television (MTV), partially owned by Gabriel el-Murr and representing the Greek-Orthodox, was stopped from broadcasting on 4 September 2004, because allegedly guilty of attempting to destabilise Lebanese-Syrian relationships, of attack to the dignity of the President of the Republic Emile Lahoud, and of broadcasting illegal electoral propaganda. The result was that expressed by Lama El-Moghrabi Dargouth (2004, 61), "*les médias [...] se conformant inconditionnellement aux orientations politiques de leur propriétaire*". Nabil Dajani (1992, 175), in an analysis not yet outdated even if arguably too strong in 2004, remarked: "The Lebanese media [...] divert the attention of the common man from the real social and political problems to marginal problems that are usually either exported from outside or of concern to the authority [communitarian, political, and economic] the media are serving. The Lebanese media oriented to serve themselves and the authorities to which they are bonded." Victoria Firmo-Forlan (2005, 162-179), commenting her analysis on Hezbollah's Al-Manar's anchorwomen, emphasised the Lebanese mass-media' effect in maintaining the communitarian power-structure.

The same capacity of political families and communities to shape social and political spaces accounts for the features of other Lebanese social sectors, such the one that is supposed to be the most lively expression of a 'civil society': the NGO sector. Fadia Kiwan (2003, 137-155) argued that, despite the high number of active Lebanese NGOs, and of their liberal outlook, two fundamental problems had arisen after the war: firstly, NGOs' instrumentalisation by political leaders and owners. NGOs were in fact funded by politicians and cared after by their wives or members of their family - most famous are the cases of Hariri, Berri, Franjich, etc. (El-Moghrabi, 2004, 36-27). And, secondly, the influence money had in their functioning and orientations. This was actually a more widespread and intense problem, which was felt at almost every level of politics and society (Mattar, 2004, 137-208). More generally, the 'privatisation' of the public sphere, clientelism, acquiescence to power, had become normal features of Lebanese political life. Joined with Syrian 'occupation' and Syrian alliances with some families and communities, such features had created a 'servility' and 'legitimising culture' (Abou, 2005), which certainly did not make many efforts in remembering the past (Beydoun, 2004, 75-96). The general result of the two problems above was that civil society was dispersed and weak. NGOs' relationships to the state, as much as those of the business sector, were channelled through communities even more pronouncedly than before the war. The different forms of contestation were expressed by segments of political elites, marginalised by the alliance in power, or by segments living on an external impulse for change but lacking a political project. However, according to Fadia Kiwan, who was writing in 2003, having pointed out "*le malaise qui la saisit dans l'après-guerre, nous sommes portés à considérer que la société civile est en pleine recomposition*" (2003, 158).

In order to sketch the institutional features of 2004 Lebanon, I was obliged to outline how political and social systems had influenced the implementation of the Agreement of Taëf (how, in turn, the latter influenced the former). It was necessary to introduce so the second level of the framework because it, in fact, focuses on the 'logics' of the system and of the 'points of contacts' among 'cultural groups'; in other words, it builds on features of the system. Before proposing the 'logics' and the 'points', however, it can be useful to very briefly recall the political models have been advanced for explaining the Lebanese political system. The presentation is very brief not only because none of them is fully satisfying, but

also because I have argued against modelling as a way for foreseeing political change. In addition, the models that have been proposed for Lebanon are all based on the Lebanese state ‘as a system’; in other words, they accept that the Lebanese political system can be circumscribed within Lebanese borders.

The most followed approach sees Lebanese political system as a consensual democracy. Antoine Messarra (1994, 27), following Arend Lijphart (1968; 1977) but modifying the latter’s model in order to apply it to Lebanon, argues that a consensual democracy is characterised by a process “*de formation de l’entité nationale, non pas à partir d’un noyau central qui s’étend à toute la périphérie suivant le modèle du nation-building des sociétés à culture politique homogène [...] mais par des concessions mutuelles*” and by “*des aménagements juridiques pour la régulation des conflits*” that can be summarised as four: firstly, the government by a ‘large coalition’ composed by the political leaders of the different segments of society; secondly, “*le veto mutuel qui sert de moyen de protection supplémentaire aux intérêts vitaux de la société*”; thirdly, the rule of proportionality in the political representation, allocation of administrative responsibilities and public funding; and, finally, each social segment’s autonomy within certain issues that, in Lebanon, are personal statute and education. According to Messarra, Lebanon is an example of a consensual democracy within a territorially unitary but personally federalist state. The model is too nice to be true, and in fact it does not include some of the features or, better, some of the conditions outlined by Lijphart (Hudson, 1976, 109-122). In fact, in Lebanon consensus is not reached through institutional arrangements or a political process that marginalises extreme forces and gives legitimacy to moderate segments. On the contrary, the Lebanese process maintains all the forces within the system, and the compromise is reached outside the state institutions or in the government, being more a result of power struggle than willingness to compromise. In fact, the second model pictures Lebanon as a polyarchy, which is a system where different factions share power because come to realise the task of gaining all of it is out of their reach. However, Lebanon does not fit all of its conditions as outlined by Robert A. Dahl (1971; Dahl and Lindblom, 1976). In addition, and as an explanation, polyarchy was thought according to the US social system, which has not much in common with the Lebanese. The third model follows the international struggle for power. In other words, Lebanon is thought as an international society, characterised by anarchy, considering as units communities instead of states. The model includes contributions that emphasise the necessity either of the hegemony of a community for the system to work or of an ‘arbiter’, which can be an external power

(France, Syria, the Ottomans) or the President of the Republic. This model would account well for some of Lebanese political system's features but, even if modified to include communities' option to 'open' the system to external powers, it downplays a bit excessively the common bond shared by Lebanese, and their common national identity.

If we consider Lebanon in 2004, we could suggest the presence of a few systemic 'logics' at work. 'Logics', I have proposed, are the objective ways a political systems reacts to external inputs in order to transform then in inputs; they are not trends, but the dynamic expression of 'rationalities' that can create trends. Even if sometimes embodied mainly by specific agents, they are not reducible to them, because they can lead different agents' actions according to the issue and the specific time. The 'logics' at work were the followings: firstly, a 'democratic-liberal' logic, which accepted the division of power and shared responsibilities advocating a consensual agreement among political segments according to the rule of law; secondly, a 'unitary' logic, which attempted to extend the power of the state on social segments by assimilating them; thirdly, a 'communitarian' logic, which aimed at maximising communitarian political power and was driven by the always present fear for communitarian survival; fourthly, a 'factional' (in terms of family, clan, client, and group) logic, which aimed at maximising faction power; a 'territorial' logic, based on the tripartition of the Lebanese space in cities (or city: Beirut), mountain, and plain (Beyhum, 1994, 275-290; also, Corm, 2005), which meant a maintenance of traditional allegiances and social, economic, and political power; and, finally, a 'geo-political' logic, which understood Lebanon as a geopolitical space for non-Lebanese goals, but it could be exploited by Lebanese actors.

It seems to me that, if these were the 'logics' at work in 2004, all of them conflicting with each other, then the system was not in equilibrium (or, to express it differently, the equilibrium was not internal), but it was fictionally created by Syrian military and intelligence services' presence.

The 'points of contact' among 'cultural groups', which can be determined by different factions' expectations, capabilities, interests, perceptions, goals, etc. could be summarised as the followings: firstly, on the nature of the state (as a 'government'). The conflict was based on the type of state it suited Lebanon best: strong, in the meaning of powerful enough to guarantee the survival of any community when facing the others; redistributive, in the sense of attempting to re-equilibrate economic and social disparities among

territories, classes, and communities; patrimonial, or characterised by client-patron relationships (for the three above, Abdallah, 2005-2006, 27-40); liberal, in the sense of ensuring only a basic regulative action, leaving society and 'the market' to ensure welfare; and, finally, weak, in the sense of having the role of mediating between social groups, especially communities, but without being able to guarantee their survival and therefore leaving considerable parts of its sovereignty to these latter or other states. The second 'point of contact' was localised in the issue of political hegemony, and was expressed by the change in relative power among communities. This is clearly a well-established conflicting issue, which had marked the whole history of the territory. After the Maronites, and the Sunnis, it was the time of the Shiite to feel uncomfortable with the power-sharing ratio, which resulted in the other communities feel uneasy. In fact, and quite understandably considering the continuing increase in size and capabilities, the recognition such community had received by Taëf was not enough. Thirdly, the geo-political positioning of the state and, more than the non-Lebanese model to accept, the alliances to pursue (Syria, the United States, Iran, France); these alliances, more than based on power, had 'cultural meanings' and created 'cultural' effects. Arguably, within this 'point of contact', the relationship toward the 'occupying' power and the other neighbour, Israel, assumed a specific meaning, and importance. Fourthly, on the 1975-1990 civil war(s), if to deal with, study, talk about it in order to reach a 'national reconciliation', or to forget it by expelling it from the political and social 'spheres'. Fifthly, on the economic course to follow, if to maintain the traditional 'liberal' or the 'new' Hariri's 'liberal-patrimonial' or more 'redistributive' approaches, and in the timing and necessity to improve economic and social conditions of certain strata of the population. Finally, the last 'point of contact' was centred in the way to consider the communitarian system, and the role communities should have maintained in Lebanon. In other words, some groups positioned themselves in favour of it, understanding its maintenance and even strengthening as the only way to maintain social peace, while others denounced it as the source of both inaction and violent conflict.

Agents could have acted according to one or more 'logics', and their decisions could have spurred political change especially if related to one or more of the above 'points of contact'. I have argued in the previous chapter that, in order to foresee political change, agents should be studied according to their goals, psychologies, histories, organisations, etc.

In the Lebanese case, that would mean to include the most important politicians and communitarian leaders, ‘opinion-makers’, and non-Lebanese states and their policies ((Evelyne Kestler, 2005-2006, 71-82) argues forcefully for an analysis of non-Lebanese agents in order to understand the shaping of the Political Independence Revolution). However, I do not need to analyse those because the chapter aimed to understand if the Political Independence Revolution could have been foreseen, and not to foresee it. Foreseeing it now, after its conclusion, would have been an exercise that could not have been epistemologically justifiable because it would have been based on an unavoidable ‘cherry-picking’; in other words, in reading the past according to the present

### *Conclusion*

Could the proposed general framework have enabled a researcher to foresee the Political Independence Revolution? My impression is positive.

On the one hand, science would have proscribed certain outcomes. To give just a few examples, on a general level, and to use again the approaches mentioned in the first chapter, the ‘modernist school’ on political change (and specifically Huntington’s analyses on ‘waves of democratisation’) could have suggested that democratic political transitions (of the so-called ‘third wave’) are unlikely to happen if, within a country, personal income is below ‘X’ level, or above ‘Y’ level. In Lebanon, certainly, the incomes of people belonging to certain groups were in that range. Similarly, they could have suggested that, in countries with a Catholic presence, democratic transitions were unlikely to succeed without the proactive support of influential members of the Catholic Church. In Lebanon, the most important Catholic figure, after the Israeli withdrawal, the Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, was not the only religious figure to heavily criticise the Syrian stay in Lebanon; also, the visit of Pope John Paul II in May 2001 was extremely meaningful for Lebanese Christians (Dagher, 2001). To give another example, the same approach suggests that authoritarian regimes are unlikely to end if they enjoy a strong ‘negative legitimacy’. The 2000 end of Israeli occupation of the South could have been regarded as ending Syrian ‘negative legitimacy’. Socio-psychological approaches propose that political change, namely a revolution, is unlikely to happen when there is no localised or widespread frustration. In Lebanon, certain groups were, in 2004, doubtlessly frustrated, both because of economics and limited access to power. ‘Collective action’ approaches to political conflict would argue that,

without the readiness and willingness of elites to pursue change through political action, political change is unlikely to happen. In Lebanon, some groups were opposing the Syrian presence (Walid Jumblatt, and all the groupings that would later gather at the Hotel Bristol) and some of those were even preparing new symbols, slogans, etc. (for instance, the 'Democratic Left').

On the other hand, the framework could arguably have been able to suggest the beginning, the dynamic, and the results of the Political Independence Revolution. It was not impossible to foresee the killing of an important political figure. It was not impossible to foresee the popular reaction to Hariri's assassination. It was not impossible to foresee the capacity of communities, parties, and political leaders to re-frame the emotional popular reaction, to control it, and to drive it according to their goals. It was not impossible to foresee the continuing trend of political assassinations. It was not impossible to foresee the dialectic between communitarian and national identities, with the prominence, in the long run, of the former.

The timing of the different moments would have been very difficult to foresee. Yet, I am not fully convinced it was impossible. Doubtlessly, however, it would have been an 'artistic act'.