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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

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policies that was rejected by many. Inside Lebanon, members of the movement preferred to establish a connection to the Palestinian *Intifhadas*, 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, 'Indipendence *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 teh 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 Down Town 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, Wehdeh 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 Condoleeza Riza 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, commited 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'lel*) 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 clienteles, 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 o 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 Skopcol'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 (Skopcol, 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 Syrian 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 Skopcol (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*[9]: 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 extend.

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 *Intifadha*, because the means employed during the Second *Intifadha* 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, *Intifadha* 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 – exceptionality. 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 focuses on democracy as a category of institutional arrangements, not considering the way the transition happens as particularly relevant. In particular, if the transition if 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 *Intifadha*', 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.

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[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 Franjieh, 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 *MERIA* (*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.