

UNIVERSITA' CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

MILANO

Dottorato di ricerca in Rappresentazioni e comportamenti politici

Ciclo: XIX

S.S.D: SPS/04

FORESEEING POLITICAL CHANGE.

**Structure, System and Agency in the Making of the Lebanese *Intifadha*
*al-Iqtad***

Tesi di Dottorato di: Alessandro Quarenghi

Matricola: 3280133

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Coordinatore: Ch.mo Prof. Lorenzo ORNAGHI

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Abstract

The thesis aims to answer the question ‘could the Lebanese *Intifadha al-Iqtad* have been predicted?’ In order to do so, it first of all tries to define the political event, in terms of features, dynamic, and outcome, and to assess if it could have been explained by a theoretical or comparative approach. Secondly, it outlines the epistemological assumptions on which a scientific prediction of the future could be based. As a result, it argues that an anticipation of the future (which is named ‘foreseeing’) is the combination of two different activities: on the one hand, ‘proscribing’, which is conditional negative anticipation according to a methodological criterion of scientific knowledge; and, on the other hand, ‘predicting’, which is an activity of free and non-scientific positive anticipation of the future based on shared human nature. Thirdly, it puts forward a framework for foreseeing the future organised on different levels and divided into macro-categories according to the role of agents in the making of human history. Finally, it analyses the ‘Political Independence Revolution’ according to the proposed framework.

Sommario

La tesi cerca di rispondere alla domanda: ‘la libanese *Intifadha al-Iqtad* poteva essere prevista?’. La risposta si sviluppa attraverso alcuni passaggi. Innanzitutto, l’evento politico è definito in base alle sue caratteristiche, alle sue dinamiche, ed ai risultati raggiunti. La tesi esamina in seguito le condizioni epistemologiche di scientificità predittiva. Il risultato dell’analisi propone la scissione dell’attività predittiva complessiva (che è denominata ‘prevedere’) in due: la ‘proscrizione’, che è una previsione condizionale negativa svolta e giudicata secondo criteri metodologici di razionalità scientifica, e la ‘predizione’, che è una libera e non scientifica anticipazione positiva del futuro che si basa sulla natura umana. In terzo luogo, la tesi propone uno schema di previsione organizzato in livelli e macro-categorie analitiche in funzione del protagonismo degli agenti nella creazione della storia umana. Infine, analizza la ‘Rivoluzione politica d’indipendenza’ in base allo schema analitico proposto.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some these carefully analyse, by following a specific approach, a particular phenomenon, with the aim of providing new findings. Others rearrange already available knowledge in a new fashion in order to offer a possibly newer and fresher interpretation of some phenomena. This thesis belongs to both categories: the phenomenon it tries to understand is so recent that the literature on it is not extensive, but the framework it follows merges quite different approaches, combining them in order to produce a different analytical perspective. This latter characteristic of this work has required, more than the former, that I employ all the knowledge accumulated during my career as a student. This work certainly represents a step on the path that I began a few years ago, involving everything I have come across since I started being interested in the question of power, at the end of my law degree. At that time, my poor high school English was all but forgotten: that I attempted to write this thesis in that language is evidence of my journey, sometime enjoyable and sometimes, more often than I like to remember, hard and tiring.

First of all, I have to thank all of my fellow students in Italy, Wales and Lebanon, who have helped me to bear the time spent away from Kerstin and my family. Among them, Nuria, Nadia and Maria made the almost two years spent in Beirut a lot more agreeable than they could otherwise have been. The experience at ASERI was of major importance: without the expertise of all the international professors teaching there I would have been blinder and certainly without the ability to feed my always feeble intellectual curiosity; without its grants I could not have followed my just-blossoming interest in international economics and, some time later, international politics and political science in general. Roberto Brambilla, the director at ASERI, helped me during some delicate moments of my life, in his own discrete but dedicated personal style. My stay at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, where I attended the Masters in Postcolonial Politics, taught me – even if by contrast, the danger of both too specialised a discourse and academic conformism; however, it definitely helped me to develop research skills and analytical precision, and made me aware of the requirements of scientific endeavour. Of course the stay in Beirut, while attending the Masters in Médiation Interculturelle at Université Saint-Joseph, made

this work possible. Witnessing the start and whole trajectory of the political event that this thesis tries to assess was of paramount importance. I have met some kind people in Beirut: Professor Père Louis Boisset S.J., whose kindness cannot be fully appreciated without knowing him; Professor Father John Donohue S.J., Professor Annie Tabet, and Jihad Nammour, with whom I have always been in disagreement about Lebanon's political and social situation but whose arguments I have never made the mistake of dismissing.

I also remember all of the professors I was fortunate to have as teachers; from all of them, I have learned something – I have used here some of their teachings, maybe a lot more than is reasonable. The Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore has funded all the steps of this journey, maybe believing it was worth it: I hope this work will not prove them wrong.

Professor Vittorio Emanuele Parsi has been the best supervisor I could have wished for, leaving me the time and the freedom I needed to pursue my research, without loading my time-table with other tasks. I find it bizarre how we, more often than not, agree on the political analysis and not on its conclusions.

My family have provided, as usual, all the support they could, both when I was abroad and when I was in Italy, in their own peculiar style.

Most of all, I have to thank Kerstin, clearly not just because she edited and proofread this thesis and all the other documents I asked her to, but because she has enlightened my life and completed me in a way that couldn't possibly be better. Every now and again, I needed to be pushed to work, and somehow she managed to do it gently and firmly. We have been through difficult times, hard moments for both of us: I firmly believe not many other couples could have faced them better than we did. It is long overdue that we join our lives. No other moment in my life has been more looked forward to.

And, finally, I have to thank myself. It has been difficult, and tiring. I have moved from studying one discipline to another (Law, Sociology, International Economics, International and Postcolonial Politics, Cultural Mediation and Anthropology), and lived in different countries (Italy, Wales, and Lebanon) in just a few years. Has it been worth it? I am not so sure, especially when I think of the time spent away from Kerstin. Yet, I have to recognise my 'journey' has granted me more freedom, knowledge, and maybe even wisdom. Mostly, however, I have to thank myself because I would like to believe this thesis is a bit different

to others. Last summer, a friend of mine came to Beirut for a month in order to finish researching her PhD, which was about Lebanon. Her thesis was basically ready, and she just wanted to interview a few Lebanese policy-makers in order to add a qualitative touch to it. On her first day, I introduced her to some Lebanese researchers and walked her around. She was not able to recognise Saad Hariri or President of the Republic Emile Lahoud, or the Free Patriotic Movement's General Michel Aoun, just to name a few of the most important political leaders. I have read a preliminary draft of her work, which was a relatively well-researched analysis of the implementation of the Taëf Agreement, but of course well below the standard of the best explorations/analyses provided by Lebanese researchers. Completed at the end of the *Intifadha al-Iqtad*, it did not include any scrutiny of it. I wondered what contribution that effort, even if well presented, could make to knowledge. It was conservative, and terribly so.

I have tried to work differently, to take risks, and to accept the possibility of making mistakes; I believe this is what a PhD, and a young researcher, should attempt to do. I am not sure I am entitled to write about a country I do not speak the main language of. In fact, despite the availability of a relatively extensive amount of literature in both English and French, I know I am missing an important part of Lebanon. However, I have tried to do something new. I do not claim any originality in any part of this work; I have simply tried to arrange some of the available knowledge in such a way as to answer the thesis' basic question. Of course, I am solely responsible for any incorrect interpretations and mistakes made in this thesis. I am not satisfied with the final result, and I am aware that every paragraph, and every sentence, should have been better researched, thought out, and written.

INTRODUCTION

While witnessing the beginning and development of what would later be called, because of its source and its political aims, the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* (Independence Upheaval, or Revolt) or Beirut Spring, Cedar Revolution, or Gucci Revolution (among others), I was struck by a simple question: whatever the nature of the sequence of events taking shape before my eyes, could have it been foreseen?

In my limited knowledge, nobody had attempted, let alone succeeded, in doing it. Sophisticated socio-political analysis, a certain historical knowledge, and common sense could have melted together to remember the recurrence of civil wars and to point out the nature of the Lebanese political system, as an equilibrium between coexistence and armed conflict. As early as 1994, in what is probably the most precise prediction I have come across, which could have been describing, unfortunately, the political situation at the time of writing (November 2006, after the Lebanese-Israeli war of the summer), Ghassan Salamé anticipated that “any attempt to reconcentrate it [power] to a single confession’s advantage will bring about a new civil war” (Salamé, 1994, p. 85). As opposed to, during a prior period, precisely on 3 December 1981, Talal Hussein, remarking in the daily *Al-Nahar* that the civil war the country was experiencing was a surface phenomenon which was bounded to vanish once all the confessional elements in Lebanese society would become equally adapted to the modern world (quoted by Salibi, 1998, 232). However, such predictions are quite generic and do not predict the precise moment and the features of such future civil wars, or peace. Certainly, they did not mention the beginning of a season of peaceful demonstrations and confrontations on 14 March 2006.

Yet, they came close to what scientific knowledge can actually offer in terms of predictions. Social and political predictions are possible, and being attempted, at two distinct levels: a ‘high’, theoretical level that involves, through history and statistics, discerning the presence or lack of conditions that can allow the phenomenon to take shape; and a ‘low’, practical level that sketches out the ‘scenarios’ that are likely to occur if those or other conditions, in terms of the actors’ strategic and tactical choices, exist. On both levels, the knowledge employed can be two-sided: ‘objective’, in terms of trends and numerical data, and

‘subjective’, in terms of judgements of experts who are better acquainted than others with the relevant issues.

Social and human sciences, as much as natural sciences, do, or attempt to, offer predictions. Despite being contested and sometimes refused, both ‘understanding’ and ‘explaining’ appear to have different focuses in the search for knowledge that can help to elucidate the past, the present, and therefore the future. As much as a physical phenomenon can be explained in order to be recreated, a social and human phenomenon can be understood in its uniqueness, and despite of and through it, be compared to other more or less dissimilar experiences. The two leading social disciplines of the modern era, which have influenced all others and marked their developments, economics and history, exemplify this well. Economics, still based on a certain concept of *homo economicus*, despite recent attempts at overcoming its limitations, is in itself a science of prediction, dedicated to understanding the future behaviour of markets and consumers (whether successfully or not is a completely different matter). History by definition looks into the past, not at the future, but it does so in order to compare past experiences to each other or to the present: understanding the past is the key to understanding the present and, therefore, the future (in spite of the forceful rejection of positivism and historical linearity, trends have been very highly rated in the last fifty years, at least from the work of Fernand Braudel).

However, admitting that social and human sciences should predict phenomena brings about a series of epistemological problems that are difficult to overcome. Those who choose to refuse this task do well. In this work, I have chosen not to devote much space, and certainly not all the necessary space, to epistemological issues. Not only because I share Gellner’s view (Gellner, 1992) that those who want to properly argue about the philosophy of social sciences should go and work in a Department of Philosophy, but because the answer to the question that guided my research has been, basically, negative. After trying to find a way to scientifically engineer an approach that could make it possible to precisely anticipate an event, I had to conclude that it is not possible. Actors, I have discovered – with some relief I must to say – do have freedom and responsibility in the making of history.

Science can offer proscriptions (negative predictions), or it can tell us what cannot happen according to logic, past experiences, and comparisons. I have called science’s contribution to anticipating the future as ‘proscribing’, while I have named the activity of positively

anticipating the future as 'prescribing'. 'Foreseeing' is the combination of proscribing and predicting. Therefore, foreseeing builds on, and includes, predicting but it is not a scientific activity. Anticipating what is going to happen, in the political realm, is not a matter of science; it is a matter of human nature. Political events are human events, and it is this common nature, which is shared by the researcher and the 'history-makers', that provides a link through which the former can aim to understand what the latter will create.

However, despite the non-scientific character of the whole enterprise, I have realised that available approaches can be 're-arranged' in order to provide a more precise anticipation of the future: 'objective' and 'subjective' approaches to prediction, and theoretical and practical levels, could be joined together. In 'building' such a framework, I was therefore more interested in finding the categories employed by each theoretical approach that could provide a better understanding of the future, than being true to any one approach.

This does not mean that epistemological and methodological precision is not necessary. On the contrary, the need for precision is very marked, especially in this historical phase, still marked by the conceptual and methodological 'free for all' that has characterised political science and especially international relations theory during the 1980s and 1990s (Halliday, 2005), partially resulting from the failure of anticipating some events (such as, for instance, the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the collapse of the USSR) and a more general denial of the possibility of 'objective' scientific knowledge. Coupled with an obsession with speculating about the future, this 'freedom' has resulted, in the field of international relations, in a multitude of images of the political future of the world. The end of bipolarity and the resulting weakness of, particularly though not exclusively, realism, opened the gate for proposals of not theories but 'images' of the world political future that was taking shape before our eyes. The most widely known of those were of course Fukuyama's 'end of history' and Huntington's 'clash of civilizations', but they were in good company: as summarised in *Contending Images of World Politics* (Fry and O'Hagan, 2000), we were heading towards an 'international society', a 'borderless world', the 'end of sovereignty', a 'new medievalism', a 'coming age of regionalism', a 'world of tribes', an 'endangered planet', a 'gendered global hierarchy', a 'postcolonial world', the 'end of modernity', etc. It was a fierce battle for academic supremacy among scholars and academic parties. Not many of those images have so far materialised.

All of the works that created these images are excellent pieces of scientific research and knowledge. What was somehow surprising was not only the attention those ‘images’ received but also the effort some academics seemed to put into proposing a ‘banner’ image, instead of the silent work necessary for relating variables and creating theories. It is hardly surprising that the academic world has not been immune to one of the defining features of our times, which the respected American philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt calls, quite strongly, the ‘scientific production of bullshits’, in other words, of ‘lies’ that are completely disconnected from the realm of truth. A simple lie is still a negation of truth; it is also created as a cover for a truth. Today’s ‘bullshits’ are ‘fabricated’ and then believed without having any relation whatsoever to the truth, because it is not important if they are true or not: after their creation they assume a life of their own (Frankfurt, 2005). The clearest and most famous example is that of the presence or the imminent acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction by Saddam’s Iraq that was offered by the US and UK governments as one of the justifications for the 2003 Fourth Gulf War¹ (incidentally, the presence or the very real likelihood of their presence in a near future was consistently pointed out in the specialised academic literature of the time). Undoubtedly, Frankfurt refers more to ‘the fabrication of bullshits’ as a social than an academic process. However, in my opinion some researchers appeared to enjoy the exercise a bit too much.

Somehow related to this is the problem of ideological accounts of events masked as pretences at scientific rigour. The whole history of Lebanon, but in general of any social and political group, is related to and shaped by actors dedicated to setting communal identity borders through the misuse of history and, more generically, science. Too often, instead of being agents of peace via intellectual integrity, intellectuals have served more parochial interests, sometimes for ideological but well-intentioned aims, and sometimes for less admirable reasons.

Among all of the above images, Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ needs particularly careful consideration, not only because it has been the most successful of all but also, and especially, because it seems as though the future has proved him right, at least as far as relationships between the West and Islam are concerned. In spite of its nature of being a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ and the conceptual inaccuracies and factual mistakes, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* is based on solid research. It is, therefore, not so easy to dismiss its thesis, at least as regards the relationship between the West and Islam, as

completely wrong: in both of those ‘civilisations’, identity discourses and ethical concerns related to culture and religion are gaining ground as forces capable of defining political interests and allegiances. As a scientific theory, his thesis is simply incorrect. However, it shows that maybe there is still some hope for predictions in social sciences.

Trying to evaluate if the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* could have been anticipated requires a preliminary enquiry into what it is we were actually dealing with: it could have been a social or a political revolution, or a step in a process of democratisation, or a democratic revolution, a counter-revolution, or simply a peaceful mobilization, or maybe simply a peaceful revolt. It would have been somehow odd if such political event had fitted perfectly into an analytical category: it seems to me that such an expression of clearly political mobilisation shares many features from different phenomena. Naming the political phenomenon, in other words, what actually took place, requires assessing the definitions its participants regarded as the most appropriate. Even for those who ‘made’ the event, naming it was not so immediate, or easy, because of the contemporary presence of different political aims and ‘trajectories’. Among all the groups and individuals that made up the movement, it was a hotly-debated issue (and not the only one).

In many respects, but not in all, the popular reaction to Rafiq Hariri’s killing came as a surprise to many, as well as its trajectory and its inability to achieve all the results participants and sympathisers had wished it to. I believe such surprise could have been avoided if the event had been viewed through an appropriate framework. I do share Huntington and Harrison’s (2000) view that ‘culture matters’. However, I do not share their modernist, behaviourist, and positivist approach, being more inclined to follow more anthropological and sociological sensibilities. Yet more properly cultural approaches suffer severe shortcomings in not dealing enough with ‘rougher’ expressions of power and economic factors. Historical sociology has tried to relate ideal and material factors, and that is the approach I believe is closer to what I propose in this work. However, I do not share its refusal to consider culture an analytical category. Beliefs and values are taken into consideration by historical sociology, and at some length, but through the device of resorting to the notion of ideology, which is supposed to cover the whole field of ideal constructions. From a certain perspective, ideology and political culture are related concepts, both appearing to be interpretative systems, or ways agents give meaning to reality. The difference between the two is that ideology is not limited by the principle of

reality, while culture is. However, as interpretative symbolic systems (Geertz, 1973, 193-233), they share a similar nature. If this is the case, then culture is a much wider category, and could, even if maybe in only certain cases, be given analytical primacy.

The first chapter deals with the question: 'Why was the wave of demonstrations, its results and dynamic, not predicted?' The main answer that will be proposed is because it was a political event that did not clearly fit in any theory of social and political change. Also, it will be suggested that social science is excessively specialised, and that this specialisation is a result of the necessarily conservative character of scientific knowledge. In order to conclude this, I will start by looking for a general definition of the Lebanese political event under consideration by testing if the definitions that were proposed during its development by protesters and commentators, which refer to theoretical and comparative concepts, are really able to describe that political event. If, in fact, a definition could describe its nature, results, and dynamic, then the political event could have been predicted by analysing the pre-event situation and individuating the presence, in 2004 Lebanon, of the conditions set by the applicable theory. My analysis, which will be conducted at a very general level, will point to two different and relatively comfortable definitions.

However, neither suits the event perfectly. This could be explained quite easily by arguing that a definition needs to be relatively general, and therefore it cannot perfectly fit any specific event. Of course, any scientific definitions, and more generally, any scientific enquiry, simplifies reality by regarding certain variables as being more important than others. However, it seems to me that this explanation is, in this case, mistaken: the features not captured by the definitions are not secondary, but very much essential to the political event. More generally, it seems to me that if definitions are essential for scientific knowledge, modelling is slightly over-valued. I would argue much more in favour of processes and general frameworks. It could be suggested that such a choice is almost necessary when dealing with a country and political and social system that escapes definition; this assessment would be correct. Yet Lebanon cannot be outside of science; if a theory and model fail to understand or explain it, then they cannot be regarded as scientific. In truth, every theory of social conflict and social and political change explains some features or stages in the progression of the waves of demonstrations. A combination of theories is required in order to give a full account of what happened in Lebanon from

August 2004 to January 2005. It is this need of a combination of approaches and theories that leads me to argue in favour of a general framework in order to anticipate political futures.

The second chapter takes a step back. The question it deals with is whether it is actually possible to scientifically predict the future. Ontologically, the question is fairly easy to answer, because predicting is one of the essential goals of science; and predicting the future is not so different to studying the present, or the past. The question is therefore more general, being about how it is possible to know or how it is possible to regard a statement as true. The problem is clearly epistemological, and I am not a student of epistemology - or of philosophy, for that matter. However, general epistemology has dealt with the question at length. By recalling the main steps in the development of the theoretical discussion about scientific knowledge, I argue that the last century has seen a move in theoretical reasoning from a focus on rationality to a concern with power, starting with Karl Popper's solution of locating rationality of science in the method (which is a technique), and ending with Paul Feyerabend's refusal of rationality and effort to both denounce the role power has had in scientific history and to disentangle power from science.

If it is possible to keep the two focuses separated, then a solution could be found. Epistemology of human sciences could help, because it has dealt with the more specific problem of proposing criteria of scientific knowledge that are suitable for an object of enquiry, the human being, that is unique and cannot be compared either to past or contemporary experiences. Clearly, political events are human events, and are therefore impossible to anticipate because human beings 'make' them. However, it is precisely the common nature of all human beings that represents the only possibility for anticipating political future events: 'intuition', arising from the shared human bond, can allow the flourishing of a correct forecast. In the end, it will be proposed that a solution needs to maintain power separated from rationality and that, in order to do so, two specific activities compose the anticipation of political (human) future. Firstly, 'proscribing', which is the scientific anticipation of what cannot or is not likely to happen; science, in other words, is a rational endeavour, judged according to methodological criteria, and concerned with stating negative anticipations. And, secondly, 'predicting', which is 'creative intuition' based on common human nature, shared by the researcher and the object of knowledge. 'Foreseeing', the combination of the two, finds its source in and includes 'predicting', but is

different from it because, as a whole, it is not scientific; 'foreseeing' is positive anticipation, and is an activity without power. The problem here is whether 'foreseeing' is a completely free and therefore not comparable activity or if it could flourish better within a certain 'structured' thinking, which could help, to a certain degree, to make comparisons. Because the human being is a 'totality', and therefore requires a holistic approach, and because it is necessary to include prediction in order to be able to foresee, it will be argued that anticipating the future requires a general framework.

How is it possible to organise such a framework? The third chapter suggests it needs to be both complex and elegant. The need to include a range of different theories, because all approaches and related theories could help to 'foresee', creates the problem of needing to engineer a framework capable of including different epistemological premises. In order to do so, theories and approaches need to be 'deconstructed' in their basic categories and re-arranged through inclusive macro-categories. I have sketched the framework on three levels, organised according to the level of actual human involvement. Indeed, the human being is the very focus of the whole effort; in a certain way, the multi-faceted role of human beings in making history has been split into a few dimensions in order to be better understood. For this reason, dividing them is just an analytical device: the relationships and cross-interactions among all of them are so complex and multi-faceted that it is sometimes difficult to disentangle them from one another. In other words, each level, and macro-category, interacts with all others. The framework is analytical, and therefore simplifies reality; interaction is nonetheless the constant theme bonding all categories.

Aiming to foresee political change, the framework should include both diachronic and synchronic transformations; these two axes are placed within each macro-category and across all of them, as a result of their reciprocal interaction. In addition, it should be able to accommodate long, medium and short-term anticipation of the future, according to the researcher's aim. In general terms, long-term foreseeing assigns primacy to the level of 'structure'; medium-term anticipation focuses on the 'systemic' level; and, finally, short-term foreseeing needs to concentrate the analysis on the 'agency' level.

The first level includes 'material' aspects of social life, which constrict human action, are perceived as 'external' to human intervention, and 'channel' social life; I have decided to call these three macro-categories 'structures'. The choice is intended to mean that, even if they are transformed by human beings' actions, the change requires a plurality of actions

that are simply unlikely (but the possibility should always be left open) to happen in a short time. There are three of these: economics, institutions, and technology. On this level, special attention is devoted to emphasising inequality in economic development and features, institutional access to power, and technological level and accessibility. The second level is organised in terms of 'systems'. In this dimension, the human being acts as a member of groups. In the first macro-category placed on this level he/she acts through political groups; in the second, through social groups. Analytically, the first macro-category focuses on the internal dynamic of a political system, understanding them as following some 'logic': behavioural patterns that follow certain rationalities. The meeting between pluralities of 'logics' represents a system's equilibrium; however, the reaching of equilibrium is not a system's necessary requirement, but simply a possible and actually not so frequent characteristic. In fact, in order to understand change within a system, equilibrium is not a relevant analytical category. The second 'systemic' macro-category tries to include social dynamic as intra- and inter-group interactions. Groups are understood as 'cultural' organisations, whose continuous transformation derives from contact between members. Contacts among members imply identity exchanges, and therefore they are power-games; cultures, and identities, are in fact hierarchically organised. Exchanges are impossible to trace, and it is a mistake to define the cultural characteristics of a group because doing this creates borders that, even if analytically sound, are both exploited by power and mistaken because continuously changing. In order to foresee political change, what it is possible to do is to focus on border-lines, 'fault-lines', so to speak, dividing 'cultural groups'. It is indeed from border-lines, the 'points' where cultural groups meet, that change can flourish, out of conflict or out of agreement. The third level is for 'agents', in other words individuals but also groups understood as a single entity (therefore, the state, as 'government', is included in this category). Agents exercise their autonomy through acts, which are single decisions that shape political change. Roughly speaking, if the first two levels constrain agents' autonomy, this latter level shapes the previous two; indeed agents have autonomy in making their own choices and taking responsibility for them. A sequence of individual acts constitutes a process, which is not understood as an impersonal succession of acts; on the contrary, processes are very much personal.

I would like to note however, that in developing the framework, I am not interested in 'being true' to every approach. On the contrary, the aim is to include as many approaches as possible; this effort requires, clearly, a level of generalisation in 'deconstructing' an

approach that could hardly be accepted by an advocate of orthodoxy. From this perspective, the equilibrium to be aimed for within the framework is between flexibility and theoretical accuracy.

The final chapter attempts to ‘apply’ the framework to Lebanon in 2004. In order to do that, it places itself in that time, and analyses the Lebanese political, social, and economic situation as it was before the beginning of the dynamic that was going to create the *Intifadha al-Iqtad*. However, the exercise is not about history, but about understanding whether some ‘signs’ of the future were discernible; to a certain extent, it consciously analyses the past according to the future. As a result, some features of Lebanon in 2004 will be granted more attention, in an effort to discern whether the necessary conditions for certain theoretical explanations exist.

Yet, foreseeing cannot be limited to looking for conditions. On the contrary, the analysis should maintain a certain degree of both generality and specificity, depending on the researcher’s knowledge and judgment. The analysis is consequently not particularly concerned with reaching maximum 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, and even data that are the most likely to lead to foreseeing what is going to happen; in other words, to foresee the future.

¹ The First Gulf War was the sustained but not particularly intense border conflict between Iran and Iraq which started in 1969 and ended in 1975; the Second Gulf War, again between Iran and Iraq, started in 1980 and lasted for eight years, becoming the bloodiest war in Middle Eastern history; the Third is the Iraq – US-led multinational force war in 1991; and the Fourth Gulf War is the recent 2003 Iraq – Coalition of the Willing (in fact a US and British force) clash which resulted in the occupation of Iraq and Saddam Hussein’s being ousted from power, imprisoned, and sentenced to death (at the time of writing, an appeal is under way).

1.

WHY? A Brief History and Definitions

“By the very nature of their impact, however, revolutions are very difficult to analyze satisfactorily, surrounded as they are and must be by a cloud of hope and disillusion, of love, hatred and fear, of their own myths and the myths of counter-propaganda.”

Eric J. Hobsbawm (1965, 252)

As soon as the popular reaction to the killing of Rafiq Hariri began, the battle to define what was actually happening started. The fight for a definition was not driven, of course, by scientific accuracy, but by each actor’s goals and individual sensibilities. Internationally, almost immediately, the title ‘Cedar Revolution’ gained ground, proposed first by the US administration (by Paula Dobriansky, to be precise, at the time US Under Secretary for Global Affairs at the Department of State), which was looking to ‘spread democracy’ in the Middle East and immediately realised the political opportunity the events unfolding in Lebanon could represent.

From the US administration’s perspective, the 2003 Iraq invasion, and the new US policy towards the region (which has been labelled in many ways: ‘constructive instability’, ‘creative chaos’, ‘regional democratisation’, etc.), coupled with the successfully and barely finished 2003 Georgian ‘Rose Revolution’ and the 2004 Ukrainian ‘Orange Revolution’, had spurred a democratic ‘conjuncture’ that was expected to create a ‘domino effect’ and spread to the whole Middle East. Originally, the country from which the democratic movement was going to start to re-shape the political face of the region had to be Iraq; unfortunately, events in Iraq were not conducive to this. Lebanon would prove the theory right, especially because the democratic movement appeared home-grown there, a national and spontaneous outburst that would propagate itself in neighbouring countries, and most immediately to Syria, a country included in the ‘Axis of Evil’.

From the perspective of Lebanese protestors, in spite of offering the advantage of underlining the movement’s aim to drastically transform not only the confessional political system but also the confessional social system, such a definition implied a link to US

policies that was rejected by many. Inside Lebanon, members of the movement preferred to establish a connection to the Palestinian *Intifadas*, political events that not only happened closer to Lebanese borders and were closer to Lebanese sensibilities, but also emphasised the repressive nature of Syrian occupation and the hard fight the movement was likely to face. Indeed, the proposed and generally adopted definition was, domestically, 'Independence *Intifadha*'.

The sceptical, even if somehow sympathetic, attempted to play down the differences between the groups composing the movement and their goals, by preferring the notion of a 'movement', maybe by adding the adjective 'democratic' to it, in the general meaning of 'peaceful'.

Others, more romantically, suggested to name it 'spring', hinting at the new life that could be beginning.

The 'struggle for definition' involved international and domestic actors, their strategies, goals, and even identities, allegiances, and solidarities. However, it was not just the result of internal hegemonic competition or external geopolitical ambition, and balancing. The wave of demonstrations that focused international attention on Lebanon for the first time in fifteen years, since the end of the savage civil war(s) was indeed difficult to define, for it mixed features of different social and political phenomena. Also, if not an absolute novelty in world history, it certainly looked like something new to the Middle East, traditionally a great producer of revolts, upheavals and uprisings, but not of a large number of 'democratic' and 'peaceful' movements.

Defining the nature of the wave of demonstrations is essential to the aim of this work: if it can be defined according to the literature on social and political change, maybe it could have been predicted or, at least, the knowledge necessary to predict it may have been available. It would only have been a matter of identifying, before the beginning of the protests, the presence of the necessary condition as identified by the theory that defines it best. If, on the other hand, the wave of demonstrations escapes definition even today, almost two years after it began, then it would have certainly been harder to predict.

Accepting the definitions proposed by participants represents a useful operative starting point - it allows me to set up working hypotheses requiring validation. Indeed such proposed definitions cannot be taken as correct without being tested. Self-categorisation is problematic even in, or arguably especially in, what should be the easiest case: self-defining

an individual identity (Lavaud, 2001). There, the issue is not only represented by the plurality and instantaneity that characterises the phenomenon of identity, but also by the political and social power involved in such an exercise. In the particular case under consideration, the question is even more problematic, for four reasons: firstly, participants are agents driven by their own perceptions, experiences, goals and therefore strategic and tactical choices; secondly, diachronically, each participant cannot avoid being able to paint and experience only a partial image of the whole socio-political event and plural movement; thirdly, synchronically, definitions have been put forward during, and at different stages of, the socio-political phenomenon's unfolding, and are therefore partial representations of a part instead of a whole; and, finally, each participant is the object of the working of social and political power, which shapes and moulds, through ideological proposals and social and political primary, secondary and tertiary bonds and allegiances.

Hence, definitions proposed by participants in the event will be tested according to the literature that has proposed definitions of arguably similar phenomena. I will not need to properly compare the Lebanese wave of demonstrations to other actual historical events, because a lot of comparative work has been carried out resulting in theoretical definitions. I will only briefly hint at some historical features of the 'Prague Spring' and the Palestinian *Intifadhas* because the two proposals, and the images they carried, were to actual events. The theoretical definitions will be compared to features, results and the dynamics of the Lebanese wave of demonstrations, which will be considered as starting on 26 August 2004, the day that marked the end of the already shaky alliance between Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, and as ending on 20 October 2005, when the head of the UN international investigation commission, Detlev Mehlis, delivered his report to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. At that moment, arguably, the dynamic that had driven the wave of demonstration started to clearly show it had faded, leaving a new political polarisation, a new political game, and a legacy. The comparison will be carried out at the most general level, because I am interested in finding an appropriate analytical category that describes the political phenomenon, and not in not being able to categorise it. But, firstly, I will present a history,¹ which will be kept as short as possible, of what actually happened in Lebanon, almost two years ago already.

The dynamic of the event started neither on 14 February, when Rafiq Hariri is killed and people start gathering at the site of the blast, opposite the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut, to grieve and pay homage the previous Lebanese Prime Minister, nor on 16 February, when his public burial is attended by a gathering of circa two hundred thousands people. A political phenomenon, whatever its exact definition might later be, like that unleashed by the explosion, has roots planted further back in history, maybe in Walid Jumblatt's turning away from Syria in 2000, or in the 1995 extension of Elias Hrawi's presidential mandate, or in the Agreement of Taëf, or in the 1975-1990 Civil War and its aftermath, or in the 1943 National Pact, or in the 1926 Constitution, or in the creation of the State of 'Greater Lebanon' in 1920, or in the birth of the institutionalisation of the Lebanese communitarian system in 1845, or even earlier, as far back as the settling within the Mountain of the Maronites in the seventh and ninth centuries or in the settling of the Druzes after the eleventh century via the Mann and Shihab emirs. However, such reasoning would take back too far, excessively watering down historical causality.

According to common political analyses, the beginning of the dynamic that was unleashed by the assassination of Hariri should be connected to the Syrian decision to push its Lebanese allies to amend the Constitution and therefore allow the extension of the mandate of President of the Republic Émile Lahoud. The move was announced to Hariri by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus, on 26 August 2004, during a meeting reported to have been quite tense.² The disagreement on the move probably marked the definitive end of an increasingly uneasy relationship, and resulted in Hariri's decision to step down as President of the Council of Ministers on the following 20 October and to focus on organising his campaign for the general election, scheduled for the following spring, on an allegedly 'anti-Syrian' political platform.

At the same time, on 2 September, began the great powers' '*activisme inédite*' (Kestler, 2005-2006; Corm, 2005, 305): United Nations Council Resolution 1559, sponsored by France and the United States (both quietly pushed by the Lebanese-Saudi millionaire), called for "all remaining forces" (and the reference was to Syria and not Israel because the Sheeba Farms were, and still are, considered by the UN and the international community as part of Syrian and not Lebanese territory) to "withdraw from Lebanon"; also, it urged "the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non Lebanese militias, therefore

supporting “the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory” and reaffirming the “sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon”, while declaring “its support for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon’s upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence”. In response, on the following day, 3 September, the Parliament amended the Constitution and prorogued Lahoud’s mandate for another three years. In a move intended to express their strong disagreement, on 6 September, ministers Marwan Hamadé, Ghazi Aridi, Abdallah Farhat and Farés Boueiz resigned.

On 1 October, Marwan Hamadé was wounded when his car was blown up in an attempted assassination. On 21 October, following Hariri’s resignation, Omar Karamé accepted the mandate to form the new government.

The polarization of the entire political spectrum, which existed previously but was not so visible, started gaining momentum: on 19 November a few thousand students rallied to denounce Syrian presence in Lebanon. On 30 November a couple of thousand pro-Syrian protesters responded by demonstrating against UN resolution 1559.

On 13 December, the ‘Bristol Gathering’, a heterogeneous political grouping, met at the Bristol Hotel in Beirut, from which it derives its name, to discuss and adopt a shared document opposing Syrian tutelage of Lebanon. The group would form the bulk of what would, in the following months, be called the ‘opposition’. On 23 January 2005, Farouk al-Chareh, Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that Syrian forces would remain deployed in Lebanon for another two years, causing forceful protests from both the Lebanese ‘opposition’ and international powers, notably from the US and France.

On the morning of Monday, 14 February, Rafiq Hariri was killed along with Economy Minister Basil Fuleihan and twenty-one other people, mostly belonging to his entourage. Two hundred and twenty people were wounded, probably by the explosion of a huge amount of dynamite hidden in a white van parked alongside the road that Hariri’s car column was travelling on.

Two days later, two hundred thousand people, belonging to all Lebanese confessions (but Shiites were heavily under-represented) attended his public burial at the Mohammad Al-Amine Mosque in Martyrs’ Square in Downtown Beirut. From this moment on, Martyrs’ Square (which would be renamed by the ‘opposition’ as Freedom Square) became the

centre of a series of first daily and then mostly weekly (the most important took place every Monday) peaceful demonstrations demanding *Horryeh, Syedeh, Este'lel* (Freedom, Sovereignty, Independence) or *Ha'i'a, Horryeh, Webdeb Watanieh* (Truth, Freedom, National Unity). Of course, the different slogans reflected the heterogeneous make-up and goals of the groups composing the protesters. On 18 February the groupings constituting the 'opposition' declared the *Intifadha al-Iqtad* (Independence Upheaval, or Revolt, or Uprising) and requested that a new government be installed, which should aim only to prepare the necessary legal and organisational requirements for the scheduled legislative elections to be held within the constitutionally defined time. The political spectrum was now apparently completely polarised, divided between the 'opposition' bloc and the 'loyalist' side.³ On the same night, defying the Government's explicit ban on demonstrations and related Army checks, a group of activists (mostly belonging to General Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement but enrolling a certain number of independents) installed a permanent sit-it in Martyrs' Square, opposite Rafiq Hariri's mausoleum, which would later be referred to as 'Freedom Camp'.

On 21 February, one hundred thousand people rallied to ask for a Syrian withdrawal. On 28 February, the 'opposition' called for a general strike. In the late afternoon, following a debate in the parliament session, Prime Minister Omar Karamè suddenly resigned.⁴

On 5 March, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad announced, in a speech delivered to the Syrian Parliament and broadcast by Syrian national television, that Syrian troops would retreat from Lebanese territory in two phases, in compliance, after a fifteen-year delay, with the Taëf agreement. The next day, the withdrawal began.

Three days later, on 8 March, Hezbollah, which is regarded as belonging to the 'loyalist' side, gathered five hundred thousand people in Riad al-Solh Square, which is located only some fifty meters from Martyrs' Square. The following days, Hezbollah's popular support and organisational skills were underlined by demonstrations held in other Lebanese cities, most notably in Tripoli and Nabatiyé on 11 and 13 of the same month. This wave of 'loyalist' demonstrations, long expected, throws some light on the subtle role played by Hezbollah during the *Intifadha*: firstly, the Party of God not only employed its mobilization capacities exactly three days after Bashar al-Assad's announcement of Syrian troop withdrawal, effectively (and explicitly during its speech) wishing them 'farewell'; but, secondly, during the gatherings, in spite of expressing its allegiance to the 'Syrian brothers',

it underlined its nature as a Lebanese party pursuing a national agenda. Against the polarised narrative proposed mainly by the ‘opposition’, therefore, Hezbollah actually allowed the *Intifadha* to succeed, at least in one of its goals – the end of Syrian occupation.

However, reinforced by their ally’s mobilisation strength, the ‘loyalist’ side moved, on 10 March, and Karamé was asked to form a new government.

Feeling compelled to counter Hezbollah’s huge numbers, the ‘opposition’ appealed to Lebanese people to gather in Martyrs’ Square: on 14 March, one million people - roughly one fourth of the entire Lebanese population - participated in the largest demonstration in the history of the country and one of the largest in the history of the Middle East as a whole.

This demonstration virtually closed the phase of visible activism, and politics was re-conveyed, more than to the Parliament, to elite level consultations among the different groupings and alliances. It was the start of a process of political re-positioning marked by the sectarianism and factionalism what would characterise the general elections.

On 19 March, a massive terrorist bombing campaign started: eleven people were wounded in New Jdeidé; three were killed and three were hurt in Kaslik (23 March); eight were injured in Sad al-Bauchrieh (26 March); nine were left wounded in Broumana (1 April); and two died and sixteen were injured in Jounieh (6 May).

From another perspective, at the same time, on 25 March, the UN international fact-finding Commission headed by Ireland’s Deputy Police Commissioner, Peter Fitzgerald, who had landed in Lebanon exactly one month earlier, delivered its conclusions on the Lebanese political situation. Following its findings, UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1595, which, in agreement with the Lebanese Government, “establish[es] an international independent investigation Commission based in Lebanon to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of all aspects of this terrorist act, including to help identify its perpetrators, sponsors, organizers and accomplices”. Headed by German Prosecutor Detlev Mehlis, the Commission would hand its first report to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, on 20 October, pointing to the Lebanese security services and, more indirectly, Syria, as the perpetrators of Hariri’s murder. International pressure on Syria, headed by the US (who had included Bashar al-Assad’s regime in its latest formulation of the ‘Axis of Evil’) and France but also coming from Arab and Middle Eastern countries, reached its maximum intensity.

Roughly a month after accepting to try to form a new Government, on 13 April Karamé declared he was not up to it: Nagib Mikati, former Minister of Transport in Hariri's government, was designated to form a transitional Government, which would be charged with the task of making the necessary arrangements to hold legislative elections.

On 22 April, Generals Jamil as-Sayed and Ali al-Hajj (respectively General Security Chief and Internal Security Head) resigned from their offices. A few days later, on 26 April, the last Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon.

On 6 May, General Aoun landed at Beirut international Airport (which would later be re-named Rafiq Hariri International Airport), ending his French exile begun in 1991, as a result of the end of the civil war.

From 29 May to 19 June, legislative elections were held, with an electoral system drawing heavily on that of the 2000 elections – engineered in order to facilitate Syria's Lebanese allies, notably by heavy gerrymandering – which makes it a district-based majority list takes-all with preferences. In each district, the number of parliamentary seats are assigned in advance in ratio to the demographic relevance and relative power of the communities; voters can express as many preferences as the district's number of assigned parliamentary seats. The system is even made more interesting by the facts that lists can change their party composition in each district, and elections are held over a month (elections are held every week in a different governorate, which includes a few electoral districts; the exception is that of the South and of the Bekaa governorates, where elections were held on the same Sunday). The election delivered contradictory results: in the Beirut region the list of Saadeddine Hariri, Rafiq's son and his political heir, won; in the South, Hezbollah and Amal took the whole posts; in Mount Lebanon it was Aoun's time to win, while in the Bekaa the situation was more mixed; finally, in the North, Saad Hariri won the whole governorate by a tight margin. The electoral process had been marked by the predominance of sectarian logic and pragmatic political bargaining – for instance, in different governorates, Hariri and Jumblatt's bloc was allied with Hezbollah and Amal (allied more consistently in all districts), while Aoun was allied with pro-Syrian groups, most notably in the North, where a win could have given him a majority in the Parliament. In the end, the Sunni-Druze-Maronite Hariri-Jumblatt-Geagea 'opposition' bloc gathered a parliamentary majority of 72 out of 128 seats, 14 short of the two-thirds majority that was hoped for and would have been necessary for ousting President Lahoud (Saad, 2005-2006).

During the election month, on 2 June, the terrorist campaign resumed, but this time showing some new features by targeting specific individuals of some political or social notoriety: *al-Nahar* journalist and Université Saint-Joseph politics and history professor Samir Kassir was killed in Achrafieh when his car was blown up. After the end of the elections, on 21 of the same month Georges Hawi, former leader of the Lebanese Communist Party, was killed in the same manner; on 12 July Elias Murr, former Minister of Defence, was wounded in the explosion of his car in Antélias while one person was left dead and another ten were injured; and on 25 September, May Chidiac, anchorwoman of the Lebanese channel Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), was wounded in the explosion of her car. At the same time, the not-so-targeted terrorist campaign still continued: on 22 July, twelve people were injured in a blast on Rue Monot while US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in her diplomatic trip to Beirut; on the same day of the following month, twelve people were wounded in Zalka; and on 16 September, a bomb in Jeitaoui left one dead and twenty-two people hurt.

On 28 June Nabih Berri, leader of the Shiite party Amal Movement, was elected President of the Parliament. On 30 June Fouad Siniora, previously Minister of the Finance in Hariri's Government, becomes President of the Council of the Ministers. On 26 July, Samir Geagea, leader of the old 'militia-turned-party' Lebanese Forces, was released from prison after eleven years of detention, thanks to an *ad hoc* amnesty, one of the first decisions taken by the new Parliament.

On 30 August, Moustafa Hamdane, head of the Presidential Guard, and the generals Jamil as-Sayyed, former director of the Sûreté Générale, Raymond Azar, former director of Lebanese army intelligence services, and Ali al-Hajj, former director of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), were arrested. On 12 October, Ghazi Kanaan, head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon from 1982 to 2002, committed suicide in his Damascus office. On 20 October, Detlev Mehlis delivered his final report to the United Nations. In the report, Syria, despite not being directly fingered as the instigator of Hariri's homicide, appears to be suspected of having been involved in the planning. Further investigations by the same Commission, headed again by Mehlis before being replaced by Belgian Prosecutor Serge Brammertz in January 2006, would not add much more evidence.

Mehlis's report ended the political season of the 'Cedar Revolution'. At the same time, the international 'conjuncture' had started to change: the 25 January 2006 Palestinian general

elections delivered results that advised the US Bush administration to pursue further the more reformulation of its national security strategy, and therefore of its foreign policy towards the Middle East.

To sum up, then: firstly, the political season followed a trajectory of growing polarisation, and political manoeuvring and repositioning among groups. Secondly, the demonstrations were pacific and, initially, represented a spontaneous reaction to a barbarous homicide. However, and thirdly, that reaction was quite soon absorbed into the communitarian political game, and led and used by some pre-existing political groupings. Fourthly, it was a season of carnage, punctuated by targeted homicides and more terrorist violence. And, finally, it was marked by external interests and intervention.

Yet, what is uncertain is what it represented, and what results it achieved.

According to the slogans that people cried out during the demonstrations, the protestors' goals were 'Freedom, Sovereignty, Independence' (*Horryeh, Syedeh, Este'leh*) or, in another formulation, 'Truth, Freedom, National Unity' (*Ha'i'a, Horryeh, Wehdeh Watanieh*).

The arguably pro-Western website cedarrevolution.net (cedarrevolution.net, 2005), which strongly supports and identifies itself as being within the protesting movement, expresses the same objectives but reduces them to the following six: firstly, to "unite all Lebanese in their fight for freedom and independence"; secondly, to "oust Karami Pro-Syrian regime"; thirdly, to "fire the six Lebanese commanders of the nation's main security services along with the State Prosecutor"; fourthly, to "execute the complete withdrawal of the Syrian troops and their security services from Lebanon"; fifthly, to "run free and democratic parliament elections in spring 2005 away from Syrian interference"; and, finally, to "unmask the killers of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri". According to this source, which reflects the pro-'opposition' narrative of the period, all the goals, with the exception of the last - which is, according to the website, "ongoing" - have been "accomplished", and the first even "flawlessly accomplished".

The movement's results could be considered in a less emphatic matter: not all Lebanese were united, and certainly not all communities took to the streets in the same degree and because of the same reasons. In particular, Shiites offered a less important and visible contribution to its unfolding, even if some people belonging to that community were

certainly involved. Nicholas Blanford (2006, 161) argues something similar about the Sunnis, who were involved politically, in organising and supporting protesters thanks to Hariri family's political leadership, wealth, ownership, and clientele, but who showed up in large numbers in actual demonstrations only on one occasion – not considering Hariri's burial: at the last one, that of 14 March. Blanford probably downplays the Sunnis' role excessively, but certainly Christians and Druzes formed the backbone of the protesters. In addition, the general elections could hardly be regarded as perfectly democratic exercises, marked as they were by gerrymandering (a legacy of the Syrian regime from whose electoral law it was adopted) against which Christian protested with very low turn-outs in the first electoral week-end (following Aoun's call boycott – this system of protest has marked all Lebanese elections since 1992 (El Khazen, 2003, 65) – because the law 'minimised' Christian votes); bribery and vote-buying (practised notably, but not only, in the Northern governorate by Saad Hariri's Future Movement. In addition, the Future Movement introduced two novelties for Lebanon: firstly, Sunni clergymen pushed voters to perform their duty by voting for the Hariri's list and, secondly, Saad Hariri personally resided in Tripoli, outside of his residence region, for a whole week in order to supervise the electoral process.

More generally, and more soberly, the movement's objectives could be summed up as being three-fold: firstly, the conclusion of the Syrian army and intelligence services' presence in Lebanon - and, even more generally, the dismantling of the Syrian power system in Lebanon - and the re-establishment of Lebanese sovereignty on all Lebanese territory; secondly, the discovery of the 'Truth' about Hariri's assassination, in terms of both executors and instigators; and, thirdly, the transformation of the political system to a truly democratic one.

If these objectives are to be assessed, then none of them has been 'flawlessly accomplished'. As far as the first goal is concerned, of course the Syrian troop and intelligence service retreat has been achieved. However, it is much more doubtful that the whole intelligence apparatus and Syrian power system were dismantled. Syria assured Lebanon' fifteen-year *pax* through a complex network of alliances, which cut through communities, based on a sophisticated system of incentives and disincentives on the one hand, and due to a certain number of not completely legal groups working in the security and economic fields on the other hand - for these reasons, Samir Kassir (2003, 100-102)

preferred to define Syrian hegemony in Lebanon as a protectorate, and not as an occupation. However, the fist aspect of its apparatus, despite being considerably weakened by both the findings of the Lebanese judiciary alongside the UN Commissions and the electoral results, maintains a clear hold in Lebanon - most visibly, in President Lahoud's capacity to retain his office, which is certainly due to the high (two-third) parliamentary majority required by the Constitutional Law to dismiss the President of the Republic, but also to his political clienteles and alliances. For another example: elections were marked by Syrian meddling, which aimed at advocating certain alliances among parties, banning candidates, and supporting the inclusion of certain politicians in certain electoral lists. The wave of bombings that followed the 14 March demonstrations make evident the capacities that 'pro-Syrian' groups maintained in Lebanon. In addition, Lebanese sovereignty was not extended across all of the Lebanese territory: even excluding the refugee camps controlled by Palestinians, who gently refused to hand in their weapons after the Syrian retreat, parts of the South and of the Bekaa stayed under the control of the Resistance, Hezbollah's military wing, despite the strenuous efforts of the international community, in agreement with the central Government and the parliamentary majority.

The 'Truth' about Hariri's killing was not uncovered, at least on a formal level, in terms of a sentence being handed down as a result of a fair trial. UN investigation reports have fallen just short of formally directly accusing Syria because of a lack of substantial evidence, opting instead to stress the level of sophistication and technology required to carry out a homicide of such scale and importance, and lamenting the lack of Syrian cooperation while underlining the possible involvement of some Syrian regime figures. These have been sporadic accusations, most notably among them that of Abdul Halim Khaddam, the former Syrian Vice President now in exile, who was more direct in pointing the involvement of Bashar al-Assad's regime. Despite the strenuous efforts, particularly and comprehensibly on the part of Hariri's family, it is doubtful that an international trial could actually take place without excessively deepening communitarian and group divisions, hence unbalancing the unstable equilibrium assured by the system of alliances characteristic of the political and social Lebanese systems.

However, the most ambitious objective, in other words, the transformation of the Lebanese political - and arguably social - system into a truly democratic one, was certainly not achieved. At the moment of its maximum glory, on 14 March, the democratic logic that

had led the demonstrations started to be, at least visually, absorbed by and within the communitarian political game and replaced by a more familiar Lebanese logic. The dynamic of the election and its results highlighted it far too clearly. However, its legacy has maintained a polarisation, even if arguably only a cosmetic one, between political actors' choices and rhetoric: the post-election period has been marked firstly by an uncertain but then increasingly strong polarisation between two fields – those called the 14 March bloc, who refer to the wave of demonstrations and enjoy a slim parliamentary and allegedly popular support majority (centred on Hariri's Sunni Future Movement, Jumblatt's Druze Progressive Socialist Party, and Geagea's Maronite Lebanese Forces), and those who are sometimes referred to, in a mistaken taxonomy developed according to the old 'opposition' narrative, as the 8 March bloc (Nasrallah's Shiite Hezbollah, Berri's Shiite Amal, and Aoun's Maronite Free Patriotic Movement).

In a nutshell, assessed from the perspective of the movement's objectives as stated by the protestors themselves, the wave of demonstration has had mixed results. Does this influence its definition? I would argue that yes, it does.

The most ambitious of all proposed definitions was the US-advanced 'Cedar Revolution', in a reference to the most famous and glorious trees growing on Lebanese soil and, through this, to the national flag and to the most famous symbol of the Lebanese state. This name had the advantage of shedding a glorious and sacred 'light' on the protests – after all, Phoenician commercial and military ships were made of cedar wood, Egyptians used its resin for mummification, all ancient civilisations employed it in their most important buildings, including the Temple of Jerusalem at the time of Solomon, and the Bible refers to it in many passages. It also reminds one not only of the successful 1989 Czechoslovakian 'Velvet Revolution', but also, very strongly, of the much more recent 2003 'Rose Revolution' and 2004 'Orange Revolution'. However, and paradoxically, it reminded the sceptic that cedars not only do not cover all of the Lebanese territory but also, even more ironically, that today they are found mainly on the Chouf Mountain, heartland of the Druze community, and especially, particularly important from a symbolic point of view, on the top of Wadi Quadisha, the 'Holy Valley', a Maronite stronghold; in other words, such a definition highlighted that not all Lebanese communities and people were involved equally in the wave of demonstrations and that two communities were more

involved than others. This is exactly the contrary of what the definition wanted to hide. In addition, and even worse, the Cedar had been the symbol used by nationalist Christian militias during the 1975-1990 civil war, such as the Phalange, whose symbol is a stylised triangular cedar tree, and the Guardians of the Cedars, whose leader Etienne Sakr once proclaimed that it was the duty of every Lebanese person to kill at least one Palestinian.⁵

However, in spite of the advantage of implying a major socio-political change, the definition was proposed by the US. It risked thereby alienating the potential support of many Lebanese citizens, especially those belonging to the Muslim and Druze communities, and suggesting an even more deeply international and regional power involvement in the Lebanese scenario, hence absorbing it in a geopolitical game, even more than was already the case. Yet, the opposition somehow used this definition by choosing the national colours and flag as symbols of the protests. The aim, however, was not just to cast it in a favourable light externally, especially towards the US and France, but also internally: indeed the choice was not to pick the cedar but the national flag, which could appeal to a larger number of communities and which displays the cedar at its centre, in a hint to international powers. It is not surprising that the symbol, so capable of gaining maximum support both internally and externally, while balancing their contradictory needs, was studied and chosen by a committee formed by several intellectuals - most prominently, the late political scientist and journalist Samir Kassir - and the advertisement experts of the international firm Saatchi & Saatchi (Majed, 2005, 18).

In any case, what is important is that the definition was used widely and accepted by a certain number of participants. But really, was the wave of demonstrations a revolution (generally translated as *Thawra* in Arabic, and not as *Intifhada*)?⁶

According to Theda Skocpol (Skocpol, 1979), a distinction should immediately be made: social revolutions are rapid and radical transformations of a socio-political state system and its underlying class structure, accompanied and partially caused by class revolts arising from below; they therefore reflect a structural social change, and political change that coincides with social change – they are two self-reinforcing processes of change. There is no doubt that the protests enjoyed a relevant participation from below, but it is not so certain that they represented a class action. Protesters belonged more to the middle-class (which was the point made by those who nicknamed the wave of demonstrations the Gucci

Revolution)⁷, as opposed to ‘loyalist’ supporters, who belonged predominantly to the lower, peasant, class.

However, it is more doubtful that the sense of solidarity and interests shared within each of the two groupings was an expression of class. More generally, social transformation was not one of the goals of the revolution or, at least, a goal on which all protesters agreed. Of course the transformation of the political system into a democratic one implied not only the demise of political but also of social communalism. Even if sometimes declared by some political figures or small groups, this was never a goal shared by all participants. Most of all, the revolution did not reflect a structural social change, and certainly not a rapid one.

On the other hand, Syrian tutelage was seen as not allowing the economic development Lebanon could have wished for. After all, that was Hariri’s conviction, and allegedly the main reason that caused his political trajectory to collide with that of the Syrian regime. Economic interests had a role to play in the wave of demonstrations, as is confirmed by Hezbollah’s position, a reflection both on the relatively new urbanised Shiite middle-class and of the poor strata formed by its most trusted supporters, who were competing with cheaper Syrian seasonal migrant labour – for once, middle-class and lower-class interests worked together. And yet, class interests and economics were certainly never the major forces causing the political polarization.

Again, according to Skocpol, political revolutions transform state but not social structures and are not necessarily a result of a class conflict. The Lebanese protests aimed, first and foremost, to produce a political change - independence - and the creation of a democratic system, understood in terms of power delegation and accountability. Therefore the wave of demonstrations could not really fit within the general concept of revolution but within that of political revolutions. What is problematic is a requisite of Skocpol’s, who develops a structural socio-historical theory of social revolution through a comparative methodology, and who forcefully argues that the following is essential: quite simply, a revolution has to succeed; in other words, the socio-political transformation must represent an effective change of the state and of its class structure (Skocpol, 1979). The American sociologist aims to explain social revolutions; however, her point stands up better by leaving aside the class structure element and focusing only, for political revolution, on the element of an effective change of the state structure – as opposed to revolts: the trademark of revolutions

is the aim and the achievement of a substitution between political systems (with all that that includes - institutions, leaders, values, etc.), which are mutually incompatible.

That simply did not happen: despite a new polarisation and, to a certain extent, new alliances, Lebanon maintains all the features (community predominance over citizenship, institutions, elites and leaders, etc.) of the period before the wave of demonstrations. However, it succeeded in forcing Syria a withdrawal and in substantially weakening the role of Syria in its policy-making and more generally in its political life: 'independence', at least on a formal but maybe even on a certain substantial level, is the goal that doubtless has been achieved.

Therefore, the wave of demonstrations could be acceptably be named 'Political Revolution of Independence'.

However, Skopcol's approach does not seem to properly describe the actors involved in the wave of demonstrations and, to a certain extent, its causes, results and dynamic. Her analysis and definition need, therefore, to somehow be confirmed by other approaches to political revolutions.

It has to be pointed out immediately that the literature does not always follow the distinction between social and political revolutions, preferring to analyse the two phenomena in more general terms, and hence treating them as one. For example, Hannah Arendt, in her classical *On Revolution*, suggests that social revolutions are political phenomena characterised by both modernity and aim, which is the emergence of political freedom: "the aim of revolution was, and always has been, freedom" (Arendt, 1963, 11). It is, on the contrary, when a revolution attempts to solve the social (and economic) 'questions', and the effort is unlikely to be avoided, that it corrupts itself and unleashes the reign of terror. There can be no doubt that Lebanese wave of demonstrations was driven by a desire for more freedom, if we understand the terms in a very general sense as meaning the independence of the country, open political process, individual rights, rule of law, and political accountability. Therefore, the wave of demonstrations could be defined as a proper revolution. Unfortunately, Hobsbawm has harshly critiqued Arendt's notion of revolution, pointing out not only that it is not useful for any scientific social and political analysis but also Arendt's evident disinterest in 'mere facts'. According to the English historian, the German philosopher's analysis is marked by a "certain and metaphysical and

normative quality”, and by sometimes a “quite explicit old-fashioned philosophical idealism” (Hobsbawm, 1965, 253).

According to Marxist approaches to revolutions, such events reflect the separation between social forces of production and social relations of production, which results in a class conflict. What could be relevant here is, more than class conflict, which I have excluded above, the role played by intellectuals or particularly ‘advanced’ political groupings; a point that, already included in Marx’s thought, was highlighted by some of his followers, like Lenin, Gramsci, and Mao. The two different perspectives, in other words whether revolutions are mainly structural or voluntary processes, are not to be found only in Marxism; the question generally cuts through the different theoretical approaches. This criterion, centred on the role played by human agency, has led Kamrava (1999) to classify revolutions as spontaneous, planned and negotiated. Yet, if such a criterion is useful in order to classify resolutions, then it is useless in order to define it.

The socio-psychological approaches understand revolutions as specific expressions of the phenomenon of political conflict and violence. By following theories of cognitive categorisation and frustration-aggression of violent behaviour, these approaches view revolutions as a reaction to a ‘diffuse and intense relative frustration’, which is described as a non-coincidence between what is desired and what is received. A widespread frustration can be conducive to a mass revolution; socially localised frustration can lead to violent political action, and terrorism, or to an elite revolution (Gurr, 1970). Frustration was certainly both widespread and localised in Lebanon (especially in the Christian communities, and especially the Maronite community as a whole, which had undergone a period of relative decline of their hegemony due to the Taëf Agreement and Syrian tutelage). Yet the socio-psychological approach is more interested in understanding the conditions and the reasons of the unleashing of the process of political violence more than focusing on the specificity of the revolution. The assassination of Hariri, a figure who had represented both internally (even if a more nuanced way, because he was accused of being responsible of corruption, nepotism, and clienteles) and externally the reconstruction efforts of the post-civil war era, can have been perceived as the ultimate proof of a situation of domination, and therefore can have focused on that act the frustration that had accumulated over thirty years. If that is a convincing, even if excessively brief explanation of the emotional reaction to the homicide, it does not tell us much about the subsequent

political and social dynamic and, especially, whether the reaction constituted a revolution or not.

As socio-psychological theories, approaches derived from the more general field of studies of political conflict regard revolutions as specific expression of political conflict. Revolutions are, in other words, considered specific expressions of the normal processes of realist group competition for power. For instance, according to Charles Tilly, 'collective action', which is the common action of individuals determined by common interests, can follow two models. The first is a model of 'state action', the second of 'mobilisation'. The 'state action model' is a bureaucratic competition in which groups, and group members, divided between those who hold power and those who challenge the previous group, fight for power. This 'mobilisation model' includes variables, such as group interests, organisational levels, and group capabilities, which should make possible the framing of collective action. In such a framework, revolution is nothing more than a successful substitution between power holders. A revolution is successful if the challengers are able to obtain the support of the population; in its crudest formulation, whoever has access to "the control of real power" wins (Tilly, 1978, 213).

By recalling Organski's 'power transition theory' and realist view on politics – and indeed the basic reference proposed is that of Thucydides - such an approach can be useful for, generally, understanding at least some aspects of the Lebanese political system, a communitarian system that retains some features of the world of international politics, and therefore of the wave of demonstrations. Indeed groups, and political leaders, exploited the wave of popular emotional reaction to Hariri's killing in order to reach their own goals; in fact some groups had control of the sources of power, and they were able to guide the movement, to lead it, to use it, and to stop it when it had stopped being useful. What is more uncertain is whether the wave of demonstrations was a result of this, or on the contrary, whether the power-holders accompanied it and transformed it into a tool for their own political objectives. The dynamic of the wave seems to fit this latter account better. The wave of emotional reaction to Hariri's killing bonded individuals into a spontaneous and loose grouping immediately after the tragic event, but that bond, in spite of all attempts, remained somewhat weak, and resulted in intermittent political action: leaders of the protests were surprised by the wideness of the support both just after Hariri's killing and on 14 March. Certainly, the wave of demonstration showed groups allying - in Tilly's

models, power-holders and challengers can form bonds and alliances of course - and group common interests. Yet that is a recurrent feature of political life, according to realism, generally understood, and a simple, average observation of politics. What is more important, from this perspective, is that the wave of demonstrations appeared not to be only driven by those factors. Hence, this definition and interpretation of revolutionary dynamics, even if extremely useful for understanding the shaping and the steps of the protests, does not account for the factors that prompted it and for all of its features.

Systemic theories (which of course follow Parsons' framework) define revolution as violent reactions, by ideological movements, to significant social system disequilibrium (Johnson, 1966). This approach is not particularly relevant in this taxonomic exercise because it sees violence as having an essential role in the revolutionary process. Yet, in spite of that, it presents some insights into the process that could have started the wave of demonstrations. From this perspective, and according to this approach, a social system is fulfilled by a coordinated value system, which ensures the subjective internalisation of authority relationships. Revolutions are therefore a substitution, through necessary violence, between two value systems. If, for some reasons, such as external or internal intrusion – for instance, ideologies proposing new values or the appearance of some new technological developments -, the value system and the social system are not coordinated, then people are disoriented, and there is a space for revolutionary change: people are willing to adopt new value systems. If that is the case, authorities lose legitimacy; as a reaction, they can propose certain reforms or recur to coercion. However, this latter course is likely to be effective only for a limited time. If repression is excessive or too prolonged, it is revolution that will synchronise the value system and the social system again.⁸

In 2000, the death of Hafez al Assad, Bashar's father, was followed by a period of anticipation and relative liberalisation in Syria – the so-called 'Damascus Spring' – and by an outburst of public criticism in Lebanon, as a result also of the Israeli withdrawal from the South. After stopping the relative liberalisation in Syria, the regime took care of Lebanon by resorting to more coercive measures in cooperation with its Lebanese allies (Harris, 2006, 295): in fact, in Lebanon Hariri's assassination was commonly perceived as the latest and boldest move of a repressive regime. The theory of systemic change can help to explain the period that prepared the wave of demonstrations and maybe also some

features of its aftermath, but the necessity of underlying violence in order to pass from one value system to another rules it out as a reasonable account of the protest dynamic

More recently, works on revolutions have focused on the identity relations involved in the construction of the image of the 'Other', on rational choice explanations, and on understanding the sub-phenomenon of democratic revolutions. The third of these can be dealt with in two ways: regarding a democratic revolution primarily as a revolution, which implies depicting the 'democratic' element simply as a distinctive governmental arrangement, or on the contrary as a step in a more general process of democratization. This second trend will be dealt with later, alongside with democratic transitions. The first interpretation relies on the approaches of revolution so far sketched here, and therefore does not need any further assessment.

Works focusing on the construction of identities have not dealt with the question of defining what a revolution is. They accept a loose definition of it while understanding it as a particular expression of political conflict and narrative construction. Indeed they are more interested in the processes of identity polarization and the creation of narratives, images, and processes of social reality construction. What is more interesting in these approaches is how the processes of self-identification during political events, and therefore revolutions, and the construction of identities, read through a polarisation between the 'Self' and the 'Other', occur. The most interesting insights refer to a contraposition between post-modern (and civic) and pre-modern identities, which can of help in understanding some features of the Lebanese wave of demonstrations. However, they do not offer anything new to this taxonomy exercise, and I will therefore leave the discussion to chapter 3, which deals with general and theoretical aspects of analysing political change, and chapter 4, in relation to the Lebanese situation.

Similarly, rational choice approaches understand revolution as a specific category of political conflict, and they try to explain it by rationalising individual and agency behaviour - most commonly through adapted versions of the 'free rider problem' (Taylor, 1988) or the 'threshold model' (Granovetter, 1978). They are built upon the theory of collective action and power group competition. I have already noticed the usefulness of this approach but I have also pointed out that it cannot explain the beginning and all of the features of the Lebanese wave of demonstrations. For a very similar political event, or at least one that was hinted at as a model, namely the 'Velvet Revolution', Saxonberg (1999) has forcefully

argued that such models cannot explain people's behaviour. In general, the problem lies in the constructions of the models, which require at least the setting of some premises and rationalities according to which human behaviour is reconstructed: the approach is more sound for an elite revolution, while it faces its shortcomings in a mass movement where rationalities – even if we accept that there are some – are quite numerous.

It seems to me that, thus generally analysed, the definition of the wave of demonstrations as 'Political Independence Revolution' could be accepted. Even if none of the briefly summarised approaches fully explain its nature, beginning, results, features and dynamic, all of them combined can explain it. More generally, the actual event could fit relatively comfortably within such a definition. The first part of the definition – namely, political revolution - needs, however, to be compared to other proposed definitions in order to be confirmed. There could well be a more precise category.

I will firstly briefly compare the wave of demonstrations to the phenomenon of the revolt (the general concept which is expressed in Arabic by *Intifadha*). Then I will focus at greater length on the processes of democratic transition in order to finish with some notes on the idea of 'spring'.

Once again by following Theda Skocpol (1979), who clearly distinguishes between the revolt and revolution, the former may involve the upheaval of a subordinated class but it does not represent a structural change. Unlike revolutions, the requisite of success is not included in the definition while, similarly to them, revolts can represent spontaneous outbursts or the results of a group action. However, generally the idea of a popular spontaneous reaction to a certain political order fits better, and it is an event that characterises not only modern times, because it does not aim to achieve higher (political) freedom (to follow Arendt's arguments). In fact, a revolt can arise for more disparate reasons, including social and economic ones, which appear to be on the same level as the political ones. Most importantly, revolts do not carry within them an idea of a different political order: they do not aim to substitute one political system with a different one, but at best to replace political leaders within the same political institutional framework. Most of all, they do not represent, therefore, a rupture of a political order.

There can be little doubt that the wave of demonstrations was a revolt, a popular mass reaction to a political order felt to be repressive. Yet, if the interpretation of it as being mainly a political and emotional phenomenon remains correct, such a definition is not

enough: it aimed to end Syrian tutelage of Lebanon and, at least for the majority of protestors, to create a new political democratic order. Even if that was not achieved, the wave of demonstrations achieved the goal of ending the formal Syrian occupation. Therefore, it seems to me that 'Political Independence Revolution' remains a better way to describe the phenomenon.

The Arabic term *Intifadha* has been translated as 'upheaval', 'uprising', and 'revolt', while carrying a sense of 'shaking something off'— politically, domination. The definition has not been applied only to Palestinian revolts – it has also, for instance, been applied to the relatively recent military campaign of 2003 of Al-Sadr against the allied forces in Iraq, and the 1991 Shiite uprising against Saddam Hussein's regime – but it received its international fame thanks to the 1986-1993 First Palestinian *Intifadha* and the 2000 Second (or *Al-Aqsa Intifadha*): outbursts of political violence against Israeli forms of domination (the former still formally continues, the relative peace now in place being the result of a Palestinian truce. The proponents' aim was to hint at this, and not to other experiences of revolt. The two *Intifadhas* appear to share just a handful of features: the social, political and economic situation against which they both react, the use of violence, and the mixed results obtained. On the other hand, they are in stark contrast in terms of the tools of the struggle - stones, boycotts, strikes, meetings, civil disobedience, etc. versus Kalashnikovs and suicide bombers; leaders – *ad-hoc* city committees formed mainly by common people against political parties and groups; and category – spontaneous against planned. The common traits between the two underline that they were what they were claimed to be - revolts. The use of violence reinforces the non-applicability of it to the Lebanese wave of demonstrations. In addition, the Palestinian *Intifadhas* are so entrenched in the neo-colonial forms of political, social, economical, and identity group construction, and domination characterising the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and relationships, that the concept portrays the Syrian form of tutelage, and its grip on political, social, and economic life incorrectly. Politically, Syria 'had the last word', and managed to keep this capacity by shaping the political spectrum according to its interests by establishing alliances, pushing constitutional limits, controlling social figures and creating 'disincentives' – the whole range, from personal threats to blackmail to killing – and 'incentives' – offering economic and political gains. Economically, the Syrian state, but particularly groups (especially groups related to the military) exploited the Lebanese economy and open market for their semi-legal businesses. Socially, Syrian tutelage was not openly visible; by extending security needs, its

grip on social expressions of dissent were curtailed, but not to the point of not completely allowing it. For instance, Sélim Abou (2005), former Rector of the Jesuit Université Saint-Joseph analysed and denounced the social and cultural aspects of Syrian tutelage on Lebanon in a series of public annual speeches, pointing his finger at the creation of discourses legitimising it and the complacency of intellectuals in accepting the 'unwritten rules' of proper public and scientific questioning. Also, because they sparked much debate at the time (Mallat, 2005), they were a sign that freedom of speech was still permitted. Syrian tutelage was mainly political, with its social and economic appendages. Yet, Syrian predominance was built on the very features of the Lebanese political system and, it could be argued and I will do this in chapter 5, it was required by the system to a certain extent.

Also, unlike the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where identity construction processes follow relatively well-studied colonial and post-colonial features (for examples, see Fanon, 1967), in pre-demonstration Lebanon they presented quite different features: the exploited - or, at least, a section of them, and above them the Christians - constructed their 'Self/Selves' as hierarchically superior to the (Syrian) exploiter. The proposed social image pictured the Lebanese as economically better off, enjoying closer ties to the West, proficient in languages and more 'cultured' (in terms of achieving higher average educational levels) than the badly-paid Syrian worker, with no education, no language skills, and living in a autarchic dictatorship. The Lebanese 'cultural schizophrenic' (Shayegan, 2003) paradox was that, in terms of social images, Syria represented the politically over-powered machine exploiting Lebanon, at the same time as it did looking for a job in the morning and sleeping in a dump. The wave of demonstrations solved, for many Lebanese, the paradox.

The proponents of the *Intifadha* definition intended to overemphasise the Syrian role in Lebanon and the injustice of its domination – correctly or not, this is the widespread opinion held by Arabs towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, when used by more politically aware Christians, the definition aimed to stress the Arab character of the Lebanese nation, and therefore to imply a proposal to renew the National Pact, in an effort to reach the Sunnis and the Druzes (more than the Shiites who had not taken part in the Pact and who were, by far, the proportionally least involved community, among the most important ones). To summarise briefly, such a definition offered a framework conducive to the unification of communities, presenting a common ground acceptable both to Christians and Muslims. Finally, it aimed to refer to the commitment and to the incentive Palestinians

showed during, most notably, the First *Intifadba*, because the means employed during the Second *Intifadba* were never included in the proposal. Indeed, with the exception of some episodes of violence against Syrian immigrants and pro-‘loyalist’ supporters that resulted in a few casualties, violence was never hinted at and employed by ‘opposition’ groupings, supporters and sympathisers.

As is made clear the, *Intifadba* was more of an ‘operational’ concept, very much like ‘Cedar Revolution’. While the latter was more of a reflection of international actors’ goals and geopolitical competition than of the domestic context, the former was better equipped for internal struggle, for leading and shaping strategies and tactics. Indeed it has been, internally, the most successful proposal.

The wave of demonstrations could be seen as a moment of democratic transition too. This is the way it was understood by many, both internally and externally; and this was what some protesters, especially the students gathered in ‘Freedom Square’, wanted to achieve. In order to understand if that was really the case, I start by using an influential and widely used ‘working definition’, proposed for comparative purposes: a “democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*” (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 3).

The post-demonstration political situation would fit such a definition – if not perfectly, at least comfortably: an agreement was reached on procedures - despite some discomfort and denunciation of the adopted electoral law - a government came to power more or less as a direct result of a more or less free, popular vote, the government almost enjoys the authority to generate new policies, and the three branches of power, slowly re-generated by the new regime with new appointments (for instance, the Constitutional Council), almost do not have to share their *de jure* power - once they have been formed according to communitarian quotas, they formally do not share power.

I am aware of the pact that I have had to use too many qualifications: by returning to the power-sharing system engineered at Taëf and laid out in that agreement, or rather to its partial historic application, the wave of demonstrations resulted in re-proposing once again

the Lebanese dilemma: can Lebanon be considered a democracy? Or, in other words, does the interplay between the democratic and the communitarian logics produce a democratic system? I do not really need to deal with this question, and to give a precise and articulate answer to it. Here, it should be enough to add that the qualifications above could be reinforced by a less operational but more theoretically grounded, and yet very general definition, which widens Schumpeter's 'procedural' or 'formal' definition of democracy to include some 'substantial' elements. According to Grueger (2002),¹⁰ the concept of democracy is usually associated with a set of governmental institutions and processes. However, ultimately, it is the basic principles that are embodied in these institutions that make them democratic. These basic principles can be, in an extreme synthesis, restricted to two: the idea of popular control over public decision-making and decision makers; and the equality between citizens in the exercise of that control.

The two principles have been at least shakily applied in Lebanon: popular control over decision-making remains weak, if not absent; for instance, only one party, Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, felt compelled to present an electoral program – and that is probably the one party that behaved the least coherently in terms to its pre-electoral statements. Formally, in Lebanon equality between citizens in the exercise of control is absolute. Practically, it is quite difficult for certain strata of the population to exercise that control. Also, judiciary control is virtually absent. However, I am reminded, democracy is not an 'all-or-nothing' affair, but a matter of degrees: the degree to which people can exercise a controlling influence over public policy and policy makers, enjoy equal treatment at their hands, and have their voices heard equally. Therefore, for an attempt at a definition, that could be enough: we can hold on to the opinion that Lebanon can be considered, to some degree, a democracy. Maybe not a consolidated democracy, but one that is in transition, enjoying a process that began thanks to the wave of demonstrations... A sceptic could add: more or less as it has been since the creation of the Lebanese constitutional state, in 1926.

However, an additional problem that is raised by the definition of the wave of demonstrations as a democratic transition is the question of whether the Syrian tutelage of Lebanon could be depicted as a dictatorship. In their most general definition, Linz (1970, 255) has defined authoritarian regimes as "political systems with limited, not responsive, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilisation, except at some points in their

development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercise power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.”

It seems that such a definition fits comfortably: Syrian meddling in Lebanon allowed a certain pluralism, not really mobilisation, and the power was exercised by Damascus, at least in the last instance, but arguably also on a more everyday basis by its allies in the governmental structure. The dynamic of its stay in Lebanon, also, seems coherent with the general pattern experienced by authoritarian regimes in the late twentieth century. According to Huntington (1991, 46-58), those regimes have been immediately welcomed with a sense of relief because they represented a solution to previous political instability and disorder. In this first phase, the regime benefited from a ‘negative legitimacy’, granted by the reaction to previous inefficiencies. However, ‘negative legitimacy’ declined over time: time weakens the very reason for their popular acceptance – exceptionalism. The regime can respond to its loss of legitimacy by taking different courses of action, among them becoming more repressive and recurring more frequently to coercion. This course of action can work, especially if the main leaders all agree to it, or it can not work. In the Lebanese case, not all Lebanese leaders welcomed the more repressive measures introduced since 2000, and that could be assumed to be the reason why the Syrian authoritarian regime was not able to maintain its hold on society and politics.

Continuing to consider the Syrian withdrawal from a democratisation perspective, the wave of demonstrations caused a regime change, which followed the model of replacement - to follow Huntington’s terminology. In addition, it could be added that during the ‘third wave’ of democratic transitions mass revolutions played a role in all successful transitions, even if not a pivotal one in all of them. If, therefore, we consider Lebanon, post-Syrian tutelage, as, at least some degree, a democracy, we could accept the definition of the wave of demonstrations as the turning point of a process of, to some degree, democratic transition. From this point of view, if consolidation and the achievement of the ‘two-turnover test’ (two peaceful elections involving at least one change of power) have not been reached it is only because they need a ‘technical time’ to be confirmed.

In general, the literature on democratic transitions does focus on democracy as a category of institutional arrangements, not considering the way the transition happens as particularly relevant. In particular, if the transition is carried out by violent or peaceful means seems not to constitute one of its essential requisites. However, the Lebanese wave of

demonstrations was distinctly peaceful, and therefore it seems to me it could be comfortable to define it, always regarding Syrian tutelage as creating an authoritarian regime, as a 'Peaceful, at Some Degree, Democratic Transition' – which is not an elegant way to define it of course.

Finally, the literature on democratisation draws a distinction between democratic transition and liberalisation. The latter can precede the former, but this is not always the case because democratisation does not seem to follow a linear trajectory. More importantly, the two concepts are theoretically sharply divided: political liberalisation refers to a mix of policies and social changes, such as less censorship, greater autonomy for social groups, the release of prisoners and the introduction of some individual rights, and the tolerance of opposition. However, it is a process that can be conducive to 'transformation' but it does not entail a change of political system, which remains authoritarian. From the same point of view, it is a process led from the top in order to adapt a political institution and maintain or regain some legitimacy.

The concept of liberalisation is useful in order to assess the occasionally used proposed definition of the wave of demonstrations as a 'Spring', which was meant to refer both to the beginning of the actual season, in other words to the time of the year when the wave of demonstrations took place, and to the 1968 'Prague Spring', a period of liberalisation led by Czech communist leader Alexander Dubcek and ended by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies' invasion, which was marked by non-violent expressions of dissent, at their maximum degree expressed through the self-immolation of the student Jan Palach. The 'Prague Spring' offers itself to many analytical perspectives. However, at a very general level, it can be depicted as a liberalisation enjoying a strong popular support: the Lebanese events do not fit the definition, because the regime had never intended to propose any degree of liberalisation.

Conclusion

I have tried to understand whether the Lebanese wave of demonstrations could fit the definitions proposed by the participants, as validated by science. The definition of the event as a 'spring' did not fit the event at all, while that of 'Independence *Intifadba*', the one that has gained the most widespread acceptance in Lebanon, was confirmed only partially –

as far as the first term is concerned but not the second term. Similarly, none of the proposed definitions describe perfectly the actual events despite the fact that the comparison has been carried out at a very general level; those that seemed to fit better all required some qualifications. However, this is hardly a surprise: a good theory is precise and elegant, in other words it explains the phenomenon being studied in a very concise manner by using the lowest number of variables. However, it seems that there is something more here, because all definitions are missing not secondary features of the political event, but certain essential characteristics. Definitions, in spite of being essential to science, are a risky enterprise. In any case, it seems to me that, in order to predict the future, definitions are not particularly relevant, while processes may be more relevant. The two definitions that could describe, more or less convincingly but yet reasonably, the wave of demonstrations, their beginning, results, features, and dynamic are the not-very-elegant ‘Political Independence Revolution’ and ‘Peaceful, to Some Degree, Democratic Transition’. They result from somehow different scientific sub-fields of political research – the study of revolutions and processes of democratisation – despite the fact that they both belong to the same field: political change. Should it therefore have been predicted?

It could be suggested that one of the sources of the difficulties researchers could be facing when trying to understand the political, economic, and social situation of Lebanon pre-August 2004 is excessive specialisation. In truth, the problem is bit more general, because Popper’s criteria of scientific knowledge makes science a conservative enterprise (see chapter 2).

Systemic theories and socio-psychological approaches to revolution, along with those concerned with democratic transition, seemed to explain reasonably well the causes and beginnings of the wave of demonstration – which I will call, from now on, ‘Political Independence Revolution’ because it is more convincing than ‘Peaceful, to Some Degree, Democratic Transition’, which relies judging the Lebanese as a (at least to some degree) democratic system. Theories of collective action, and more generally realist approaches to politics (including rational choice theory), systemic theory and constructivist approaches and, again, democratic transition theories appear to account collectively reasonably well for its features, results and dynamic.

It would appear that the Political Independence Revolution could have been predicted by simply applying the available knowledge. What this suggests is that excessively elegant

theories and, generally speaking, the sub-fields of scientific research could be undermining the possibility of understanding the human phenomenon. In chapter 3 I will try to build a general framework, based on a holistic and comprehensive approach that still aims for clarity and elegance, which could be appropriate for predicting political change. Before undertaking this exercise, I will try to understand whether predicting the future can be scientifically valid, at least as much as explaining, or understanding, the present and the past can be.

¹ This brief history is drawn from my reading of international newspaper in the three languages I am most confident (Italian, English, and French), and especially from the Lebanese dailies *The Daily Star* and *L'Orient Le Jour*. Also, see Blanford, 2006; Harris, 2006; Iskandar, 2006; Knio, 2005; Safa, 2006; Young, 2006; and Kassir, 2006. A collection of excellent photographs of the demonstration period is offered by Schiller and Zahar, 2006.

² According to Walid Jumblatt, political leader of the Druze community and of the Progressive Socialist Party, who reported that Hariri personally told him that during that meeting Bashar al-Assad had told Rafiq Hariri that “[President of the Republic] Lahoud is me. If you and [President of the French Republic] Chirac want me out of Lebanon, I will break Lebanon”. If we take into consideration the important role played by Jumblatt during the 2005 events as a central figure of the opposition, there is a strong suspicion of at least the presence of a vested interest: indeed Jumblatt took good care to inform all of the Lebanese and international press of the matter, of course after the death of Hariri, while adding “when I heard him [Hariri] telling us those words, I knew that it was his condemnation of death” (for instance, reported in *The New York Times* by MacFarquhar, 2005; Jumblatt’s account is quoted but not confirmed in the Fitzgerald report, the result of a UN information gathering commission that arrived in Beirut after Hariri’s assassination). However, Hariri’s entourage confirmed the nature of the meeting, if not the exact words quoted by Jumblatt.

³ I will employ the adjective ‘loyalist’ and not ‘pro-Syrian’, despite the fact that the former was maybe less commonly used at the time, because I believe that it, more so than the latter term, accounts for all the different strategies followed by the groups referring to that position. I hint here particularly at Hezbollah, but also at the Amal Movement, at the Interior Minister Suleiman Franjeh, and at the Prime Minister Omar Salamé.

⁴ On 28 February, not many people were expecting the Government to resign; certainly not the members of the ‘opposition’ (even if, maybe, some dreamer could have anticipated it). On the contrary, the Parliament was largely supposed to confirm its confidence in the Government: Prime Minister Karamé still enjoyed the parliamentary majority. His surprise move requires a few

considerations. Firstly, from a legal point of view, the constitutional legitimacies of the Parliament and, therefore, of the Government were clear. On the other hand, from a political perspective, the ‘opposition’ argued that the Government was only an expression of Syrian presence and power in Lebanon and, hence, it did not enjoy popular legitimacy. Of course, the demonstrations that followed Hariri’s burial reinforced such a claim. Always according to the ‘opposition’, the Parliament, on the contrary, was legitimated (at least until the scheduled general elections); the point was underlined by the presence of all the Members of the Parliament (MPs) belonging to the ‘opposition’ (with the notable exception of Walid Jumblatt, but because of personal security reasons) at the session of 28 February. In a nutshell, the ‘opposition’ claimed that only the Parliament was legitimate, and not the Government, which enjoyed the support of the majority in that Parliament and had been formed according to Lebanese constitutional law and practice. However, the majority could not confirm Karamé because he resigned before a confidence vote. Now, and secondly, considering that he was aware of the existence of a certain ‘loyalist’ popular support’ (demonstrated a few days later by the 8 March gathering), why did he decide to step down? It is not clear, at least to my knowledge. The following are a few hypotheses: 1. Contrary to all accounts, the Government would not have enjoyed majority support: in particular, Hezbollah, which the previous October had not granted it its confidence, would have refused to support the Government if needed, as it had repeatedly stated; 2. Karamé would have been heavily personally shocked by the ‘opposition’ ’s verbal assaults, and especially by those of MP Bahiya Hariri, sister of the former Prime Minister; 3. In order to avoid being accused by the ‘opposition’ of being politically responsible for Rafiq Hariri’s death, Karamé would have asked some security service officials to resign: after their refusal, the only choice left to him would have been the step down; 4. More generally, the ‘loyalist’ bloc would have decided not to offer ‘an easy target’ to the ‘opposition’: without a ‘pro-Syrian’ Government, ‘loyalists’ would have been able to ‘move more freely’ and, at the same time, the ‘opposition’ would have been left with only an external target (Syria) to attack, and not an internal one; and, 5. Popular pressure would simply have been too strong. Despite the fact that it seemed unlikely at the time (not only but also because, in announcing his decision, Karamé acknowledged that the majority of MPs were ready to confirm the Government), the first option has gained ground in light of subsequent events and especially of Hezbollah’s strategic choices. Simply put, Hezbollah could have failed to assure its ‘allies’ that it was ready to throw its weight firmly behind the ‘pro-Syrian’ side. For Karamé, popular pressure could have been too strong. However, none of the hypotheses above can be ruled out. In the end, Karamé was probably forced to step down by a combination of them all.

⁵ In exile since 2000, Sakr published, in December 2005, in *MERLA (Middle East Review of International Affairs)*, an excellent, even if unsurprisingly vehemently anti-Syrian, analysis of the Syrian tutelage of Lebanon concerning the features of Syrian order in Lebanon, the making of the Cedar Revolution, and the problems Lebanon faces and the steps politicians should take in order to solve them (Sakr, 2005).

⁶ On revolutions, other than the works quoted in the main body, see Goldstone, 2001; Huntington 1968; Moore, 1967; and Walt, 1996.

⁷ The nickname reflected both the fashion some women wore while protesting and the fact that the movement was, in that month, quite fashionable itself. A story has been reported, which gives an idea of the contradictions espoused by this ‘freedom’ movement: a high-class lady demonstrated with her Asian maid (who held the national flag) and shouted what her employee suggested. For instance, see Ghattas, 2005).

⁸ Borrowing heavily from systemic approaches, Thomas Kuhn outlined the revolutionary dynamic in order to compare it to the dynamic of scientific revolutions and therefore show their analogies. After defining a scientific revolution as “a non-cumulative developmental episode in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one” (Kuhn, 1996, 92), he recalls

the dynamic of the political revolution. According to his analysis, a political revolution begins with a growing sense, by members of the community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. Initially, the dissatisfaction with existing institutions is generally restricted to a segment of the political community. However, in growing numbers, individuals become increasingly estranged from political life and behave more and more eccentrically within it. As crisis deepens, individuals commit themselves to some concrete proposal for the reconstruction of society in a new institutional framework. Competing camps and parties are formed, and polarisation starts: one camp seeks to defend the old institutional setting, while one or more camps seek to institute a new political order. As polarization occurs, political recourse fails. Parties to a revolutionary conflict finally resort to the techniques of mass persuasion.

⁹ The *Intifadhas* are very much a step in the whole history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that that history and context should take into account. The literature on it is particularly extensive: see, in general, Laquer and Rubin, 1995; Schulze, 1999; Bregman and al-Tahri, 1998; Shlaim, 1999; and Morris 2001. I am drawing mainly from Morris in my brief analysis of the two Palestinian *Intifadhas*.

¹⁰ My colleague at the Università Cattolica Enrico Fassi, whom I am glad to be able to thank, pointed me in the direction Grueger's work.

2.

REALLY? Epistemology and Foreseeing

“Toute ‘bonne’ théorie scientifique consiste à proscrire: à interdire à certains faits de se produire. Sa valeur est proportionnelle à l’envergure de l’interdiction.”

Karl R. Popper (1985, 64)

This chapter deals with the epistemological conditions on which it is possible to base the scientific prediction of the future. Prediction is one of the most important aims of scientific enquiry and, for some, arguably one concerning its very nature. Knowledge *per se* remains science’s main goal, but prediction represents its legitimising principle: if a theory explains something according to some conditions, and then when those conditions are fulfilled but it does not happen what it was predicted, the theory is held to be mistaken. More specifically, however, this chapter tries to understand if it is possible to scientifically predict political change and, therefore, the historical transformation of the forms of interaction among human beings that concern both authority and social organisation in a historically and geographically determined group.

Hence, the epistemological bases of such a prediction concern both the general epistemology of knowledge – whether or not science can actually predict – and the more specific epistemology of human and social sciences – whether or not science can actually predict human behaviour.

Fred Halliday (2005, 4-7), in his latest work *The Middle East in International Relations*, passionately refuses the concept according to which social sciences should aim to predict. It is unreasonable, he argues, to request that social sciences copy the natural sciences when the latter are very much unable to advance reasonable predictions. On the contrary, social sciences should focus on explaining the past in order to highlight the main tendencies of the present. In other words, the past can help to explain what has shaped the present.

As a preliminary, it has to be said the activity of explaining the past in order to understand the present is epistemologically risky, because it can mean interpreting the past according to the present – and that can happen when the researcher lives in the present and analyses the past. This perspective can cause the researcher to fall into what is called the hermeneutical cycle, which particularly concerns the comprehension of written texts but is of interest to every scientific activity involving interpretation, and therefore historical analysis as well. The hermeneutical cycle is the problem of how to understand a text and, at the same time, its single parts: each part should be considered alone, in its own meaning, and then combined with the other parts, and their own meanings, in order to shed light on the meaning of the whole. Yet, in order to understand the individual parts, we need to understand the whole. In other words, the hermeneutical cycle is formed when the part is given a meaning because of the whole, and the latter is given a meaning because of the former.

From a historical perspective, any single moment and event in the past is assigned a certain meaning according to what it has produced, and the past is used in order to better understand the present: even if temporally displaced, it is still the whole that gives meaning to the parts, and the parts to the whole. In fact, how do I know that the event did not mean something different in the moment in which it happened? Or, similarly, how do I know that a factor that now seems important in fact did not have a role in producing the present? Because I relate it to other events and meanings and therefore I understand the single event and factor as a reflection of the whole. Yet, if I use the past in order to highlight the present, then I am reading the whole according to the parts, and therefore I fall into the hermeneutical cycle. Expressed in a different way: I find that the past sheds some light on the present because I am looking at it from the present. But how can I know that those parts are exactly the ones that maintain a relationship to the present, and not others that I am not able to identify?

Hermeneutics, and historical analysis, have found their own ways of dealing with the problem (for instance, they transform the circle into a spiral), and I am not suggesting that Halliday is not aware of it. More generally, the question here is concerned with whether the present can really help us to understand the past. As Bertrand Russell observes, if a chick receives its feed every day, it will be justified in thinking it will always be like that. Yet, one day, the person who was feeding the chick kills it: that was the very reason he/she was

feeding the chick. Until the moment the chick is killed, the past justified its theory. Unfortunately, it was clearly and tragically an incorrect theory - for the chick.

Halliday's position implies that an interpretation of the past is right until proven wrong by a certain event in its future – the present, according to which the past has been interpreted, confirms the interpretation of the past and, hopefully, the future will keep confirming it. Such a position is an apparent application of Popper's or Lakatos' criteria of scientific knowledge. However, by following Popper, this approach provides theories that cannot be tested precisely because they refuse to predict and do not take any risks, and therefore it cannot be regarded as scientific; and, similarly, the refusal to make predictions condemns such theories to not being in compliance with Lakatos' criteria.

In addition, to refuse prediction but to accept the possibility of knowing the present through the past is logically flawed: to say that the past can help to explain the present implies that it maintains a certain relationship with its future, which is the present. And therefore, the present maintains a certain relationship with the future. The problem is to discover what, in the past or equally in the present, is related to the future. Arguing that the past can be understood only by looking at it from the present is reasonable, but a bit too easy. It is intuitive that the past can be better understood from the present, because it is possible to analyse a phenomenon as a whole, have access to a wider amount of information, etc. but, epistemologically, it does not make such a big difference. The problem is how to understand the phenomenon as a whole while it happens, and among the parts that form the whole to discern which ones are linked to the future.

In spite of Halliday, science is indeed an activity of prediction: if I push a key in order to switch on this very computer that I am using to type this thesis, science tells me that the computer will start to work for certain reasons. In other words, science is a specific way, and nothing else, of predicting. It can do it deterministically, or according to trends, or conditions, or to causes, or according to probabilities, but science is still based, in general, on the idea that it is able to explain, or to understand, the relationships between phenomena.

Hence, the question concerns the relationship between the past, the present, and the future; and, more generally, the meanings of links and assumptions we can accept in order to infer one phenomenon from another, and therefore in order to explain and regard a

statement as 'true'. This question has been the very object of the speculation of philosophy of science.

I will try to deal with the question as little as possible, because I am not a philosopher of science. In addition, it should suffice to sum up some of the main general points. I will outline, firstly, the general epistemological debate on the criteria of scientific knowledge by following an outline history of the philosophy of science focused on the last century. The discussion concerns both natural sciences and social science; the latter, in fact, have been established thanks to a device proposed by the founding fathers of sociology, especially Stuart Mill and Comte, namely 'objectifying' human phenomena by assuming that social events can be explained in terms of social constructs, and therefore by treating human events as natural events (Dilthey, 1900).

Of course, the profiles raised by general epistemology also concern the human sciences. However, the latter consider the human being their object of enquiry. The fact that he/she is a 'total' and unique phenomenon, in any sense but especially in terms of both time and space, forces human sciences to face specific difficulties when being considered sciences, and to somehow rely on different criteria of scientific knowledge. What I am trying to understand – whether there could be some epistemological foundation to a scientific prediction of the future of political, and therefore human, change – requires that we deal with two, in a certain measure, different questions: whether there can be, and what are in the affirmative, the criteria of scientific knowledge that could suit both social and human sciences. I will treat the two questions as distinct.

As far as the natural sciences are concerned, it was at the beginning of Western philosophy that philosophers started trying to reason about how is it possible to 'truly know' an object. According to Aristotle, four causes, the 'reasons' according to which a phenomenon is produced, (as opposed to 'conditions' - 'reasons' without which the phenomenon is not produced) are necessary in order to know an object: its formal cause, which is the idea it is possible to have of an object; its material cause, or the object itself; its final cause, or the aim of the object; and, its efficient cause, what produces the object.

Since the eighteenth century, scientific enquiry into the conditions of knowledge in the natural world has maintained that only the efficient cause is necessary; in other words, knowing what produces the object is enough to grasp it, and therefore know it. In fact, for

the determinists the efficient cause automatically determines the object, and therefore becomes the 'reason' of its very existence.

Hume refuses causality, because he argues that the origin of all ideas is 'feeling': it is not possible to 'feel' causality, or to experience it, and therefore it does not exist. Causality is a human product, a way of ordering reality, and another name for personal experience. Contrary to Descartes, he accepts knowledge only as a product of experience. Therefore, he introduces a double limitation: the knowledge available to human beings is limited by the agent, the human being – and the only way of knowing it (Butchvarov, 1959) – and is confined within the world in which he/she lives. The result is that science is the way in which the human being explains how the world which he/she can 'feels' works: the method is clearly observation and experimentation.

However, experience is not enough in order to judge if something is true or not. As Popper (1978) points out, the observation of a number of white swans does not justify the conclusion that all swans are white. More generally, the problem, which is called 'the problem of induction', concerns how to rationally accept the truth of a statement as found through observation. It is clear that truth obtained by observation cannot base itself only on logic. The justification of accepting as true – and therefore universal - the results of observation and experimentation needs to be based on what is called a 'principle of induction', which must be a synthetic statement, in other words a statement whose negation is not in contradiction but logically possible (for instance, swans are white), or deduction would be a better way to offer true statements. However, the principle needs to be universal, because to base it on experience requires anchoring the observation on a principle belonging to a superior level, which needs to be based on another one, and this way regressing until infinity.

Kant solved the problem by basing the principle of induction – which he called the 'principle of universal causality' – as 'valid *a priori*', in other words, it does not follow from experience, it is based inside the human being. Indeed it is inside every human being that the universal and the specific meet, and therefore there is no need to base induction on principles belonging to different levels. Causality is a fundamental category of the human soul (therefore *a priori*) which applies it in order to recognise synthetic judgements derived from experience as being true: it is the very way the human being works that allows true knowledge.

At the beginning of the last century, quantum physics undermined Kant's solution: the impossibility of predicting the trajectory of an electron when hit by a photon led Heisenberg to conclude that truth is never certain. At best, truth can be based only on probabilities, when many numbers are involved, but the single event escapes being held as true. In other words, causality can be understood and maintained as probability, but that means certain knowledge becomes impossible. What is important here it is that truth, and the possibility of human knowledge, leaves the human being. From this moment, the rational basis of science needs to be anchored in something else.

The philosophers belonging to the Vienna Circle offered logic and probability. More particularly, they held that empirical findings maintain a certain degree of truth, in terms of the number of cases observed: there is a scale of truth, and not a single truth. However, Popper (1978) points out that such a solution is not really a solution: inductive inference would still need to be based on a principle of induction modified to accept probable truths. And therefore requiring again a principle of a superior level, etc. – exactly as before.

For him, the solution can be found in the method, or in the 'deductive method of control'. According to this method, a hypothesis can be accepted as valid, and true, only after being tested empirically according to a test advanced before its statement. Indeed, today social sciences most commonly work through his hypothetical-deductive method.

His 'procedural' criterion of knowledge follows on from some basic considerations, which follow a precise reasoning and can be summed up as follows: firstly, if we search for confirmations, it is not difficult to find them for the majority of theories. Therefore, the question is: how can we distinguish between scientific and non-scientific theories if the criterion of factual confirmation cannot be maintained? Secondly, the answer is that confirmations cannot have any value if they result from predictions that did not involve a certain risk of being proved not valid. Therefore, considering that the nature of every good theory is to proscribe, which means to interdict certain outcomes, then (thirdly) every theory that is not refutable by an imaginable event declared in advance of its proposal is not scientific. To conclude, to scientifically prove a theory means to try to disprove it – this is a matter of degree and risks involved in the theory – according to authentic tests, or tests that can actually disprove it. And, to qualify this, new *ad-hoc* interpretations of the theory that allow it to pass tests and falsifications are acceptable, but the scientific statute of the theory is ruined or, at least, affected. To present Popper's criterion from another

perspective: a theory can be scientific even if there is no evidence whatsoever supporting it. The distinction is no longer between scientific and un-scientific theories, but between scientific and un-scientific methods.

This is a quite a shift from the previous philosophy of science: science does not base its rationality on the human being, but on itself, on its method that, clearly, is 'simply' a technique.

However, Kuhn (1996) refuses the idea according to which any knowledge is possible, and therefore that technique has an internal rational logic. According to him, science has nothing to do with truth. By adopting a historical perspective, he argues that the history of science is nothing other than a succession of different scientific 'paradigms', which are models of science involving a theory, a method, and a system of beliefs. The arising of anomalies, in other words, cases which the 'hegemonic science' cannot explain, produces the emergence of another paradigm, which is another science that is able to explain the anomaly. The succession between different paradigms, however, is not linear and does not involve an idea of progress. In many ways, science is a social product, and is not related to truth.

Kuhn marks the shift from the issue of truth to that of power, in his case mainly social power, which will characterise epistemological enquiry for the last part of last century. In fact, his starting point is that a scientific community cannot work without a set of established beliefs, which are received through 'rigid and rigorous' educational preparation. In other words, a scientific community sustains 'normal science' through reproducing it in the minds of future members of the community. Scientific enquiry becomes, therefore, an enterprise aiming to force nature into the boxes provided by the scientific paradigm, and to exclude anomalies. Passing from one paradigm to another is therefore indeed a revolution, seen roughly as a proper struggle for power between a resisting community and a new scientific community that has been able to establish new assumptions through the re-evaluation of previously known facts. There is no rationalism driving the process, it is a matter of chance and struggle. From another perspective, therefore, scientific power is not justified by the rationalism of the scientific endeavour.

Lakatos (1978) accepts some of Kuhn's arguments, while attempting to defend rationalism in science. In order to do that, he tries to disentangle science from power by reformulating Popper's approach. In particular, he refuses to accept the relativism that Kuhn's position

involves but he has to agree that anomalies do exist. He actually concedes even more: anomalies not only exist, but they are part of the very enterprise of science and characterise all theories all through their lives - a theory is 'born' with anomalies and dies with anomalies'. However, by building on Popper's reasoning, he claims that a scientific theory is not simply a relationship between facts, but an expression of a wider research programme. Facts can prove a theory wrong, but that is in the nature of the research programme, which modifies itself in order to accommodate the anomaly. Hence, the problem is not to look for theories with no anomalies, but to distinguish between 'good' (scientific) and 'bad' (non-scientific) research programmes - and not between scientific and non-scientific theories. Popper's disproof solution can hold for research programmes but not for theories. In fact, research programmes can be, in one way or another, disproved immediately after they are stated - for instance, Newmann, a distinguished physicist, disproved Einstein's relativity theory just after it had been affirmed.

The criteria Lakatos proposes is that scientific, or progressive, research programmes are those that are able to predict novel and exceptional facts - and one of the examples he offers is that of Halley who, working in Newton's programme, calculated to the minute when the comet which is named after him would appear at a certain point in the sky seventy-two years later, when he was long dead. On the contrary, pseudo-scientific, or degenerating, theories are fabricated only in order to accommodate established facts. According to Lakatos, Marxism, for instance, which Popper had already ruled out as scientific (as opposed to Marx's work, which he regarded as properly scientific), has never predicted a 'stunning novel fact' successfully. Marxism explains facts and events *ex-post*, by successive modification of the theory, and not *ex-ante*. Scientific enquiry can be regarded as rational because scientists tend to join progressive research programmes while abandoning degenerating ones. Rationalism is therefore based on both science and human beings, and 'scientific power' is justified by claiming rationalism in the process of improvement of science.

From another perspective, Lakatos, therefore, sets the future as the very criterion of scientific knowledge. However, his argument is weak: firstly, by following Popper he refuses facts as criteria for judging the scientific status of a theory only to reintroduce them as the main criterion, even if he places them in the future and qualifies them as necessarily exceptional, as 'stunning novel facts'. And, secondly, as noted above, by placing such

‘exceptional’ confirmation facts in the future he does not solve the basic problem: how can we know that a fact has been produced as the theory predicted, but not according to the reasons on which the theory is based? I recalled earlier that the efficient cause is the reason of the object (if we are determinists), but that can hold if the experiment is repeatable. Yet an ‘exceptional’ fact is, by definition, not usually available and therefore not so easily repeatable. The problem is not so important as far as natural sciences are concerned, but it is indeed important for the social sciences, and essential for human sciences, which research non-reproducible phenomena.

Feyerabend (1975) is not impressed with Lakatos’ efforts both to find a rational solution to the problem of scientific enquiry, and to justify scientific power because of its rationalism. He actually bases his ‘anarchist theory of knowledge’ on power. From two perspectives: firstly, in internal terms, or considering the very nature of scientific progression; and, secondly, in external terms, or according to the relationship between structures of power (such as, and mainly, the state) and science.

From the first point of view, according to him, science is an essentially anarchist enterprise, because the only principle that actually does not inhibit progress is ‘anything goes’. Scientific progress cannot be guaranteed by only ensuring consistency between well-established theories and new hypotheses, because the latter only preserve the previous, and the outcome can only be scientific aridity. On the contrary, a proliferation of theories is beneficial for science, while uniformity undermines science’s critical power. Truly, we should accept that any idea is capable of improving our knowledge. Any theory faces some anomalies (Kuhn and Lakatos both agreed on this), and that is because facts can be constituted by older ideologies (one aspect of the work of power) - a clash between facts and theory can be a sign of scientific progress instead of demonstrating the non-scientific character of the theory. Also, more historically, Popper has described something that really never existed; if science had applied his criterion, we would not have science, or at least not as we know it.

In fact, and from the second point of view as far as power is concerned, to be honest myth and science are strikingly similar. Science won over mythology not because of a superior ability to explain facts, but because it had been linked to power – that of the modern state. Indeed modern science did not convince its opponents, but ‘over-powered’ them. To link science to rationalism, and therefore to disentangle the historical role power has had both

in supporting science and in using it for its own goals, is not just unrealistic but it is pernicious because it limits individual freedom through the status (power) that science enjoys. Also, it is a dangerous operation for science itself, because it makes it too dogmatic by neglecting historical circumstances that influence scientific change. On the contrary, theories should be tested according not to their own methodology but according to different ones – in other words, different systems of thought. Feyerabend aims to break the universal validity associated with science, and therefore to disentangle science from power and, as a result, free both science and the human being. The result of the attempt is, however, absolute scientific relativism.

If we follow Feyerabend, and more generally post-structural and post-modern thought, there is no truth, not science. Scientific programmes become (part of) narratives and meta-narratives that do not present a more scientific character than narratives, or explanations and ideas believed by any human being. Theories are entangled with power, and refusing to allow them to be carriers of any particular values can only improve individual freedom. What becomes important is therefore to understand how power, and science, shape reality, and the human being.

To sum up: during the last century, epistemological thought has been marked by a shift from the issue of truth, and rationalism, to that of power. In other words, from the problem of understanding if truth can be justified in rational terms to the more political question of recognising the role power has in constituting truth and, in turn, the power that truth holds. Therefore, the central problem for the prediction of the future turns out to be not really whether predictions can be scientific, but whether or not it is possible to maintain rationalism in scientific enquiry, while freeing it from its close relationship with power.

The two issues are quite different, and belong to two different orders. The first issue is concerned with how rational scientific knowledge is, and specifically whether or not facts can validate a theory or if it is the internal structure of science that confirms truth. The second issue refers to human freedom and power, and therefore to how to free human beings from the power of science. Feyerabend's proposal to separate, after the Church, also science from the state (power) is a result of the denial of internal rationalism in science.

Maybe it can be possible to find a solution by keeping the two issues separate.

However, before dealing with the question of whether a solution can be found, it is appropriate to raise some of the specific issues and problems that the epistemology of human sciences had to face in order to claim a scientific status. In a certain respect, in fact, human sciences had to deal with some of the issues raised by Fayerabend, and interesting solutions have been offered. In addition, the object of human scientific enquiry – the human being – raises specific issues as far as prediction is concerned that, paradoxically, could help to identify a solution to the question of whether or not it is possible to scientifically predict human political change.

The line distinguishing between human sciences and social sciences is truly blurred, and positions vary greatly, from those who believe that the aforementioned are not sciences at all, to those who accept that they are specific sciences to those who deny them any scientific character. The problem arises from the fact that human sciences focus on the human being, and that brings with it some specific difficulties. These can be summarised as the following: firstly, methodologically, the problem of coincidence between object and subject; secondly, the problem of the uniqueness of human experience; thirdly, the problem of measuring; and finally, the problem of human change.

First of all, there is the methodological problem of observation or, in other words, the coincidence between the object and the subject of human science scientific enquiry - the human being. More specifically, he/she who observes is both the observed and the observer while, on the other hand, who is observed is both the observed and the observer. The outcome is a complex relationship: the object is a human being, who is constituted by the subject through the process of observation while, on the other hand, the subject is an object because of his/her nature as a human being.

In general, it is a methodological problem, that of external interference, which is stronger in human sciences than in natural sciences, where the problem can be more easily minimised - human sciences require inter-subjective methods, and therefore there is a direct action exercised by the subject on the object. This external interference arises mainly from three sources: firstly, from the plurality of cultures that work on the subject, and are projected onto the object; secondly, from the personality of both the subject and the object; and, thirdly, from the subject's personal values, which make him/her feel closer to a specific value system.

The question is how to solve human science's particular complexity and therefore ensure scientific knowledge. Devereux (1970) showed how the subject projects itself onto the object ('transfer'), and how the latter projects the subject back on him/herself ('counter-transfer'), therefore producing a 'distortion'.

Roger Bastide (1970) finds a solution in the *pluridisciplinarité*, which “*consiste à faire collaborer deux ou plusieurs disciplines en respectant l'autonomie de chacune d'elles*”, though accepting plural readings of the same phenomenon but setting them in the same perspective, which means practically that one discipline 'leads' the others and imposes its own perspective and approach on the scientific enquiry (Abou, 2002, 230-231). The *pluridisciplinarité* allows the different disciplines to correct each other and the researcher-subject to “*dépasser cependant la subjectivité inhérente à toute observation et faire même de la «distorsion» [...] la «vie royale vers une objectivité authentique[...]»*” (Bastide, 1970, XVIII). In fact, it is the very fact of being aware of the distortion that allows the subject to separate the objective from the subjective by acknowledging his/her own subjectivity.

From another perspective, human sciences are characterised by a specific approach: they present three dimensions (the social, psychological, and historic), and are based on the dialectic among these dimensions. Because such dialectic cannot be properly measured, they are primarily not quantitative. On the contrary, social sciences do not follow a dialectic approach, and therefore are based on the quantitative.

Pluridisciplinarité, then, could represent the solution to at least some of the methodological problems presented by the distortions derived by inter-subjectivity.

However, we should note that Popper (1985) denied, in general, the scientific status of human sciences (of course). In a specific application of his falsifiability criterion of scientific knowledge to human sciences, Alfred Adler's individualist psychology and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, he explicitly rejects them as sciences – along with post-Marx Marxism and astrology - because they both only look for confirmations. In fact, for him, they observe according to the theory instead of following the reverse procedure; in other words, observing against the theory. In addition, they present some other specific problems: all of those related to self-suggestion and to the relationship that characterises the interaction between the psychologist and the patient (Popper, 1978). And, finally, he specifically accuses Freud's psychoanalysis of being based on mythology: despite the analysis' working on facts, these are facts that cannot possibly be tested. This does not

mean that the findings are deprived of any value – they are not absurd, but simply non-scientific. However, Popper concedes that human sciences include some scientific branches that can be regarded as scientific and therefore are not condemned to remain as non-sciences.

Yet if, in general, human sciences cannot be regarded as scientific according to Popper's criteria, could they be regarded as scientific if they followed different ones?

Indeed the object of human science is different from that of natural sciences: the human being is a 'unique' and 'total' phenomenon, and therefore a science concerned with his/her understanding should be based on solid foundations, with an attempt at solving only the methodological problems posed by the peculiar object of study not being enough.

Contrary to Popper, Raymond Boudon (1995) believes there is no difference between human sciences and natural sciences, because they share the same nature. First of all, in order to explain his position, he sets two different criteria according to which human science theories can be regarded as scientific: firstly, the criterion of universality, in other words that a theory needs to be comprehensible and acceptable for all human beings, regardless of culture; and, secondly, the criterion of being inclusive, or to be able to incorporate the other theories. Having posed the criteria, he confutes some of the critiques that could be raised against them: firstly, in a reply to Bachelard, who had argued that science is only that which can be expressed by numbers – the 'condition of mathematical formalism' – he points out not only that in human sciences that are theories and results that can be expressed in numbers but also and more importantly that the mathematical language is just a language, and therefore not superior to natural languages. Secondly, arguing against those who hold the view that natural sciences can predict while human sciences cannot, he recognises that some predictions are impossible but argues that if we assume that predictions represent the absolute value of science, then science should pursue only practical goals while, on the contrary, the aim of scientific enquiry is knowledge, and this is not a practical goal. Thirdly, he accepts that natural and social sciences are concerned with explanations, while human sciences aim to understand, but he argues that science is not defined by the method that is followed in order to gather knowledge, but by the fact that knowledge exists and is recognisable – therefore, his criterion of universality holds; and, finally, he partially accepts Habermas' critique on the role interpretation plays in

human sciences, but not as a criterion for distinguishing between the two – on the contrary, it is a problem that concerns both branches, and they should both minimise it.

Boudon's proposal is not very convincing: in particular, the criterion of universality is refuted by too many historical cases that show that, sometimes, human beings firmly believe something is true when this is obviously not the case (Lakatos 1978). And, more generally and logically speaking, if something is believed to be true because it 'makes sense' it does not mean it is actually true.

The arguably more solid foundation has been proposed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1900), the father of the epistemology of human sciences, who follows a different line of reasoning. He distinguishes between social and human science in terms of the object of study and therefore method: human sciences study the 'spirit', and employ understanding as their method, while natural sciences study the natural world, based on causality, and therefore their method is that of explanation. As far as the object of study is concerned, human sciences try to understand the specificity of human beings as opposed to the natural world; this specificity derives from the very feelings human beings have as subjects – in terms of awareness and freedom - and not objects. The method is not explaining, but understanding an individual experience as it had been lived thanks to the method of empathy, which attempts to recreate the experience. However, in Dilthey the distinction between nature and spirit is not absolute, because the human being is the result of both – history, for instance, is the combined outcome of causes and of human freedom. According to him, therefore, the totality of human experience could be scientifically studied by recognising the existing differences between causes and spirit, and therefore by both explaining and understanding.

However, Raymond Aron (1979) pointed out that it is not possible to recreate human experiences, but only to project the subject on to the object, and Paul Ricœur (1969) argued that empathy is indeed not a scientific method, but a 'psychological intuition'. Elaborating his position further, Ricœur argues that hermeneutics – the research of meanings - can follow two strategies: the first is the reductive, and the second is the teleological. The reductive approach looks for hidden meaning in the past in order to understand the present - and the 'masters' of it are Marx, who reduces everything to socio-economic relationships and class struggle; Nietzsche, who focuses instead on the will to power; and Freud, who believes truth can be found in sexual lust. The reductive is an

archaeological and regressive strategy, because it looks into and towards the past. Against it, it is necessary to adopt an amplification strategy, or the teleological approach – which focuses on ends - which allows for more interpretations and looks into the future. However, similarly to Dilthey, Ricœur does not refute explaining: on the contrary, he argues that it is necessary in order to ‘explain more to understand better’.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1973) both agrees with and refuses Dilthey and Ricœur’s conclusions. According to him, human sciences are not true sciences because they study the ‘conscience’ of the human being. Therefore, firstly, the human being, his/her conscience, and human relationships are too complex to be grasped by science; secondly, inter-subjectivity relationships perturb observation; thirdly, experiments are impossible because human experiences are not replicable – and hence what can be studied are not single human experiences but the elements that reproduce themselves through human experiences in their relationship other elements, in other words the structures; fourthly, the object cannot be precisely defined because it is the very result of human complexity, and hence human sciences cannot be precise. The result of all of the above is that, finally, predictions are impossible.

According to him, the nature of human sciences is, therefore, that they are not sciences. They offer something in the middle between explanation and prediction: wisdom, which helps the human being to make fewer mistakes. More generally, human sciences are more similar to art than to science.

There is a preliminary conclusion then: human sciences are based on understanding, but this understanding is a result of ‘intuition’, of an ‘artistic’ activity, which derives from the common nature of subject and object. The problem which derives from this is how do we achieve some objectivity and is it therefore possible to compare the different results.

The third specific problem that comes from having chosen the human being as an object of study is exactly that, and it can be summed up as the problem of measurement - ‘conscience’, or ‘spirit’, are hard to quantify. In general, and to put it briefly, mathematical data and quantitative methods are excluded as suitable for human sciences. It is clear that if human sciences are interested in the ‘search for the meaning’ of a specific human phenomenon, which is characterised by both complexity and ‘totality’, then comparison is not possible. Among many positions, some of which argue in favour of mathematical measurement (for instance, that of the so-called Chicago School), that of François Furet

(1978), a historian, can be remembered: according to him, data can help both to pose questions and to limit answers. The problem that human sciences face is that there are too many variables to be considered, and it is not possible to identify the relative importance of each variable. Most of all, history cannot be formulated in mathematical terms and, even if that was possible, maths could not express the reasons behind events.

Therefore, qualitative methods seem to suit the aims and the very nature of human sciences better. Many methodological devices, and principles, have been engineered in order to assure a certain degree of scientific integrity in human sciences (the principle of generality or universality, methodological precision and methodological plurality, corroborating documents, etc.) but it is difficult to overcome the epistemological problems raised by the uniqueness of the object of study.

The last question raised by human sciences is very much more specific to prediction. If the human being is unique, then his/her experiences cannot offer any guidance in other cases. In particular, firstly, because the object of study is the human being, then he/she should be respected in his/her freedom to assign values to his/her own behaviour and to change it. In other words, the researcher cannot limit the freedom of the human being by predicting the future. In more general terms, this is the problem of what is called the 'self-fulfilling prophecy', or the statement of a theory which is confirmed not because it was true when stated, but because it becomes true thanks to human conforming behaviour, due both to personal acceptance and to the workings of power – of course, Huntington's theory of the 'clash of civilizations' could be the latest successful example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

And, secondly or from another perspective, the human being is a being in continuous transformation. Therefore, what can be true today cannot be held to be true tomorrow. As far as prediction is concerned, the present does not offer any form of guidance for the future.

Conclusion

Before drawing any conclusions, it should be remembered that the discussion above was not interested in analysing philosophy of knowledge in order to understand whether any prediction can be epistemologically valid. The focus, even if general epistemological

questions have been raised, was very much on whether it is possible to predict political change, which is the outcome of human actions.

From this perspective, prediction is excluded by both general and human science epistemologies. According to the first general field, facts do not confirm the scientific value of a theory; therefore, if a theory predicts something happening in the future, whether this happens or not is not particularly relevant. Of course, it could be possible to apply Lakatos' general criterion, but that has been ruled out because of general inconsistency. However, it has been argued that natural and social science epistemology has been marked by a shift from the question of rationality to that of power and, therefore, the question to be dealt with could be reformulated to whether it is possible to maintain rationalism in science while avoiding a specific status that science offers knowledge, and the power that that brings with it. As a solution, if we were able to disentangle power from rationality, then Popper's general solution could hold.

Science is haunted by power when it asserts something, because in that case it does not leave freedom to the object. However, scientific predictions both assert and deny something. When I say 'if I do X, then Y will (or it is possible for it to) happen' I am also saying that 'if I do X, then Z, M, S, etc. will (or it is possible for them to) not happen'. Or, (but this is, from our perspective, the same concept differently expressed): when I say 'if conditions A, B, C remain, then Y1 will (or it is possible for it to) become Y2', I am also saying that 'if conditions A, B, C remain, then Y1 will (or it is possible for it to) not become Y2'.

It could well be, then, that if science did not prescribe anything, but only proscribed, then a free space would be opened. This space would be limited by scientific theories, but it would not deny human freedom. This is the concept expressed by Furet – the tasks of science are to ask questions and limit answers.

Popper is in the same vein (1959, 276-285). In an address delivered to the Plenary Session of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy, held in Amsterdam in 1948, advancing the general content of his forthcoming book *The Poverty of Historicism*, he specifically deals with the problem of prediction in social sciences. His definition of social sciences is closer to what I have been calling human sciences, because he argues against the historicists, including Comte and John Stuart Mill – and Hegel, Plato, and especially Marx – whose approaches I have described as qualifying social sciences – they are those attempting to

‘objectify’ human behaviour in order to treat social phenomena as natural phenomena (an attempt described by Popper as ‘naïve’ because it overlooks the fact that social constructs are constituted by social theories). In particular, he argues against the possibility of human, or social, according to him, sciences to predict a specific event in the future. Social sciences cannot make ‘unconditional historical prophecies’, as opposed to ‘scientific predictions’, for two reasons: the first is that natural sciences are conditional sciences, and historicists do not derive their historical prophecies from conditional scientific predictions. The second reason is that scientific conditional predictions can be stated only if they refer to systems that can be described as being well-isolated, stationary, and recurrent. Unfortunately, societies are not such systems. And, finally, the last reason is that history does not follow a discernible pattern, because human beings, who are constantly evolving, make it. On the contrary, the main task of social sciences is to “trace the unintended social repercussions of intentional human actions”. This presents a two-fold consequence: firstly, a scientific prediction is stated in a negative form – such as, for instance, “you cannot, without increasing productivity, raise the real income of the working population”; and, secondly, it makes social sciences very similar to natural sciences (Popper, 1959, 282), because it transforms the social world in a laboratory.

If rationalism and power ought to be separated in order to allow scientific predictions, then Popper’s solution (not the one above, which is entangled with power, but the more general one, which places rationalism in methodology) could be maintained. Other than power, the problem with Popper was two-fold: firstly, how to rationally explain anomalies in science (raised by Kuhn, Lakatos, and Feyerabend); and secondly, how to let science progress if rationalism is placed in the method (especially advanced by Feyerabend). From the first perspective, anomalies do not seem particularly problematic, because they are so only when science is assumed to bring truth; if science does not attempt to do so, anomalies can arise, but they would concern the space of freedom that is, by definition, populated by anomalies. From the second perspective, indeed science needs to be conservative in order both to be rational and to hold a certain degree of power. Clearly, that does not mean it should not take risks; on the contrary, it should state as much as it can about precisely what cannot happen. It is clear that the objection asserting that historically science has never followed Popper’s criterion is not particularly strong: if science has needed inconsistency in order to progress, then ‘Popperian’ science is indeed conservative. Indeed scientific progress

belongs to another field, that of freedom and non-science. In other words, if the future options are N , the role of science (X) is to leave human freedom an $N - X$ space.

Science could maintain rationalism in expressing what cannot happen more than what can happen while, at the same time, undermining the role of power associated with it. Power is introduced, and becomes problematic, when it asserts something, not when it limits options - or, better, in this second case it could be acceptable. As advanced earlier, such a solution opens up a space of freedom, which is related to what can actually happen in the future; in this space, science is not science, and does not hold any power – a researcher's opinion is as valid as any other opinion. To express the idea in other words, predictions become a matter of personal freedom, which leaves freedom to the object, and reality is not constituted by science.

On the other hand, progress comes from actually predicting the future. But this prediction, when it concerns the human being, is not derived from science, but from an artistic activity, from 'intuition', which finds its source in the very nature that is shared by subject and object. The correct prediction can be used by science in order to set new boundaries. From this perspective, science is then devoted to proscription. In this activity, both human and social sciences, and therefore both explanation and understanding, can be allowed. The method of *pluridisciplinarité* and the devices engineered by human sciences in order to reach some objectivity and comparison bring them closer to social sciences; their unwillingness to predict should not affect their ability to proscribe. Using Popper's criterion, human sciences can be regarded as sciences as much as they can offer some objectivity and follow the methodological criterion.

On the other hand, prediction cannot find its source in a reduction, as that requested by social sciences, or in an application of the correct methodological device as is hoped for by human sciences. Its source is the 'intuition' derived by the common nature shared by the subject and the object. Therefore, I would use 'proscription' and 'proscribing' to refer to science, which places its rationalism in the method, and I mean to imply that scientific theories ought to be expressed in the form of negative conditional statements. Flowing out of 'proscribing' is 'prescribing', which is the anticipation derived by a 'creative intuition', and which belongs to the 'space of freedom', where 'anything goes' and where there is no power, because there is no science. Inside the space of freedom, anticipating the future is free, anarchic, and open to all human beings, because arising from their common human

nature. 'Foreseeing', which is the whole activity of anticipating future political changes, results from the combination of proscribing and predicting. From this perspective, there is no collapse of science: science sets the boundaries of freedom, but does not constitute facts and human beings.

The question is whether foreseeing can arise only from an absolutely free intuition, as limited by science, or from a mystery as has been the case for thousands of years (and therefore it would be impossible to compare its statements), or it could arise according to an organised thought that can help some comparison.

Firstly, if the criteria of scientific knowledge is that it proposes, in advance, negative conditional statements regarding specific events of the future, what I have called 'proscription', then all 'research programmes' should be accepted as being able to offer some guidance. For a specific case, maybe post-Marx Marxism could not be regarded as scientific, but should a historical materialist neo-Marxist approach (such as for instance the neo-Gramscianism of Robert W. Cox, which actually focuses on long-term conditional positive predictions and which therefore needs time in order to be assessed according to the criterion outlined above) be dismissed so easily as well? I would argue that the task of proposing a framework for foreseeing the future means including all research programmes, regardless of their scientific value, because they too could concur to create the 'intuition'. It is within such a framework that every single theory could be assessed.

And, secondly, if the phenomenon I am trying to foresee (which is, in this case, historically and temporally determined political change) is a human phenomenon, then its 'totality' requires the adoption of a holistic approach. Everything should be considered, and valued. The framework is necessary in order to grasp all the different facets of reality and to remind us of who is trying to foresee them. However, it is true that versions of reality are infinite. Therefore, considering the fact that scientific enquiry is in itself a reduction, an acceptable compromise would be to allow all scientific approaches into the framework by rearranging them according to their shared elements. This way, the framework would include both the limits and the intuition of foreseeing. In other words, the framework should aim to allow comparison among all sciences claiming to offer scientific knowledge.

A comparison between foreseeing activities related to the same phenomenon is, obviously, not possible, because it remains within the world of art. However, if such activities arise from a common framework, maybe it is possible to compare the relationships, their

meanings, their values, etc. assigned by each researcher to the different elements, in order to understand the specific relevance of each. Even if it is not scientific, it could at least offer some amusement.

3.

HOW? Foreseeing Political Change

“You and I belong to a people who will not have ideas which we don’t believe in thrust down our throats by bayonets or other force. Why should we assume that this process will work with other people.”

Lord Mountbatten to Sir Gerald Temple (Silvester, 2006, 41)

Political change has been a well-studied subject of political theorising. However, remembering the conclusions from the previous chapter, foreseeing political change requires that we adopt a holistic approach that includes both understanding and explaining, and considering the past, and the ‘trends’, without assuming that the past can offer any guidance and that the trends will continue. Science prescriptions, which can arise from both explaining and understanding, are acceptable in as far as they are stated in the negative conditional form; this way, they set the limits within which an anticipation of the future can be proposed. The challenge is whether it is possible, and how it can be possible, to outline a framework comprehensive enough to include all of the different approaches, which are based on different epistemological premises. All theories claiming to be scientific should find a place within such a framework, both because they are scientific as much as they proscribe (and not according to other criteria) and because their positive predictions cannot be regarded as non-scientific only because they are un-validated by future facts. In fact, incorrect predictions are stripped of their scientific pretensions but the theories and approaches employed for advancing them could maintain a value as expressions of human understanding. In order to predict, everything is useful or, recalling Fayerabend, ‘anything goes’.

My starting assumption is that is possible to engineer such a framework. Therefore, the central question of this chapter will be how that is possible; in other words, how is it possible to outline an approach that includes both science and non-science. The next chapter will try to employ the framework in a specific case, that of Lebanon in 2004, in order to test if the Political Independence Revolution could have been foreseen. Preliminary, however, it is necessary to outline the approaches that have been followed in

order to make positive predictions, and specifically the positive prediction of political change. Then, I will propose the framework and qualify it.

In general terms, political change has interested students of many areas, and civilisations, and eras: Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Jamal Eddine Al-Afghani, Oswald Spengler, Talcott Parsons, and so on. I will not even attempt to present a full account of all approaches to political change, also because the field has focused, for instance during the 1930s and 1940s and from the 1980s on, on seeing it not as an autonomous process but as one resulting from social, psychological, cultural and economic changes; as a result, the literature concerned is immense.

(After remembering the trend of ‘futuology’, centred on the work of Bertrand de Jouvenel, which maintained that the past cannot be a guide to the future and which relied heavily on technological change and measurable aspects of social life, such as, for instance, demography, in order to predict the future or ‘possible futures’) Robert W. Cox, in a 1976 essay, which represents a preliminary study he carried out in order to formulate his own framework for understanding *longue durée* change in world order, identifies three ways of ‘thinking about the future’: the positivist-evolutionary; the historicist-dialectic; and the natural-rational. It is useful to summarise them, without intending to be exhaustive and taking the risk of over-simplifying – also because many theories over-lap across the three types - and to consider from this perspective the more specific theories that have been advanced and then followed in order to predict political change. All of these general approaches are characterised, in fact, by specific epistemological assumptions.

The first ‘way’ is the positivist-evolutionary way, which considers the social world as being similar to the natural world. In fact, this approach reduces human agents and actions to their outward phenomenal aspects. As a result, science looks for rationalities expressed by regularities existent in the relationships among externally observed phenomena. Therefore, science becomes the cumulative discovery of laws in the forms of consequences that are predictable under prescribed conditions – from this point of view, this is exactly what Popper suggested social sciences should aim to do. Social and human historical events are converted into objects, and everything is measured in order to be compared – while other approaches deal with facts, in other words events or institutions which are intelligible by

people because they have been made by people - positivism requires data. Actions are explained as resulting from a combination of influences, both conscious and unconscious. Reality is segmented into observable phenomena, variables, which are related to others in order to explain their connection while all other variables are maintained as constant, or irrelevant. However, the social world is too complex to be reduced to two or more, variables, and therefore the approach introduces the device of the system.

The system can be conceived as taking, generally, two shapes: firstly, according to a structural-functionalist framework, it can take the shape of an organisation of relationships among social roles that assures the carrying out of functions. Despite David Easton, who had warned against its 'reification', the system is likely to remain not just a useful framework for organising data but to become a real entity with its own finality, which is the maintenance of its own equilibrium. The system is understood as having a normative content, because what ensures the proper behaviour of the individuals who are part of it (in other words, the system's necessary internal coherence) are values. Therefore, it can end up suggesting a research programme that focuses on the regulatory social mechanisms that ensure that agents stick to their roles and that control deviant behaviour. The modification of the system, which through its own construction aims to preserve the status quo, is conceived as a 'progressive integration', which is a teleological concept – a reformulation, barely disguised, of the concept of development. Integration, in other words, is the emergence of a structure “capable of ensuring a harmonious complementarity among functionally specific roles in a society characterized by a high degree of interdependence of its parts” (Cox, 1976, 180). The second variant of the system undermines the concept of equilibrium, introducing the concept of a 'feedback loop', and emphasising the dynamic of the system. The interaction of the system produces certain consequences which 'feed back' by modifying the inputs of the next interaction, and so on. The dynamics are, therefore, the result of a series of interactions.

Within the general approach, the choices that a research project has to face split it into some sub-approaches. Such choices are the followings: what kind of analytical perspective, either retroactive or prospective, should be adopted; what is the meaning that is to be assigned to the cause, either deterministic or probabilistic; and what should be the focus of the research, should it analyse steps – or phases – or recurrent relationships. The retroactive analysis starts from certain specific historical conditions and researches their

causes – succinctly, this analysis is expressed as “Y happens if and only if A, B, C, ... are given”. A prospective analysis, on the contrary, starts from a specific historical situation and researches its likely consequences – this can be expressed as “given A, W will happen if B, C, D... N intervene” (Tilly, 1975a, 14-15). Theoretically, the two analyses are related, but practically they require different focuses and research programmes; the first is more suited for general questions, while the second is more for specific issues. The second choice concerns the meaning of the cause, whether deterministic or probabilistic. For research purposes, that first option is more suited for a very specific enquiry, while the second allows more general explanations. The third choice, which concerns the focus of the research, conduces to modelling or to analysing relationships among processes or variables. However, regardless of the different choices within this general approach, which are mainly methodological, the positive prediction of the future results from the projection of the observed, and observable, tendencies of contemporary society – in the first systemic model above, the future is represented by the regaining of the equilibrium; in the second, a trend is made up by a certain number of interactions.

The notion of social change, as a specific concept, has been derived from nineteenth-century sociology, and particularly from the work of Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies. They conceived social evolution in terms of a movement from traditional, rural societies towards a more complex and industrial, modern, and urban, social organisation. The modern concept of political change draws from their works, but it comes during the second half of the last century, and had a distinctive mark of positivism and evolutionism in it, as opposed to the relative pessimism that had characterised political speculation on change during the 1920s and 1930s; in that period, political change was understood according to a cyclical idea of history and declining civilisation patterns, such as in the works of Oswald Spengler, Vilfredo Pareto and Arnold Toynbee. A general pessimism regarding the future was also expressed in terms of the alienation, anomie, and fear brought about by the process of modernisation (Hannah Arendt or Reinhold Niebuhr). Contrary to what these scholars proposed, post-second world war positive evolutionists went back to the end of the eighteenth-century sociologists to draw their own distinctions between modernity and tradition (Huntington, 1971, 290-292).

The glorious years of this approach date back to the 1960s-1970s, but its framework and some of its concepts, despite being criticised, are still very much alive in political science. In

general terms, according to Tilly (1975b), these approaches to political change can be divided into three groups: firstly, theories of political development (divisible into two sub-groups: those including phases, sequences, or standard patterns of development, and those focusing on relationships among variables without any indication of precise historical coordinates; Huntington (1971, 305-313), on the other hand, divides them into three theories: systemic theory (social processes, and comparative history); functionalist theories; and historical theories. In general, however, studies of political change are centred on a dichotomy, that of tradition versus modernity, and on a process, that of development, later renamed, also but not exclusively by this approach, as globalisation. The process of modernisation determines a transformation in traditional societies, diversely valued by the different scholars and approaches: there is a replacement of political organisations, fragmentation, uniformity, co-existence among different value-systems, reformulation of traditional practices according to new world-views, etc. Roughly defined, the goal was, and is, that of explaining political and social modifications in politics and societies as a reaction to a common process of transformation, which was general but had specific and similar effects across societies.

The more 'modernising' approaches of the beginning have been demolished by the critique of development and of modernisation theory; and, most of all, by the actual historical factual non-achievements of development and modernisation. Indeed, those theories have changed the analytical interest, focusing on other variables such as culture, that interfere more than originally believed with the process, yet without changing the approach. Such 'new' variables shape and transform the process of modernisation; as a consequence, this transformation is not held to have similar effects across countries. Samuel Huntington, who has been a highly influential student of political change, sometimes leading the way, offers a 'paradigmatic' example. He started by studying political change and the process of political modernisation, becoming academically known thanks to *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968). He then moved on to analyse, by employing the same comparative framework, processes of democratisation at the beginning of the 1990s (*The Third Wave* was published in 1991), and ended up focusing on cultures, firstly as the main contemporary and likely future forces of political legitimacy and action (outlining his thesis in a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article and then in the 1996 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, the expanded version of the original article); and, secondly, in a work co-edited with Lawrence Harrison named quite boldly *Culture Matters. How Values Shape Human Progress* – I

will deal with this book at greater length below - as factors influencing economic development (and, implicitly but sometimes explicitly by some contributors, blaming them for underdevelopment). His last work, *Who Are We?*, focuses specifically on culture (and cultural engineering and the future of the United States). From a certain perspective, his scholarly journey exemplifies what has been the transformation of the 'modernisation' research programme: starting with political development to arrive at culture and identity.

Despite its advantages, for instance the capacity to build models and to compare, this approach has suffered from some shortcomings: firstly, from an international perspective, it is inherently pro status quo, because the international is assumed to be composed of national states, which are seen as 'given' or, at least, as also offering a strong analytical framework; secondly, the concepts of modernisation and then globalisation enter the framework as processes presenting certain characteristics, in other words without questioning them; thirdly, they imply a pro-Western bias, by comparing the transformations happening in so-called 'developing' or 'under-developed' countries to those of 'developed countries'; and, finally, the role of power in constituting reality is heavily under-considered.

More recently, the blueprint offered by modernization theory has been employed by somehow quite distant approaches. For instance, as far as specifically social change is concerned, post-modernism is actually based on the acceptance of the existence of passages from traditional to modern and post-modern values. These different world-views and power configurations, which shape identity features, are analytical models that can be employed to understand social transformations and change. In these approaches, there are neither steps nor development; in fact, they accept the joint presence of themes and values belonging to different phases, within the world as a whole or a country. On the other hand, recent years have brought to the attention of 'modernisation theory' the role of identities and culture in shaping political life; and so the new categories could be introduced within its framework without major problems.

Others have tried to revive the old institutionalism in order to explain the work of international organisations and their potential for fostering political change. Neo-liberal institutionalism, and all the literature on international political regimes, for instance, has linked institutions to rational choice approaches to explain the possible creation of new international systems as a developing set of tasks, values, beliefs, and understandings as created by multiple interactions that can spill tasks over?. In this vein, studies on the

European Community have developed according to a neo-functionalist framework, focusing on the work of transnational organisations and governments.

The natural-rational approach, the second proposed by Cox in his grand generalisation, is based on the concept of a duality distinguishing the inward nature from the outward appearance of human institutions and events. The inward nature is knowable by reason because of the universality of the human being. Corresponding to the double profile of reality stand two conflicting principles: the subjective principle, which is the direct action of the human being in social and political life; and the objective principle, which is the concatenation of conditions and events against which the subjective principle has to work (and the examples Cox offers are those of St. Augustine and Tolstoy). The problem of how to resolve historically such a duality has been given different solutions: when the objective principle is understood as predominant, and political action is therefore seen as futile, a doctrine of providence could appear in order to justify inaction. On the other hand, when the subjective principle is leading, and there is a strong will to master the objective principle, attention focuses on the ability to manipulate circumstances (for instance, Machiavelli).

Two lines of enquiry derive from this approach: firstly, there is the normative task of designing the most appropriate polities for the human being (utopianism); and secondly, there is the analysis of politics to better understand the conditions that must be taken into account in order to construct the ideal polity. This approach is largely confined to political theory and philosophical reasoning.

The historical-dialectical approach, like the natural-rational one, deals with facts, not data, and thinks in the dualistic terms of subjectivity and objectivity. Unlike the previous approach, however, its perspective focuses on subjectivity, by conceiving the social world as being the creation of the human mind; in other words, while the natural-rational approach contrasts a subjective universal idea with the objective condition of human existence, the historical-dialectical sees the ideas as forces acting in the actual world. It therefore understands history as being divided into distinct phases, which are defined by different organisations of ideas, behavioural patterns, and institutions, expressed by ideal-types – for instance, feudalism, capitalism, liberalism, etc. Historical change is the result of

the conflict between two different organisations; the general concept is that a phase is already characterised by its own antagonist elements that will, through conflict with the previous pattern, lead to change in the second. Within this general approach, different emphases have been placed on the prominence of material aspects (most clearly, Marxism) or, on the contrary, ideas (for instance, constructivism).

As becomes clear, then, each of these general approaches conceives of the future in terms of some combination of current restraints and actions; it follows distinctive epistemological assumptions, which lead it to follow a specific line of enquiry; and, most of all, it assumes a specific idea of history according to which the future can be predicted. More precisely, the natural-historical approach follows a cyclical model of the historical process; the positivist-evolutionary assumes a linear, uninterrupted progression; and the historicist-dialectic is developed according to what is, of course, a dialectic idea of history.

In other words, for all of these general approaches, predicting the future is an activity requiring a basic assumption about the idea of history. This is not compatible with the proposal, as expressed in the previous chapter, that foreseeing requires assuming that there can be no link between the past and the future – because human behaviour cannot be predicted according to the past. All of the general approaches above belong to the activity of proscription, which is that of setting boundaries about what cannot, or is unlikely, to happen. As a result, they are proven wrong if what they had predicted as not, or unlikely, to happen actually occurs. The two profiles, in other words the one concerned with proscription – which involves both explanation and understanding – and the one concerned with prescription – an intuition arising from organised thought – should, as advocated in the previous chapter, find their own place within a common framework. As I have been arguing so far, proscription is the task of science, and requires assuming conditions in order to explain phenomena. In an attempt to proscribe the future, an assumption related to the past is therefore in order. All hypotheses, from this perspective, are perfectly legitimate.

A particular case is that of those theories not concerned with any idea of the future and which, on the contrary, have other concerns, and namely power. These are neo-constructivist and post-modern theories concerned with the social construction of reality and the imbalances of power. These latter approaches are particularly useful for

understanding cultural and identity issues related to politics, and therefore for focusing on 'new political actors' - transnational movements, such as Diaspora and NGO networks. In spite of appearing not to be concerned with the future, however, they are very much based on it. In general, they aim to criticise the current power structure, and therefore to open alternative courses of action, because the future, as seen from now, is a future of domination, injustice, etc. The present and the future melt together here, and the future is a projected present (to be challenged and avoided).

The problem is whether all of these very briefly outlined approaches, methodologies, and epistemologies can be included in one framework that can help organise the thought, and the whole activity that has been called 'foreseeing'. Such a framework needs to both accommodate scientific theories (or claim to do so) and allow 'creative intuition' to be brought into life. Human reality is a complex phenomenon, and a framework attempting to predict it needs to be complex. However, and primarily, in order to organise such a framework, some specific issues need to be addressed. These are the following: firstly, that of generality versus clarity, or complexity versus elegance; secondly, that of the time-span of foreseeing; thirdly, that of historical universality versus specificity; fourthly, that of who can be allowed to foresee; and, finally, that concerning the role of the state and the different levels of analysis.

The first question concerns whether such a framework needs to be as general as possible or, on the contrary, to be as simple as possible. A holistic approach calls for the maximum level of generality in order to include all approaches, yet excessive generality does not allow the inference of one phenomenon from another or, to put it better, to relate one variable to another. Maybe the problem could be expressed in different terms, as clarity versus complexity. An elegant theory is characterised by its simplicity, or the degree to which it is able to explain a phenomenon by involving as few variables as possible without losing explanatory precision. A framework can be exactly that: holistic, and therefore including all of the categories employed by all of the different theories (which grasp the maximum aspects of reality) but re-organising them according to their shared features. The macro-categories so formed could allow for a certain comparison. The aim is to let each theory contribute with its own insights, and to let it assign its own priorities to the different macro-category. However, the framework should be simple, in order to be able to offer elegant theories, and clear anticipations.

The second issue concerns the time-span of foreseeing: long, medium, and short-term. The problem here is that theories that attempt to predict political change focus, analytically, on different 'levels'. Theories that aim to predict *longue durée* change centre their attention on more 'material' categories and on trends. 'Material' means not only resulting from a single actual or intended human action, but requiring a plurality of actions in order to change (for instance, economic structures or technological improvements); theories aiming to predict medium-term change can focus on the strategic manoeuvring of actors and on institutional outcomes, or on conflicts, or on cultural and identity transformations; and, finally, short-term predictions could be advanced well according to short-term agents' choices, cultural and individual features, etc. However, the different macro-categories, which can prioritize differently according to the time that it is intended to predict in, are not easily detachable: a short-term prediction needs to consider carefully the environment in which decisions are made, and the constraints that this places upon agents; similarly, a long-term prediction may need to focus on material factors, but these are nothing other than the result of a historical accumulation of agents' choices (in other words of short-term decisions), and so on. Indeed the three levels, and more generally, all the categories and macro-categories, are interrelated and mutually influence each other. To express this in another way, foreseeing the future requires understanding and explaining all the features of the present, and that implies considering the mutual relationships between different elements and levels. Therefore, I have to assume that the framework would have to be flexible enough to accommodate all categories and therefore to allow any sort of foreseeing – short, medium and long terms.

The third problem refers more specifically to the macro-categories that such a framework should include, both in terms of time and space. The question is: should it be useful for all times and areas? As far as times are concerned, it should be evident that certain categories are suited only for certain times. It could be true, on the other hand, that at a certain level of generalisation human life could be seen as being characterised by the maintenance of certain needs, goals, and variables that have played an important role throughout the history of mankind in all geographical areas. However, such a level of generalisation seems excessive. More generally, by definition, the future is something that follows the present and, therefore, the activity of foreseeing should be based on the categories that play a role in today's world. In other words, a contemporary framework that aims to foresee the future should be based on contemporary categories. This suggestion can offer a solution to the

problem of space, which looks somehow similar. Unlike the early approaches of political development (which was eventually modified in order to understand tradition and modernity not as forming a dichotomy according to which societies could be labelled but as categories that are more blurred and contemporarily at work in every societies), the categories that could explain political change should be applicable to all societies. The point is not just suggested by our common human nature. A bit more specifically, the process of globalisation (understood not as representing a nineteenth-century novelty but as a long term process of interaction among agents) has been interesting, to different degrees, in many, if not all areas of the world. Its outcome has certainly been very different across the globe (it cannot be reduced to a simplistic ‘homogeneity’ or ‘standardisation’) but it has nevertheless offered categories that suit most areas of the world, even if sometimes with necessary qualifications. Analytical primacies can be different according to the areas of the world under study and the political change the researchers aim to foresee, but the expansion of certain political organisations (for instance, that of the state or of Non-Governmental Organisations, etc.) could allow the use of similar categories and, even further, macro-categories. For instance, the role of religion as a political factor can appear to present a stronger analytical force in some areas but it is in fact useful in others as well; similarly, literacy rates can assume a specific importance in some areas, but it is a category that could be important in any. Some processes, such as that of modernisation and globalisation, have indeed touched all parts of the world, shaping them, in one way or another, according to the different theories – this is something all of them agree upon. Finally, there can be a more methodologically straightforward concern: if we intend to allow some comparisons, the framework needs to be common, at least in terms of macro-categories.

The fourth question concerns who is allowed to predict. On a general level, it has been argued in the previous chapter that anybody should be allowed to foresee, because that is not, strictly speaking, a scientific activity. A bit more precisely, however, what has been proposed is something quite different – that the very ‘scientific predictions of the future’ cannot be regarded as scientific. In fact, science’s contribution to foreseeing is to set limits of ‘impossible’ (or unlikely) futures. This is an activity where scientists still reign. However, to be a scientist is not enough. If science can accept statements advanced by people working, for instance, on data or even facts, foreseeing/predicting requires scientist who are very familiar with the environment, history, people, processes, values, feelings, etc. of

the analytical area where the prediction of political change is being attempted; in fact, how is it possible to have 'intuition' if there is no direct link to these aspects?

The problem can be expressed in more precise terms: should the researcher 'belong' to the environment in which the political process takes place, or is that not an absolute requisite? For instance, if we were trying to foresee the future of the political process happening within a specific state, should a researcher have been borne there, have studied there, or be living there now? Or, on the other hand, could he be a foreigner? To begin with, it is clear that he/she, regardless of his/her identification, should know the history, the facts, the data, and the 'trends' concerning the analytical area well. The problem is not one of competence, but of ability to 'intuit' the future. The researcher who 'belongs' to the environment has the advantage of knowing the most intricate details of the political situation, of the specific cultures, of maybe having access to particularly valuable sources of information, and so on; in general, of 'understanding' the area. However, he/she can have the disadvantage of being involved, possibly emotionally, in that very political life and, most importantly, of having been 'constituted' by the work of social power. Therefore, they are 'carriers' of interiorised meanings so intimate that they are very hard to self-defy and to detach oneself from – the advantage turns into a disadvantage. To reach objectivity can be a difficult, and maybe even impossible, goal to reach for the researcher. On the other hand, the researcher who does not belong to the country faces the opposite advantages and disadvantages. For instance, objectivity can be easier to reach; however, they are still carriers of interiorised meanings, different of course from those of the country under study, and may not have access to valuable information and to the intricate and arguably 'instinctive' knowledge of the area that can possibly be accessed more easily by the autochthonous researcher. A solution could be offered by the epistemology of human sciences, and precisely by the idea that is not possible to try to understand an individual experience without 'being interested' in it or, by expressing it through a different concept, without 'empathy'. Both are subjective feelings. Hence, foreseeing can only be attempted properly by researchers who are capable of developing an emphatic bond with the object of study, as derived by their shared human nature. The result is that, to put it briefly, foreseeing/predicting requires intellectual honesty.

The final preliminary problem is how to analytically consider the state and what are the necessary levels of analysis that need to be included within the framework. In its minimal

conception, and in general terms, the state can be analytically considered in two ways: from a juridical perspective, as the institution formed by people, territory and sovereignty (what Ralph Miliband has called ‘the state system’); or, more politically, as an agent that very much represents its own interests, pursues its own goals, and relates to other social, political, cultural, and economic organisations (the state as ‘government’, to keep following Miliband). In general terms, to assign primacy to the first profile implies considering it to represent the most important level of analysis, while highlighting the second widens the analysis to the reciprocal influences between the state and other categories, such as for instance economic factors, or organisations, or structures at work at sub-national and international levels. Is an analysis that aims to predict political change that confines itself to the state level analytically sound? All of the literature on political change, but in particular the literature of the last few years, generally points out that political transformations result from inter-related influences and phenomena, which work on the state and through it – the state is not the only actor fostering political change and, on the other hand, interactions do not happen only at its level. Therefore, the soundest choice appears to be to accept the state as an agent in the interplay of factors, tendencies, organisations, and institutions operating on other analytical levels. The problem that could arise here is the criteria according to which the area of study should be limited and what categories the framework should consider. One of the sayings that appeared during the ‘90s, using the interest in globalisation as an analytical category, stated: ‘when a butterfly moves its wings in China, the result is a hurricane in North America’. The saying did not express the growing power of the Asian - possibly, arguably definitely, the next super-power - but the closer relationships within a supposedly hyper-interconnected world. However, adopting such a perspective would introduce so many variables to a framework as to make it useless. Again, it is the epistemology of the human sciences, and precisely its ‘father’, Wilhelm Dilthey, that could offer a solution.

In what is called ‘the first period’ of his research, Dilthey tried to focus on the study of individual experiences as they have been ‘fixed’ on objects – as, for instance, in written texts – through the emphatic method. During a second period, after being accused of excessive individualism, lack of objectivity, and naïveté, he adopted a more ‘realistic’ approach, which considers groups as an analytic tool. In other words, he tried to place the individual piece of work in its context, physical environment, and historical period, and therefore to understand it as shaped by social groups. Indeed groups are composed by

individuals, who influence the individual, and hence are reflected within his/her body of work. The point is that, for Dilthey, the researcher should frame the research according to his/her analytical needs; the area, category, groups to consider can be modified according to what the researcher, who therefore is assigned a certain freedom, argues as being relevant. To conclude, therefore, the decision of what to include within the framework, both spatially and temporally - the area, the levels, the institutions, the groupings, the structures, etc. - is the researcher's.

Hence, the state can or can not be maintained as setting the analytical limits of the area under consideration, or of its privileged boundaries (in other words, being taken under consideration according to its juridical profile); it is a researcher's choice. However, it should be understood as shaping and being shaped by sub-national, international and transnational forces, which should be analytically valued according to their own importance. For instance, in the Middle East, groupings bonded by ethnic and family ties and allegiances, which cut across state boundaries, are analytically much more important than in other regions, and within the area they are more relevant in some states than in others. Similarly, regional agreements influence much more the choices of (at least some) European states than can appear to be the case in Middle Eastern states.

The framework may be ready to be proposed. In general terms, if it aims to foresee political change, which is a transformation resulting out of human decisions, then it should include categories that influence political human behaviour. I have organised those categories according to three levels: firstly, those that can be understood as referring to 'objects', or 'material' forces; secondly, those referring to human activities that can influence the future as mediated by group interaction; and finally, those resulting from agents in general, and more specifically by the human beings as individuals. In a nutshell, the framework develops from low to a high individual action. This way, I have tried to split the so-called 'macro-micro' dualism or 'structure-agency' dilemma, maintaining the two analytical profiles in a new framework. The term 'agent' refers to an analytical actor (an individual or a group) that is active in creating changes in his/her social and political environment while being aware of social circumstances, ties, and constraints. The term 'structure', on the other hand, is generally seen as a force that is, at least partially, independent of people's reasons and motivations. Systems, which accept agents as being

composed of individuals, are charged with a mediating role between the two; this way, I believe approaches and theories can be accommodated – the framework accepts theories in order to assign primacy to the level they regard as analytically more important.

The first level comprises ‘material’ categories: economic, technological, and institutional ‘structures’. ‘Material’, from this perspective, is simply meant to refer to factors ‘framing’ actors’ decisions and influencing the social organisation of the area being studied. In other words, they are related to proper material objects, or social interactions that can accept being ‘objectified’ while, at the same time, being subjectively perceived as factors a single individual has to face if he/she wants to act; from this perspective, they are assumed to be perceived by the individual as exogenous to him/herself. On the other hand, they shape the social and political world by rewarding specific capacities and, as a result, assigning power to some individuals and not others. Most importantly, they are ‘structures’, but neither in a proper Marxist nor in a structuralist sense, but simply in the meaning of fostering comparable changes in different societies regardless of subjective feelings, values, and cultures. The effects that such structures have on social organisations could therefore be compared.

The economic structure refers to the organisation of economic factors in a given territory. It is not necessary to be a Marxist in order to comprehend that a nomadic economy requires a different society to a post-industrial one. Individuals are rewarded according to different abilities, and they are assigned power consequently. As a corollary, political legitimacy arises from different sources, different social and political groupings are formed, and specific groupings are able to achieve and maintain a social and political leadership – or (the general concept being the same) hegemony (Chase-Dunn et al., 1994, 361-376). As far as political change is concerned, and particularly change resulting from conflict, relevant imbalances between different territories or between classes or social or political functions within a same political entity should be particularly underlined.

The technological structure is related to the economic structure, but it is more fruitful to maintain the two separated. On the one hand, technological achievements and their territorial and class allocation inter-relate with the economic structure, with the latter being both the result and, at the same time, a force that influences the speed of new technological achievements. However, technology has its own impact on change by ‘constituting’ the individual and, therefore, shaping social organisation and collective choices. Not

exclusively, but arguably most successfully, Michel Foucault's work (and more generally the approaches that employ some of his concepts, particularly those that study the identity effects of the introduction of Western technology in the non-Western world) underlines the non-neutrality of technological devices – an idea which the French philosopher summarised through the concept of 'bio-power'. To express the idea simply: any technological tool embodies not only a specific world-view but also requires specific skills, abilities, and actual bodies; for instance, a computer, even if only to use it to type an essay, requires that the individual develop specific psychic and physical abilities that are different to those required by writing the same essay with a pen. Meanings and abilities are therefore (as in the case of economics) socially, politically, economically, and culturally rewarded differently according to the technology used; the process is tied to economics, but it cannot in any sense be reduced to it. In fact, technology can change the sense of space and time of individuals, two fundamental categories for its definition, not to speak of cultural allegiances, and therefore it spills over into change in the political realm.

The last macro-category placed analytically on this level is that of institutional structures, which refer, quite simply, to the legal and enforced contents of the political system. Politics is concerned with the authoritative organisation of society – both in normative and 'factual' terms. For instance, political parties are allowed to operate because they are accepted by a legal framework; social, economic and cultural demands need to acquire a political relevance to become politicised, and when they do they are managed according to the set legal and political framework. From this perspective, the institutional structure is therefore understood as a 'building', according to which political action is granted or refused legitimacy, and organised and 'channelled'. I assume it to have a very similar meaning to that used to refer to the 'Three Pillars of the European Union', or to the whole tradition of comparative studies better represented by Sartori (1994), who effectively uses the term 'engineering' to describe the activity of modifying institutional arrangements in order to improve the performance of the system and to achieve certain results and not others. More generally, in as far as it matters, the idea has constantly featured in political thought, from the Greek political thinkers to liberalism and institutionalism: institutions have an effect on political life and on social and political organisation. All scholars and approaches contributing to what has been called the 'new institutionalism', differ on many points, both theoretically and methodologically. However, they agree on two fundamental points. Firstly, institutions shape politics, by structuring political behaviour, because they shape

actors' identities, power, and strategies; and, secondly, institutions are shaped by history (Putnam, 1993, 7-8).

Institutions do not only shape political life in terms of a framework according to which political demands receive recognition or rejection, but their legal contents are in turn brought to life by agents' actions. In its more general formula, this is expressed by the dichotomy that exists between the concepts of a 'legal' or 'formal' constitution, the foundation of political life in constitutional states, and a 'material' constitution. The former refers to the principles, norms and institutional arrangements explicitly and theoretically organising political life, while the latter refers to the basic principles and norms according to which political life is actually conducted. From another perspective, the former anchors political action to specific legitimising legal principles and norms, while the latter accepts the legitimising principle and norms that agents effectively follow in their interaction, which hence become legal. It is clear, therefore, that a constitutional state does not require a 'formal' constitution, but it does need a 'material' constitution. If we understand a norm is legal because it is sanctioned, then the concept can obviously be extended not only to un-constitutional states (because even in those cases political life is carried out according to certain principles and not others), but also to the informal rules followed by institutions in their own working. The structure that is formed by institutions, that actually works, and is not fixed principles or norms, is what can be referred to as a society's institutional structure. Institutions, in this sense, are not those of institutionalism, which is interested in explaining the role institutions can play in shaping political life, especially in terms of values and beliefs, and therefore regards them as agents of political change. More simply, institutions are here understood as compounding a 'building', thanks to which social and political life flourishes, and political action is channelled, refused or accepted. From this perspective, then, institutions are external to the individual, who can act according to the institutional arrangements or against them, but in both cases he/she has to face specific constraints, limits, and incentives to his/her action.

As far as this first level is concerned, two qualifications are in order. Firstly, structural internal differences are analytically particularly important. In other words, the economic, technological and institutional structures can be homogeneous and mutually reinforcing or not. Firstly, inside an area such as, for instance, that of a state, each macro-category could be characterised by territorial and social intra-imbalances; similarly, inter-macro-

categorically, factors and ways of production, technological tools and institutional arrangements can be unevenly distributed territorially and socially. When that is the case, such unbalances are likely to characterise the social organisation inside the state, affecting society as a whole. Secondly, all three of these structures are constituted by actions of agents – a new technological device is created and is introduced, institutions are modified according to social needs and political action, and economics can be restructured because of political decisions, etc. In a given time and area, those structures are very much the result of collective histories. In fact, those changes, as rapid as they can be, need some time to affect a whole society. Always maintaining open the possibility of a sudden change, what is more likely is that such structures will change on the long run. Indeed scholars who try to predict long-term change focus on transformations that happen within one of those structures.

The second level is made up of individuals, but their actions are taken as being mediated by groups, and it is the latter who are given analytical primacy. The macro-categories that are placed on this level are the political system and cultural groups. The first is well known, but its meaning needs to be qualified in order to better account for political change. In the second, the adjective cultural requires some considerations because culture is not really a contested but more of a confused concept in anthropological, sociological and political literature, with multiple definitions that are not always consistent with each other. In general and maybe imperfect terms, the division between the two macro-categories follows that running between politics and society, which is a dichotomy the importance of which has increased in recent political reasoning - for instance, in the studies on democracy and processes of democratisation, or in the sub-field of internal political structures, which is a category introduced in order to analytically mediate between international inputs and state actions, and which provides models according to the internal interplay between the state and society.

The system, as mentioned earlier, was a device introduced in the 1950s-1960s to simplify political reality, and the political processes, in order to reduce the number of variables to consider, and to quantify. However, the question that defines the whole research program is that pointed out by David Easton: “The question that gives coherence and purpose to a rigorous analysis of political life as a system of behavior is: how do political systems

manage able to persist in a world of both stability and change?” (Easton, 1966, 143) This kind of question suggests a few considerations: firstly, a political system is the result of a reduction to politics; secondly, it is concerned with political behaviour; thirdly, it is interested in explaining the relationships occurring within/between the political system and other systems – psychological, economic, and social; and, finally, a political system is thought to be able to change while being able to persist (Easton follows the ‘feedback loop’ model). In fact, the systemic analyses, linking with functionalism and adopting the positivist-evolutionary general approach, is interested not so much in the functioning of the system but both in the exchanges and transactions between systems and in the way they respond to the outside – social, economical, etc. - environment. The concepts of internal coherence and equilibrium are the analytical starting points, and have therefore to be assumed as ‘givens’. In effect, an external perturbation – which can come from other non-political or political systems, the latter resulting from the systemic researchers’ tendency to employ the state as delimiting the borders of one political system (Tilly, 1975b) – can shake the system, which reacts by changing some internal factors and therefore re-gaining its coherence and equilibrium. The process of change, which is understood as that process through which the political system faces tensions coming from the outside environment and systems, is explained through the concept of feedback: within the system, some agents - the ‘authorities’ or the political power-holders ‘who are individuals who can express for and instead of the whole system’, in order to respond to a demand arising from the environment learn what is happening inside the system; in other words, from the previous round of interactions. Through this process of learning, the resulting output is followed by other input, and so on, in a circle of relative change that allows the system to maintain its coherence and equilibrium. It is unsurprising that such a framework is better suited for modelling and comparing models than for explaining political change: the system is assumed to be a coherent static model.

The system, in itself, is a powerful device enabling us to reduce enormously the number of variables. However, as an analytical tool it does not need to be assumed to be characterised by equilibrium or internal coherence. To better account for change, the response to external input can be thought as following not one but plural rationalities, and the equilibrium can result not through coherence but through in-coherence, representing the unstable and temporary encounter between those rationalities. The system, from this perspective, is characterised by political processes and bargaining and, most of all, conflict.

The question is indeed not that of recording and measuring input and output, but of following the ways responses to external input are formed and are likely to transform the latter into output. In other words, foreseeing change within a system is a matter of foreseeing how that input will likely be perceived and managed by the system and where the different rationales are likely to meet. Rationales are the principles according to which the system is organised and works, but they are static concepts. The dynamic profile of rationalism/rationales is expressed by the concept of 'logic', which is the rational connection of acts according to which agents express their response to input by following the rationale. In other words, rationalism is the way in which agents 'make sense' of input, while the 'logic' is the way they react to the input. If the system is a device marked by conflicts, then there necessarily must be more than one rationale and logic. A specific equilibrium, therefore, is one of the possible outcomes of the interplay of logic and, consequently, is temporally determined.

The final result then, is not that there can be systems without equilibrium but, to the contrary, systems are fundamentally lacking it – in fact, equilibrium is neither stability nor order. In foreseeing the future, and because of the reasons expressed in the previous chapter, it is not possible to await output - and register it in order to classify the system or to outline the trend of responses – and hence anticipate the future as a trend of interactions and exchanges. Trends are important, and can be useful in limiting possible types of output, but it is necessary to situate the activity of foreseeing before them. To give a simple example: if one of the principles at work within a system is one we can call of 'religious contraposition', any input coming from the outside world, regardless of its original meaning or of what it was at its source supposed to mean, could be understood in religious and conflict terms resulting in a complex dynamic that will follow a certain 'logic'. It is just not a matter of agents' perceptions, but of the more general pattern a system follows in reacting to input. Different types of 'logic' are systemic because agents composing a political and social system behave according to values, beliefs and interests that can be analysed as 'objective' – their subjective values, beliefs and interests are societal; collectively, they are not tied to the single agent. Identifying the logic at work within a system at a certain time can allow some prediction of the way the system could react to external input. However, logics are plural – there are several types of logic, and simultaneously at work within a system, and it is therefore essential to avoid reducing them to one as this would result in determinism. Mapping the systemic types of logic at work

could allow the prediction of whether and where they can meet in order to respond to input.

Cultural groups are the second macro-category placed on the systemic level. The concept of culture has received much attention, which has resulted in quite different definitions. In his 1949 *Mirror for Man*, the anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn devoted some twenty-seven pages to addressing the concept of culture, defining it in at least twelve different ways, such as ‘the total way of life of a people’, a ‘social legacy’, a set of ‘standardized orientation to recurrent problems’, learned behaviour, a ‘precipitate of history’, a map or a matrix, and so on. In 1952, he and Arthur Kroeber (1952) found more than one-hundred and sixty-four meanings of culture or, rather, more than one-hundred and sixty-four ways in which culture had been employed in the anthropological literature. Things arguably have only got worse since. However, they reported that all those meanings could be distilled into two: a strict conception, in the sense of a description of a group’s symbolic and value organisation; and a large concept, such as the traditions, habits, ideas, technological knowledge, etc. of a group in relation to its environment. By following other criteria, definitions of cultures have been divided into objective and subjective, sociological and anthropological, and high and low, inclusive and exclusive, primary and secondary, etc. Anthropologically, culture can be defined as “l’ensemble des manières de penser, d’agir et de sentir d’une communauté dans son triple rapport à la nature, à l’homme, à l’absolu” (Abou, 2002, 34); sociologically it can be seen as a “système dynamique et transmissible de croyances, de savoirs et d’arts”, characteristic of a “groupe historiquement donné” (Nassar, 1984, 183). In an objective sense, it has been portrayed as “interworked systems of construable signs ([...] symbols)” or, a bit shorter, as a “symbolic structure” (Geertz, 1973, 14); from a subjective point of view, Huntington (Huntington, 2000, xv); defined it as “the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society”. ‘High culture’ refers to the ‘symbolic structure’ shared by a certain elite while ‘low culture’ to that shared by the mass of people in a society. Finally, primary culture refers to a bond that commands the primary loyalty of an individual (for instance, grounded in ethnicity or nationality) and is able to impose itself on other, secondary, allegiances.

Analytically, culture can be defined in many ways, and the only criteria that should be employed in order to judge a definition are usefulness and precision. Culture is, in fact, only

an analytical category; it does not exist as such as a phenomenon. It is a device, and a relatively recent one (Cuche, 2004), which is relevant only when it is helpful in explaining or understanding something, particularly the way a group behaves, or is expected to behave.

It is really not that important, for the aims of this work, to actually and precisely define what culture is; it should be enough to accept a broad definition of it, which refers to some relatively stable and shared features characterising a group of individuals that are related to their shared subjectivity. Human beings, in their interactions, develop certain patterns of behaviour and shared understandings, and assign different priorities to values; from these, norms and roles are assigned, and a certain bond is created. These patterns characterise any group that regards some other groups as different, difference (the 'Other', if we wish) being that which allows comparisons between groups (Abou, 2002, 35-36). According to Pipes (1975, 454) culture does not exist in 'primitive' and closed societies, because in those societies group members call themselves 'men'. However, in that case a group of 'men' still call themselves so because they define themselves as different from the external environment, from nature. The 'Other' is not necessarily another human being or group; it can be an idea, a history, a myth, etc.

However it is defined, culture expresses the common features of a group, and every group is characterised by a specific culture. The problem with describing a culture is that the effort needs to be based on a decision concerning the group or, on the contrary, on the understanding that certain features are shared by a certain number of people, which form a group. Recalling Clifford Geertz's exhortation to be careful, the study of culture is delicate, because the researchers both 'describe' and 'inscribe' culture. The reference is to the role of science in constituting reality, and to scientific research as an instrument of power.

Politically, defining culture means being able to propose identities to individuals, and to shape them. Culture becomes a phenomenon when a group, as a collective body, is able to guide the behaviour of its members. In fact, from a phenomenological perspective, it is individuals who act. In other words, culture is important only in as much as it refers to identity, and political loyalty. 'Cultural politics' therefore becomes a primary field of political action, and a field of essential interest for political actors, both in terms of coexistence, for instance in multi-national states, or differentiation towards others, such as states in the case of national states. From this perspective, the division among cultures

adopts the criterion of inclusiveness. 'Inclusive' cultures are 'open' cultures, which characterise groups that can be joined by people thanks to a subjective rational voluntary act of will. An 'exclusive' culture is one that defines the common bond according to certain 'objective' and shared characteristic of a group such as history, race, language, religion and it is therefore not accessible to external people to join as they choose (see Huntington and Wolfe, 2004) – the divisions follow very much the difference between 'French' and 'German' concepts of nation, citizenship and, of course, civilisation.

From a political perspective, therefore, culture is relevant in as much as it can be used in order to draw boundaries between groups, according to a differentiation mechanism, to command loyalties, and to shape identities. The construction of an individual identity develops through two distinct processes, called *self-categorisation* and *social comparison* in social identity theory, or through a more general process called *identification* in identity theory, which focuses more than the previous approach on the different roles an individual assumes in his or her development (Stets and Burke, 2000, 224-237). To put it briefly, a double mechanism of differentiation and assimilation toward the environment allows the individual to construe a certain idea of the Self (social or personal). Thanks to the mechanism of identification, the individual interiorizes the 'cultural units of meaning' and the group's values. The way the cultural elements are interiorised is different according to the type of society and group. For instance, if we wanted to follow the modernist differentiation between traditional and modern (individualistic) society, then traditional culture is based on a sacred order, generally characterised by a strong religious connotation. Individualist societies on the other hand, rely less on a common 'patrimony', and privilege the personal values and the esteem of the personal Self. According to Azar (1999), in collectivist societies, to which traditional societies generally belong, the person as such does not exist, because group identity dominates personal identity. The more important the latter is, the less the individual needs a social identity; the two respond functionally to the same need for positive self-imaging. The more groups there are within a society, the more the individual can experience a plurality of proposed identities, and the less a specific group is able to impose itself on the individual, and his/her political allegiance is a matter of personal choice. From this perspective, the passage from traditional to modern and post-modern societies is parallel to an augmentation of groups within societies. Therefore, globalisation is a process centred on identity because the collapse of communication and

movement costs increases the contacts among individuals, who are bearers of group meanings and identity.

Power appears to be relevant also from another perspective. The study of cultural exchanges has emphasised the relationships between power, identity, and culture. From the 1970s on, anthropological studies on culture and identity have underlined the dynamic content of the two latter concepts. On the one hand, no culture is fixed, and therefore definable – every culture is ‘syncretic’, and/or ‘métisse’. Culture modifies itself through continuous processes of ‘acculturation’ and ‘métissage’, which both refer to an appropriation of cultural exogenous elements through their re-interpretation (see Carmen et al., 2001). On the other hand, identity is a ‘relational and situational’ concept. The plurality of identities that ‘make’ an individual means that identity is not fixed; one identity has meaning only according to a precise moment, place, and situation. In addition, identity expresses itself through relationships; and it is relationships that give meaning to it. This way, individuals do not totally accept a culture, but interpret it according to the situation, therefore creating it through interaction. From this perspective, it is identity that gives meaning to culture, and not the other way around. Understanding cultural exchanges, and therefore cultural change, would mean deconstructing culture into its basic phenomenological units – the individuals, who are acting within a social structure (Castels, 2001). From this perspective, then, culture is very much tied to the social organisation, reproducing it; in other words, culture is an expression of power hierarchies, and the object of social struggle (Journet, 2002, 11).

To sum up, power is tied to culture and identity in two ways: on the one hand, from a top-to-bottom perspective, in the measure in which groups are able to shape identities and command loyalties. On the other hand, from a bottom-to-top point of view, because it is inscribed in identities and cultures; as a result, cultural exchange is a multi-faceted power relationship. If power hierarchies and power relationships are phenomenologically expressed by synchronically and diachronically defined individual relationships (in terms of identity transformation), they can be analytically accepted, at a macro level, as cultural exchanges. In other words, group interaction is a power game with an identity outcome: for this reason, I will call groups ‘cultural groups’. The expression aims to emphasise the identity-related feature of any contact between social and political groups, even those that can be analysed as being based on interest. From this perspective, all three of Steven Lukes’

‘faces of power’ and Michel Foucault’s concept of power are included in the analytical framework. To express it a little more clearly: ‘raw’ power, understood in terms of the allocation and ownership of capabilities, are factors that are capable of changing power hierarchies, and they do, but only as much as they are culturally framed in this way – realism argues differently, of course; however, assigning a certain relevance to identity politics suggests the acceptance of a more constructivist perspective, which is theoretically able to include all the different ‘realist’ approaches and not limit itself only to them.

The only way to trace identity transformation within a society is to consider only that transformation that happens at a macro level of cultural exchanges. It is not possible to trace all groups and define their cultural identities within a system; in addition, it is useless, because group identity changes as well. What it is possible to do is to highlight the ‘points of contact’ created by cultural groups’ interactions along cultural borders and prevailing, at certain times, within an analytical system. Social transformation is more likely to flourish from those ‘points of contact’ because it is there that conflict or agreement can be localised. At a certain time, ‘points of contact’ can be objectively traced, because they are the result of common or conflicting interests, values, beliefs, and expectations.

Three concluding remarks are necessary: the first concerns the relationship between culture and political culture; the second is related to the reproduction of culture; and the third deals with the link between the political and the other ‘spheres’.

The work of Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba, especially *The Civic Culture* (1963) and *The Civic Culture Revisited* (1989), has inspired a body of work concerned with political culture. This literature generally employs a subjective definition of political culture in order to provide taxonomies of different kinds and to understand its relationship with political systems’ taxonomies and performances. However, what is important is that political culture is understood as distinct from the ‘anthropological’ culture, in terms of having its own characteristics; it is in fact made up of ‘cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations toward the political system’. However, a link with ‘anthropological’ culture is maintained, because it is there that some explanation of political culture’s features can be found. This tendency is expressed better in *Culture Matters*, from 2000, edited by Harrison and Huntington, than anywhere else – even if Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* is a more famous example. There, the focus is on understanding the relationship between culture and political and economic development; some contributors (for instance, Carlos Alberto

Montaner, Mariano Grondona, and Daniel Etounga-Manguelle) link economic failure to traditional culture, blaming the latter for under-development. The anthropologist Richard A. Shweder (2000) cannot help proposing an excoriating critique whose points are already expressed in his title: *Moral Maps, "First World" Conceits, and the New Evangelists*. Against this idea it should be enough to point out that if, for instance, democracy needs to establish some values in order to be sustainable, then accepting democratic or civic (political) culture as related to 'anthropological' culture conduces to nonsense. On the contrary, political culture is specific, referring only to the authoritative organisation of society, and is created and reproduced by political agents (analytically, 'cultural groups') through their interactions.

Secondly, political culture should not be considered a precipitate of history. Robert D. Putnam, in *Making Democracy Work* (1993), explains empirical discrepancies among Italian regions' democratic performances by linking the presence of 'social capital' (which is a set of informal values and norms shared by members of a group that permits them to cooperate with one another) in certain regions and not others to the political legacy of the *età dei comuni*, under-valuing the centuries that have passed since then (and he has therefore been accused of 'cherry-picking'). The point is that political culture, as much as 'anthropological' culture, results from the action of agents and groups, who re-interpret history and re-create it. This process of reproduction is contemporary, and not historical. Political culture can be either quickly or slowly changed according to social and political agents' actions; it is, in every respect, the outcome of political strategies. Accepting history as an analytical category risks hiding the protagonists of political change, and their responsibility.

Finally, social, economic, environmental, ethical, religious, etc. issues become political through a process of 'politicisation', in other words a process that incorporates issues in the political realm because they come to be regarded as concerning the authoritative organisation of society. The process is impersonal, but is power-related, and is therefore included in the framework as interaction among 'cultural groups'. Instead, its 'personal profile' in other words the actual actions of agents that contribute to issue politicisation, is located in the third level of the framework. Social agents become politically relevant when their interaction is conducive to political outcomes. Families, for instance, are political agents because they reproduce values, and specifically political values, and are therefore sources (regardless of whether they conform or are oppositional) of political identity.

However, the framework is not tied to single actors and groups' identities, but focuses on the points of contact.

To conclude, the interaction of 'cultural groups' contributes to predicting political change because it allows an assessment of the points of transformation of values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations. The analysis focuses on political cultural borders, and it is actual and localised, but aimed at sketching the dynamic profile of identity constructions. The exercise clearly necessitates the mediation of the researcher, and does not easily accept objective data; 'points of contact' can be identified because they can either be present at the time of the analysis or be potential. In addition, they could lead to different transformations. It is the 'art' of the researcher, his/her ability to foresee change through 'empathy' only that can allow a correct anticipation of the political future.

The third level is organised in terms of agents. This macro-category emphasises the role human beings play in fostering political change through their actions. For this reason, it is the level on which the capacity of the researcher to understand political agents becomes, even more than on the previous level, central.

Preliminarily, agents are both individuals and groups – clearly, the state as 'a government', is considered to be an agent. Groups, as opposed to 'cultural groups', are considered to be single entities. Agents foster political change through their actions. From this perspective, processes are not impersonal; on the contrary, they are very much personal. The emphasis here is placed on the autonomy of individuals and groups to shape the course of history. Autonomy, however, does not mean absolute freedom; structures, and systems, do influence agents both by limiting their open courses of actions and by offering incentives and disincentives. However, the problem is who the are agents who should be considered. Preliminary, as far as individuals are concerned, psychological assessments, familiar background, past histories, etc. are all relevant here; as far as groups are concerned, internal organisation, goals, histories, etc. could be relevant (to be clear: studying the internal organisation is important insofar as it allows us to understand, and foresee, the final political decision of the group as a single agent). Yet the real problem is that relevant agents are sometimes, and especially in the period before an important political change, hidden; they assume relevance progressively, while the political change is shaping itself. Without referring to Hegel, it is true that, sometimes, agents become particularly politically relevant

because they are the expression of a collective will. However, in practice, only those agents who are politically relevant at the moment of foreseeing can be considered.

Conclusion

I have tried to outline the framework that could help to allow both 'proscribing' and 'predicting', which together form 'foreseeing'. In order to do so, I have preliminarily recalled briefly the different approaches that have attempted to anticipate the future by grouping them according to their epistemologies and related ideas of history: the positivist-evolutionary, the natural-rational, and the historical-dialectical approaches.

Consequently, I have clarified some issues in order to 'prepare the ground' before proposing the framework. Finally, I have outlined the framework, which has been centred on the human being and organised according to his/her role in shaping reality. This way, I have tried to solve some analytical questions, such as the agent-structure dilemma, the different concepts of power, the diachronic and synchronic dimensions, the contemporary trends and sudden change, objectivity and subjectivity, without assigning any primacy – an exercise that remains within each approach and theory's autonomy (for instance, Marx assigned it to the economic structure, Weber to culture, etc.).

The framework includes macro-categories, which have been organised on three levels, according to the role individual actions can have in shaping them. The first level includes structures: the organisation of the economy, the framework provided by institutions, and the available technology. The second is the systemic level, and it includes the types of logic of the system, and the 'points of contact' among 'cultural groups'. The final level is reserved for the autonomy of the human being in making history, and is therefore that of agents.

In conclusion, I am not sure if this outlined framework could have allowed the prediction of the Political Independence Revolution. The next chapter will attempt to put it to the test.

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 45th 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, Franjieh, 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 tri-partition 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'.

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.

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