

# **Political Theatre: Football and Contestation in Beirut**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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Muzna AL-MASRI

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the relationships between political elites and their constituencies, looking specifically at the emergence and production of a new type of political elite in post-war Lebanon. Based on micro-level ethnographic research amongst Beirut's Sunni communities, mainly within Nejmeh Sports Club, I explore the crystallisation of the model of an 'entrepreneurial elite' as exemplified by the late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, who came to be the club's patron. The most popular football club – and indeed sports club – in Lebanon, Nejmeh embraced members from different social classes, sectarian affiliations and political camps. It therefore provided a rare fieldwork site from which to observe the negotiation of clientelistic relationships, and to do so over an extended period, including times of heightened political – and occasionally violent – conflict. The stadiums provided a theatre for the spectacular performance of politics, wealth and power, and the events which took place in them mirrored the interplay of both local and global transformations occurring over the span of almost two decades.

My research argues that the post-war period ushered in a new 'glocal' model of political elite which combined a corporate background and the performative use of wealth with well-trying tactics of ascendance to power, namely philanthropy, sectarianism and clientelism. It is a model which amalgamated seemingly contradictory rhetoric and practice. Its rhetoric of professionalism, democracy, championing of state institutions, and nonviolence often paralleled practices of corruption, vote-buying, and the support of strong-arm racketeering. This model of an elite functioning at the highest level of Lebanese politics, moved the locus of power, as well as economic opportunities, into the control of an ever smaller number of people, marginalising both the power and roles of those actors operating further down the class and clientelistic hierarchy of relationships. Within such a hierarchy, public demonstrations of loyalty performed by those in the lower echelons of society served to simultaneously lay claim to the elite's favours and to suppress alternative or dissident voices.

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In loving memory of

Paul Hendrich

(1971 – 2008)

and

Roula Ayoubi

(1973 – 2013)

## Transliteration and Terms Used

Most Arabic words have been transliterated using the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration system, often adopting the simplified version of the transliteration (za'im and not za'im̄). Transliterated words are italicised on first appearance only. Individual names, including those of public figures, followed either the person's own spelling when using the Latin alphabet (like Hariri not Harirī) or the way English language media outlets spelled them. Names of localities and political groups are spelled using the English version of the name where available (like Beirut and not Bayruṭ or Beyrouth).

As a way of preserving the anonymity of research participants, I have changed the names of interviewees and often use 'club member' as an umbrella term that includes past and present fans, employees, general assembly members and the elected board members of sports clubs. Where the position of the research participant is of relevance to the argument being made or the individual occupies a key position which would enable deduction of their real identity I have used their real names having been given full permission.

I use term the 'Hariri Establishment' when speaking about the political and familial institution led by late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, and by his son Saad Hariri after him, particularly when discussing issues and actions that cannot be clearly attributed to one person or institution within the establishment. For terminology used by participants when speaking about any of the constituent parts of the Hariri establishment, I translated the exact words used including 'Hariri family', 'Hariri people', 'Future Movement', and 'Hariri's parliamentary block'.

## Glossary of Arabic Terms

In alphabetical order:

Transliterated Word	Arabic Word	Meaning
'amāna – used as 'amana in text	امانه	Trust (n)
'araqah – used as 'araqah in text	عراقة	Rootage / Lineage
fitna	فتنه	Discord
haī'a 'āma	هيئة عامة	General Committee – in a sports club this includes all registered sports club members.
haī'a 'idārīa	هيئة ادارية	Executive committee - in a sports club this includes elected members responsible for the management of a sports club over a period of three years.
mawna	مونة	Influence or authority (over somebody)
ra'ī - used as ra'i in text	راعي	Patron
waqf	وقف	Endowment (often religious)
wāsta - used as wasta in text	واسطة	Going in between: achieving goals through links with persons in positions of high status.
wazn	وزن	Weight, status
Za'īm – used as Za'im in text (Plural: Zu'amā – used as Zu'ama in text)	زعيم (زعماء)	Leader (s)
Az'ar (plural Zu'rān – used as Zu'ran in text)	ازعر (زعران)	Thug (s)

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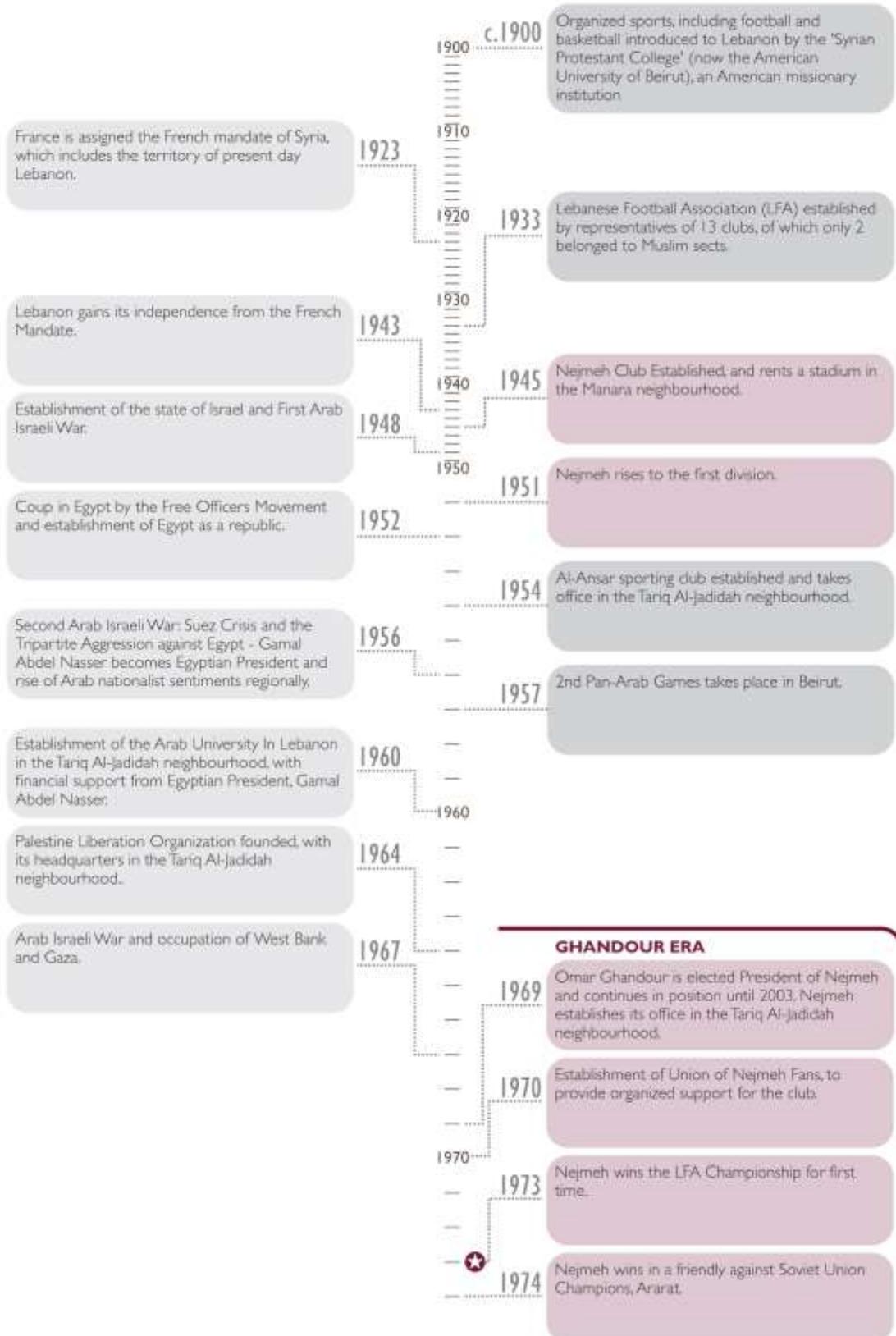
My family have unfailingly supported me through years working on this thesis. I am grateful for my parents' patience and support, and for my brother Ghassan's review of written work, his help with transliteration and for being there to provide whatever was needed at odd hours of the night. Special thanks are due to my beloved Sister Sawsan and brother-in-law Ali for bearing with and often replenishing, the drain on my time and resources caused by the effort of complete this thesis.

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# Timeline

## POLITICAL EVENTS

## NEJMEH/SPORTS EVENTS



## POLITICAL EVENTS

### LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

**14 April:** Phalange shoot at a bus in the Ayn Al-Rummaneh area killing its Palestinian passengers. The incident marks the beginning of the Lebanese Civil war which goes on until 1990.

1975

Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, Rafic Hariri first establishes popular presence by leading clearing and reconstruction efforts in Beirut

1982

**2 August:** Start of the first Gulf War by US led coalition following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.  
**22 October:** Signing of the Ta'if agreement marking the end of the Lebanese civil war.

1990

Dissolution of the Soviet Union.

1991

### RAFIC HARIRI PRIME MINISTER

**October:** Rafic Hariri is appointed Prime Minister for the first time, leading a massive post war reconstruction project.

1992

Rafic Hariri removed from power. Salm Al-Hoss appointed as Prime Minister.

1998

### RAFIC HARIRI PRIME MINISTER

**10 June:** Hafez al-Assad, Syrian President since 1971, dies, replaced by his son, Bashar Al-Assad.  
**25 May:** Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.  
**October:** Rafic Hariri returns as Prime Minister after his bloc wins all parliamentary seats in Beirut.

2000

## NEJMEH/SPORTS EVENTS

### GHANDOUR ERA CONTINUES

Nejmeh wins LFA Championship.  
**6 April:** Brazilian star Pele plays in a friendly match as member of Nejmeh's team.

1975

Lebanese football championships are suspended. Nejmeh retains the title of LFA champion until championship resumes in 1988.

1976

1980

LFA is internally divided; one part is made up of clubs emerging from Muslim communities, another of clubs from Christian communities. Nejmeh club refuses to join either.

1985

Al-Ansar, Nejmeh's local rival, wins the first LFA championship held since 1975, and starts 11 year winning streak. Nejmeh boycotts the championship.

1988

1990

Nejmeh board establishes the 'Central Office of Fans' Unions' (the Fans' Office) and hosts it in the club's offices.

1995

Pan-Arab games take place in Beirut, with support and sponsorship from Rafic Hariri, and organisational role for Nejmeh.

1997

Claiming partisan policies and mismanagement of the LFA, Nejmeh club members and fans launch protests against LFA and complaints to Prime Minister at the time, Salim Al-Hoss.

1999

Nejmeh wins LFA Championship for first time since 1975.

2000

**October:** Asian Cup held in Beirut.

LFA championship is not awarded to any team after claims of manipulation of results. LFA board forced to resign.

2001

Nejmeh Sports Club wins LFA Championship for the fourth time.

2002

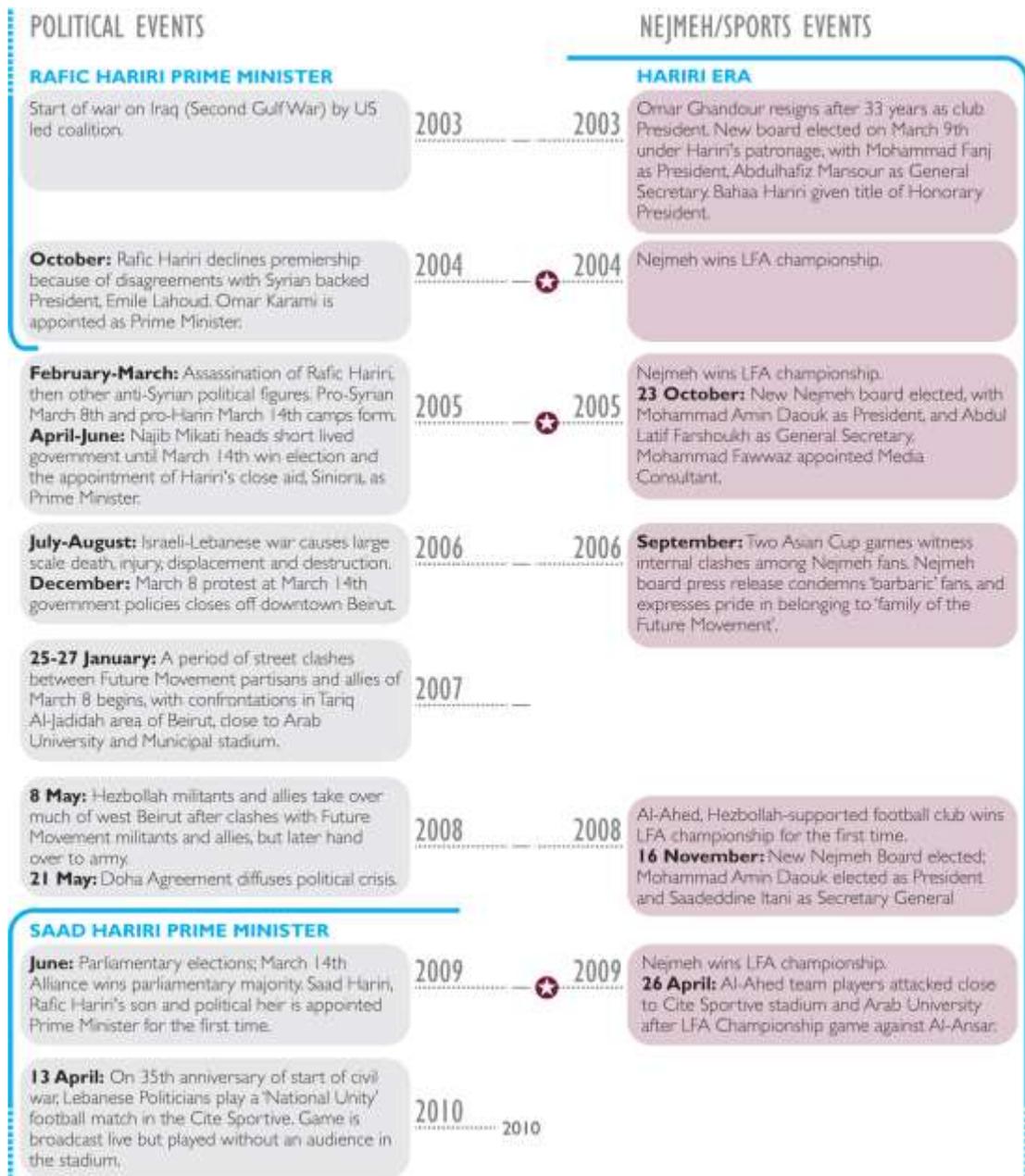


Figure 1: Timeline of key sports and political events in Lebanon and the Arab region.

# 1

## Introduction

*'For my part, I still think football is a precious gift to anthropologists. I sometimes even wonder if it was not invented to please them!'*  
(Bromberger 2012: 7)

*'Nejmeh club is not owned by its management, or its general assembly, and not even its fans. It is owned by the whole of the Lebanese people, just like the gold at the Lebanese Central Bank, it can't be touched'*  
(Long time Nejmeh club member and fan)

### A Game of National Unity

*On April 13th, 2010, the Cite Sportive in Beirut witnessed one of its most televised though poorly played matches. In an effort to demonstrate 'national unity' - and, incidentally, their downright lack of physical fitness - Lebanese politicians of varying political positions and backgrounds played a thirty minute friendly football match.*

*The match took place on the 35th anniversary of the start of the 15 year Lebanese civil war – or, as most in Lebanon call it, 'The War' - under the slogan 'we are all one team'. At the time, the country was going through one of its worst political crises since the end of the war in 1990. Politically, the country was divided between two camps, popularly termed 'March 8' and 'March 14', and the match was planned with the aims firstly, of affirming that the 'dark days' of the civil war were long gone, and secondly, reducing the political tension and strengthening the spirit of cooperation and solidarity between the Lebanese.*

*The referees were carefully selected to include a variety of sectarian backgrounds, while players from rival political camps competed to score goals and demonstrate sportsmanship in Lebanon's largest stadium. The red team, led by Saad Hariri - leader of the March 14 coalition and Prime Minister at the time - won with two goals to nil over the white team which was led by parliamentarian and Hezbollah member of the March 8 coalition, Ali Ammar. Despite being jointly organised by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and*

*Sports (MoYS) and the Parliamentary Sports Committee, the costs of the match were covered by the Intercontinental Bank of Lebanon.*

*A press conference announcing the match had been held a few days earlier. During it Abdallah, Minister of Youth and Sports at the time, explained that the match would send two messages to Lebanese youth; first, 'that sport is the most appropriate method to strengthen unity among the Lebanese' and second, that the presence of ministers and parliamentarians in the field together to play a football game highlighted the importance of 'overcoming divisions born out of periods of political tension' (As-Safir 10/4/2010).*

*Following the press conference, a video clip of politicians wearing sports gear in different team colours and singing the Lebanese national anthem was played on national television stations over several days preceding the match. The match itself was broadcast live, reported front-page in Lebanese papers, and covered by Arab regional and international media. Yet in a stadium with the capacity to welcome 40,000 spectators, only selected fellow politicians and a large number of media personnel were present at the match itself. Lebanese citizens and regular spectators were excluded for security reasons. The young people for whom the message was intended, and the audience for whom the spectacle was staged were not allowed to watch the match, at least not live.*

*The ban on spectators was not unique to this match as fans in Lebanon had been banned from attending the majority of football matches since 2006. The decision to ban spectators came after a series of clashes between supporters of different political groups at football matches and the failure of sports and state institutions to establish a mechanism to guarantee calm in the stadium. Sports, particularly in that period, as fans well knew, was a space for mobilisation of support for the same politicians who, in their match, claimed to be capable of overcoming their differences.*

*These paradoxes were readily spotted by journalists and commentators in their coverage of the match. The novelty of such a match in Lebanon and the friendliness of the atmosphere in which it was played, did not succeed in concealing the superficiality of this supposed performance of unity. While some media coverage celebrated the event and saw in it an affirmation of the desire to transcend political disagreement, most local Lebanese coverage was at minimum sarcastic. Blogger Imad Bazzi asserted that Lebanese politicians were truly all 'one team' collaborating in corruption, theft, and sectarian mobilisation. Fawzi, reporting in the Lebanese daily newspaper, Al-Akhabar, saw in the match a spectacle that surpassed the imagination of comedians. As-Safir's, journalist, Jihad Bazzi, expressed surprise that the result of the match was not prearranged, as in election results. He suggested that predictions, based on knowledge of the Lebanese political system, were that the match was to end in a tie. He also questioned the fans' exclusion from this match after many were mobilised to take part in massive political rallies to demonstrate support for each of the antagonistic political leaders.*

*In all ways, the match provided a caricatured representation of the Lebanese political scene at the time; a private sector sponsored media event in which cooperation and competition were simultaneously and contradictorily performed by politicians. The spectators – the people – were excluded from the event while also being its target audience. The stadium then was a stage for one of the many social and political spectacles that this thesis explores.*



*Figure 2: Poster for the 'Game of National Unity' played by Lebanese politicians. The match, played on April 13th, 2010 marked the 35th anniversary of the start of the Lebanese civil war and was organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), the Parliamentary Sports Committee, and the Intercontinental Bank of Lebanon (IBL).<sup>2</sup>*

## Research Questions

This thesis explores the relationships between political elites and their constituencies, looking specifically at the role of actors at various levels of political power in negotiating, reproducing, and subverting prevalent socio-political divisions during times of conflict. Patronage and clientelism have long been dominant themes in popular, policy, and academic discussion of Lebanese politics as well as themes debated by political

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://observers.france24.com/ar/content/20100413-lebanon-war-civil-again-tensions-religious> Accessed 19/9/2015.

anthropologists. Both concepts are broad and incorporate several – and at times contradictory - understandings of relationships between members of the social and political elites and ordinary people. Based on research amongst Beirut's Sunni communities, mainly within the Nejme Sports Club (hereafter Nejme), I try to expand and develop previous explorations of clientelism's role within a conflict-prone power-sharing political system. I also elaborate on the ways in which clientelism operates in a rapidly changing social context where wealth plays an increasingly important role in politics.

Like the politicians on the pitch described in the chapter's introduction, I approached sports via my interest in politics, and worked with the football community and the Nejme Sports Club in particular, using this club as my main fieldwork site. The club provided a unique entry point enabling my observations of the clientelistic practices which were evolving among Beirut's residents, most especially among members of its Sunni communities and its political elite.

Nejme, the most popular football club in Lebanon and one of Beirut's oldest, was a stage where Beirutis of various social classes and political interests interacted over an extended period of time. In the year 2003, it came under the patronage of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri 'leader of the Sunna par excellence' in the post war period (Abdel-Latif 2008). Hariri neither came from a notable family, nor was he a militia leader. As an international business tycoon, he presented himself to the Lebanese political scene as a renewed model of the emerging elite for whom money played a pivotal role. He combined this approach with other well-tried tactics aimed at ascendance to power: philanthropy, sectarianism and clientelism.

Johnson (1986: 1), in his research on the Sunni community of Beirut and the Lebanese state, claims to have observed 'the decline and fall of Sunni Beirut' which, after years of civil war, was destroyed as a political entity by 'the ascendancy of the Shiites' (1986: 2). In his description of the socio-political organisation of Beirut's Sunni community before and during the Lebanese civil war, Johnson suggests three interdependent structures of stratification, namely class, clientelism and sectarianism. He describes the Lebanese political system as one dominated by powerful local leaders, popularly called *zu'ama* (leaders, plural of *zu'im*), who are mostly descendants of families notable in the Ottoman period. These patrons had a number of strong-arm retainers operating for them and performing intermediary roles (including coercion by force) with their clientele.

This thesis starts where Johnson leaves off, and is to a large extent an exploration of the (re)emergence of the ‘Sunni sectarian community’ in the post war period. The 1990s witnessed a growing Sunni sentiment and communal solidarity that was often framed in opposition to the Shiite community<sup>3</sup>. This transformation was closely linked to the roles of a newly emergent political leadership in post-civil war Lebanon. The settlement that ended the war also brought with it an emerging and redefined political elite (El-Husseini 2004) and steered the long-entrenched clientelistic tradition in Lebanese politics to take ‘one more turn along an evolutionary track’ (Hamzeh 2001: 17).

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought the prospect for an escalation in political and civil violence. This renewal also brought about new grounds for the negotiation of inter-sectarian and political relations nationally, and examination of the roles and allegiances within existing networks. Within this context I explore the evolution of clientelism and the ways in which it is negotiated and recreated by members of the political elite and by the residents of Beirut, specifically:

I look at the changing role of local and national political leadership in Lebanon and at the formation and installation of new elites alongside the evolution of clientelism within global and local contexts where money plays a central role in politics. I trace the role of Beirut’s urban and Sunni bourgeoisies within the club and consider these peoples’ relationship to the club’s patron over more than a decade and explore their own understanding of what these roles and relationships entail.

Secondly, I examine the instrumental and symbolic role of the practice and discourse of sectarianism and violence shaping relations between political leadership and their constituency. This research strand focuses on incidents of violence and hostility within the stadium and in the city of Beirut, and considers the ways in which such events are framed and interpreted by club members and fans.

Thirdly, I explore the positioning of micro-level clientelistic networks within the processes of a power-sharing political system – or a ‘consociational democracy’ as some would describe it<sup>4</sup>.

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3 See Chapter Three for an exploration of the historical and contextual variables that affect this transformation.

4 As described by Lipjhart (1980) and promoted, particularly in the post war Ta’if agreement in Lebanon. Discussion of the limitations of the consociational model in Lebanon in the political science literature abounds (Hudson 1988; Zahar 2005; Salamey 2009).

Despite my choice of research community, this study is not an anthropology of sports: it is a political anthropology that is based within a sports institution. The sports stadium and the club provided me with a stage, a ‘theatrical production’ (Bromberger 1993) where the negotiation and reformulation of power relations could be observed.

## **Clientelism, the State and the Elite**

Extant anthropological literature provides many definitions of clientelism, a phenomenon which is most usually summarised as a relationship of exchange between a more powerful party, from which resources and protection flow, and a less powerful individual or group who provide political loyalty in return. Apparent agreement on this definition masks a plethora of understandings of what clientelism actually entails: it has long been rendered a ‘concept for all seasons’ (Gilsenan 1977). Instead of intervening in the extensive literature on clientelism which spans over five decades and mostly offers a sterile political science perspective, I aim to provide a ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) of negotiations of elite power at a certain point in time, while benefiting from the fluidity of the concept of clientelism which gives an essential utility to my work. In the brief discussion below, I selectively explore several key issues of concern for this research. My discussion borrows from the literature which has concentrated on elites and elite cultures. It also draws on literature dealing with state-society relations, as well as the extensive literature devoted to clientelism.

### **Clientelism, the State, and Democratic Representation**

Roniger (2004) speaks of three waves of work on clientelism. The first in the late 1960s-early 1970s focused on agrarian and traditional settings as well as new migrants to the city. This wave of studies conceptualised clientelism as an archaic phenomenon destined to disappear after the democratisation of these agrarian / traditional societies. In a good deal of that early literature, clientelism is discussed as ‘a parasite vine’ which ‘weakens government’ and ‘leads to nepotism, corruption, influence peddling and above all, it weakens the rule of Law’ (Boissevain 1966: 30). The second wave in the 1980s and early 1990s facilitated ‘greater awareness of [clientelism’s] ubiquity also in parts and sectors of the developed democratic and Communist polities’ (Roniger 2004: 356). Clientelistic relationships were seen to coexist with institutional and state structures; they were, as Lande (1983) describes them, an addenda to political institutions.

The late 1990s and the 2000s saw a third wave of work (Auyero 2000; Piattoni 2001), which sought to move the discussion away from the mere resilience of clientelism, and to

present instead the ‘real workings of democracy, citizenship and civil society’ (Roniger 2004: 357) and politics more broadly. This included research on intersections between clientelism, and contentious social action, and collective organisation by civil society actors (Auyero, Lapegna and Poma 2009; Gay 1994). A research perspective adopted by some writers within this third wave focused not only on the detailed practices of politics but also addressed how conceptualisations and emotions attached to politics. This approach is best exemplified by the edited volume of Joseph, Mahler and Auyero (2007) on political ethnography, where ethnography is used to provide a thick detailed description of everyday practice of politics - an approach which differed radically from formal macro-level political analysis.

This thesis situates itself within this third wave at three levels. Firstly, it adopts a specifically ethnographic approach mobilising detailed micro-level research which seeks to understand the day-to-day operation of clientelism and the perceptions and practices associated with it within sports - a context which is not a distinctly political one. Secondly, the thesis recognises the blurred boundaries between state-citizen and patronage relationships (Gupta 1995). Thirdly, it seeks a more dynamic exploration of the relationship between patrons / political elites on the one hand and clients / people on the other, seeing all parties involved in these relationships as contributors – albeit in different ways and to different degrees (Roniger 1994).

Such an approach in Lebanon is, so far, absent despite the vast literature on clientelism - a concept which has for decades occupied a dominant position in political and anthropological writing on Lebanon (Gellner & Waterbury 1977; Johnson 1986; Gilsenan 1995; Hamze 2001; Hermez 2011). While some of this literature is based on empirical research (Johnson 1986; Gilsenan 1995), there is little, if any, recent empirical work on patronage politics in Lebanon, particularly not through the micro-political ethnographic approach.

In addition, policy-level discussion of patronage politics in Lebanon remains entrapped in the dominant trope of the literature on clientelism, which sees it as an ill of ‘traditional’ societies and, as such, fundamentally opposed to the construction of the ‘modern’ state and its institutions; ideas that date back to the first wave of work on clientelism mentioned earlier. What the majority of this literature shares is a series of agreements: that clientelism is a key contributor to sectarian antagonism and an obstacle to peace-building (ESCWA 2009; ESCWA 2011; Kraft et al. 2008), that it weakens state institutions, accountability and

civic mobilisation, and is opposed to institutional state-building (AbiYaghi 2012; Abou Assi 2006; Karam 2012). Collectively this literature affirms that transition to statehood requires breaking away from clientelism.

Recent academic literature on the state in Lebanon has ushered in a different perspective - which this thesis aims to contribute to - namely that it disputes the divide between the state and democratic representation on the one hand, and personal clientelistic relationships on the other. For example, at the macro-level, a study of corruption by political scientist Leenders (2012) affirms that the failure of bureaucratic institutions does not necessarily mean that the state is non-existent. He argues that in fact it is through the capture and use of state institutions that elites are capable of applying bureaucratic rules selectively – by giving access to some and making it very difficult for others. Taking a local perspective, Obeid (2011), in her research on local elections in Lebanon, re-evaluates the role of lineage in local political practice and frames it within a process of experimentation that the electorate are willing to engage with in their search for ‘true’ representation. Reliance on lineage networks is thus not opposed to democratic representation but is, rather, an instrument that allows for experimentation with democracy. In proposing this idea, Obeid complicates the practice of politics and advocates, following Hefner (2006), the study of ‘democracy in its ethnographically emergent contexts and challenges the “one-size-fits-all” model’ (Obeid 2011: 253).

### **Styles of Instalment of Elite / Political Patrons**

The pillar of clientelistic relations is the patron, or the member of the socio-political elite who is the primary contractor in this relationship of exchange. Previous literature has discussed elite recruitment, production, and succession, noting the changes in these processes as well as the characteristics and culture of elites over time (Pina-Cabral and Pedroso de Lima 2000; Shore and Nugent 2002; Perthes 2004). Two such patterns of change are of note in Lebanon’s recent history, the first accompanying the changes in the national economy is ‘change from a preponderantly landowning elite to a business and professional elite’ in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Harik 1975: 207). The second is tied to the changes at various levels caused by the Lebanese civil war (1975 - 1989) which caused a modification of elite composition in the 1990s, when 80% of elected elites were new, and embraced groups not previously included (El-Husseini 2004). At this time new balances of power were appearing despite the fact that the way the system worked remained unchanged. The thesis examines this second wave of elite transformation from an

ethnographic perspective, looking particularly at the late Prime Minister Hariri as one of the most notable and powerful entrepreneurial members of what El-Husseini, a political scientist, called a 'redefined elite' (2004). In seeing elite formations as dynamic processes 'rather than static or bounded entities' (Shore 2002: 13), I trace Hariri's ascendance to elite status and document the consolidation and maintenance of his position - a process that spanned fifteen years of his political career and one that was closely tied to local, regional, and global economic and political conditions.

While patronage continues to be the main path that emergent elite members take in their ascent to power, the approach by which they build popular support bases varies. While former warlords have gained high status in post war Lebanon, philanthropy and sectarianism continue to be key to aspiring elite's ascendance to, and conservation of, status (Cammett and Issar 2010). Shore (2002: 9) argues that elites need a 'demos' to lend them credibility, and that they need to create a people. This necessitates 'cultural branding of their flock' or, in other words, 'cultural actions to promote feelings of solidarity and belonging among the peoples'. Highlighting the need for both 'cultural branding' as well as more instrumental attendance to the constituency's need (Harik 1975), is in line with recent trends in the literature which argue that participation in clientelistic networks provides material resources as well as promoting political identity: in other words clientelism is a 'symbolic system, a structure that provides ways of ordering reality' (Auyero 2000: 27).

A 'symbolic system' of this kind is not by necessity one that is imposed by the elite on their constituency. Following a relatively recent line of research in anthropology inspired by Bourdieu (Rutten 2007; Auyero et al. 2009), I understand such a system as part of a 'clientelist habitus'. Clientelism here is argued to have instrumental dimensions of material and political exchange, as well as a symbolic dimension where the engagement in patronage relationships has already become part of a system of dispositions that guides / dictates the socio-political behaviours of individuals. The dispositions that clientelism impresses in various actors, and the combination of symbolic and instrumental dimensions support its reproduction and endurance. Clients have a role in the reproduction of this system of dispositions, and thus contribute to the means by which the terms and exchanges of clientelistic relationships are imagined and practiced.

Despite decades passing on Nader's call for anthropologists to study-up (1972), the Arab countries have been largely disregarded in the study of political elite. Accounts deriving from the Arab countries are notably absent from relatively recent volumes which undertake

ethnographic exploration of elites (Pina-Cabral and Pedroso de Lima 2000; Shore and Nugent 2002; Abbink and Salverda 2012). Similarly, Perthes (2004) argues that the Arab countries have largely been ignored in elite studies since the early 1980s, possibly because of the limited turnover of political leaders, a factor partly due to the longevity of Arab leaders. The landmark publication in 2004 by Perthes on Arab elites in to a large extent necessitated by the death of several Arab leaders in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is the first such volume since Lenczowski's on political elites in the Middle East (1975). Still, both volumes are edited by political scientists, and with rare exceptions (Hanafi and Tabar 2005) there is little ethnographic scholarship that tackles elite power structures in the Arab countries. The political changes brought forward by the Arab uprisings renders the understanding of transformations at top tiers of politics, particularly from an anthropological perspective, not only opportune but necessary.

## **Through the Lens of Sports**

### **The Sports Scene in Lebanon: A Bench Player**

Football matches played in empty stadiums, as in the politicians' match described at the beginning of the chapter, were not new to Lebanese football. When I started fieldwork in 2008, I was repeatedly struck by the silence and bareness of the stadiums. As I sat with a privileged few allowed to watch the Lebanese Football Association (hereafter LFA) championships, I could hear the voices of competing players echoing in the huge empty space. Scored goals were met with the cheering of no more than thirty supporters, and matches started and ended with little celebration or enthusiasm. Sitting in the director's box, I could clearly hear the conversations between club board members and journalists and the cracking of sunflower seeds between their teeth as they watched the mediocre performances of their teams. By April 2010, LFA's Football championship had been held without fans for five consecutive seasons. Security concerns after a series of clashes between fans in the stadium during a tense political period were cited as the reason. Players competing in empty stadiums felt discouraged, and clubs which lost revenue from ticket sales were suffering financially. TV coverage was no solution as the interest of the alienated fans declined along with investments in advertisement. The beautiful game, like other sports in Lebanon at the time, had lost its charm. In the year 2010 when politicians played their friendly game, Lebanon's national football team was ranked by The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) as number 154 out of 203 national teams – the worst year for the team since 1993 when FIFA started its yearly rankings (see table 1).

The clubs fared slightly better than the national team, although in the same year, neither of the two clubs qualifying for the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) Cup went past the first round, and only twice have Lebanese clubs competed in the cup since the competition's inauguration in 2004 (see table 2).

**Table 1 - Lebanon's position on FIFA ranks distributed by year<sup>5</sup>**

Year	Lebanon's Rank
2006	126
2007	134
2008	150
2009	148
2010	154

**Table 2 - Performance of Lebanese Clubs in the AFC Cup<sup>2</sup>**

Year	Qualifying Club	Stage reached	Qualifying Club	Stage reached	Qualifying Club	Stage reached
2006	Nejmeh	Semi Finals	Al-Ahed	First Round		
2007	Nejmeh	Semi Finals	Al-Ansar	First Round		
2008	Safa	Final	Al-Ansar	First Round		
2009	Safa	Round of 16	Al-Ahed	First Round	Al-Mabarrah	First Round
2010	Nejmeh	First Round	Al-Ahed	First Round		

The statistics are not associated with any generalised lack of interest or enthusiasm for sports, or for football in particular in Lebanon. The World Cup, despite Lebanon's absence from it, is a major event for the Lebanese. It is an occasion when flags of various national teams adorn the streets of Beirut and huge screens showing the matches live are erected in cafes, bars and on street corners. In the same period that the 2008 LFA championship was taking place, the 2008 *Union of European Football Associations* (UEFA) European Football Championship (Euro 2008) was also in progress and many Lebanese were eagerly following it. Despite a passion for football in Lebanon, the sports scene as I saw it from the director's box then appeared depressing and an unlikely object of study. As one of the spectators in the Lebanese sports stadium put it, watching the Lebanese game after having watched the

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5 Source: <http://www.fifa.com/associations/association=lib/ranking/gender=m/index.html> Accessed 9/11/14

Euro 2008 games was like eating a falafel sandwich after having been to a lavish banquet of sea food - falafel being the cheapest meal available in Lebanon.

Yet in discussing the local sports scene, fans and sports enthusiasts would often speak to me of different times, of golden days when the stadiums were filled and competitions were fierce. In the previous decade, Lebanese basketball clubs were competing for and winning the game's Asian cup, and local football clubs attracted tens of thousands of fans to their games. As they described it, the current bareness of the stadiums was the result of recent political conflicts, poor leadership and unfair regulations by the association, lack of financial resources, and unruly fans. Those same sports fans spoke as if, prior to the year 2005, football had always been thriving and its stadiums full, and they recounted cherished memories of key events and games when their teams won awards and football reports occupied the front pages of local news-papers.

Reading through the sports history of Lebanon, I soon realised that despite the fact that times when football fared better did exist, periods when sports floundered in Lebanon were not exceptional; they were as recurrent as the country's periods of violent conflict. Since the establishment of the LFA in 1933, national championships were repeatedly suspended, cancelled, or played without spectators. Over 77 years until 2010, the annual LFA's championship was cancelled 27 times due to political and security considerations. In fact, the 20 years of the post-war period after 1990 constitute the longest stretch when the competition took place uninterrupted after being suspended for 12 years during the civil war<sup>6</sup>. Periods of crisis in the Lebanese football sector, just as in all other sectors, were the norm rather than an exception.

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6 For details of years in which the competition was not held, see <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/lebchamp.html> Accessed 30/11/2012.



*Figure 3: Empty stadiums during the final match of the 2008-2009 LFA Championship. Sidon Municipal Stadium. One of a privileged few allowed to watch the game with the empty stands appearing in the background. Nejmeb played against Safa and won the title.*

Poor performance, the emptiness of the stadiums, and the recurrent interruption of national competitions were not the only indicators of the dismal situation at the time the above game was played. In a press conference early in 2010 parliamentary committee leader, Simon Abu Ramia, claimed that the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) had in the previous year received a budget of merely three billion Lebanese Liras, equivalent to around two million US dollars, a sum barely capable of covering the salaries of the Ministry's employees (see table 3). The figure given by Abu Ramia accounted for less than 0.02% of the government's total expenditure that year. In Norway for example, to enable a comparison, sports expenditure in the year 2003 was 0.32% of state budget (De Bosscher et al. 2008), sixteen times the percentage in Lebanon<sup>7</sup>. According to the projected budgets for the years 2006 to 2009<sup>8</sup>, the Ministry would at best receive an average of 0.12% of the national budget, and there was no clear sports policy beyond the construction of sports grounds in rural areas and covering the salaries of employees. Beirut, the country's capital

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7 As De Bosscher et al. (2008) affirm, government sports budgets are very hard to compare, especially as in many countries sports receive a share of the local government budget (which is not so in Lebanon's case) as well as support from the private sector.

8 Since the year 2005, consecutive Lebanese governments have only published a yearly 'public finance review' which covers overall government expenditures and revenue, without a breakdown by ministry. The projected budget published yearly is not reflective of the actual expenditure, and in the case of the poorer ministries is often inflated to match promises for increased government support which are not usually fulfilled.

provided little space for the practice of sports. The Cite Sportive, Beirut's municipal stadium, and a few grounds for various kinds of team sports in Horsh Beirut<sup>9</sup> were, at the time of my fieldwork, the only public sports spaces provided for the capital's two million residents. Most premiere league clubs had their own privately owned or rented venues. However, a few commercial venues, which rent their spaces on an hourly basis, have begun to emerge recently.

**Table 3 - Share of sports of Lebanon's national government budget<sup>10</sup>**

Year	Total Budget Proposal (LL Billion)	Allocation to Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) (LL Billion)	Percentage of MoYS budget out of total budget
2008	13,360	13	0.10%
2009	18,337	25	0.14%
2010	21,742	2911	0.13%

Another prominent characteristic of the sports scene in Lebanon was the widespread patronage and political control over both individual clubs and the LFA. With almost no support from the government, lack of income from ticket sales, and a decline in revenue from TV coverage, clubs were almost entirely dependent on the sponsorship of patrons who were attached to the club via ties of sectarian and regional allegiance. In attempts to mobilise and strengthen ties with their constituencies, many socio-political leaders, or *zu'ama* as they are known locally, would sponsor a club so as to complement the work of various social, educational and political institutions which performed community based services.

Seen from a distance, the Lebanese sports scene easily lends itself to caricatural positioning of every club with a sectarian community and political leader, where X club is labelled as

9 Horsh Beirut, also known as Horsh El Snoubar or Bois de Pins, is the largest green public space in the city of Beirut. Besides the sports stadiums, it has largely been closed to the public. See <http://horshbeirut.com/> Accessed 8/11/2014

10 Source: Summary Table of 2010 Budget Proposal vs 2009 Budget Proposal published by Ministry of Finance - [http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-US/finance/BudgetInformation/AnnualBudgetDocuments/Documents/Annual%20Budget%20Documentation/2010/Budget%20Law/Budget%20Proposal%202010%20Tables%20\(Inc.%20COM%20Amdts%20180610\).pdf](http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-US/finance/BudgetInformation/AnnualBudgetDocuments/Documents/Annual%20Budget%20Documentation/2010/Budget%20Law/Budget%20Proposal%202010%20Tables%20(Inc.%20COM%20Amdts%20180610).pdf) Accessed 30/11/2012

Source: "Summary Table of 2009 Budget Proposal vs 2008 Budget Proposal" published by Ministry of Finance - <http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-US/finance/BudgetInformation/AnnualBudgetDocuments/Documents/Annual%20Budget%20Documentation/2009/Budget%20Law/Budgetproposal2009summarytables.pdf> - Accessed 30/11/2012

11 While total amount allocated to MoYS might appear to have doubled in the year 2010 compared to the year 2008, this is due to optimistic budget estimations and the percentage of total budget remains within the same range.

the favourite of Y community, and is governed as well as sponsored by Z leader and the institutions affiliated to him. This characterisation resonates with the way some of the fans saw football clubs – especially rival ones – yet it denies observers the opportunity to truly understand the complexity of the entanglement of sports and politics in Lebanon. The linkages between political and sectarian figures and groups, the consequences of these links, and negotiations over how they are defined, created and severed are key aspects of this thesis. Understanding such dynamics within the sports community can shed light on how broader socio-political clientelistic networks are formed and negotiated in Lebanon, and on the changes in such formations during the past two decades.



*Figure 4: Graffiti at the entrance to Beirut's Municipal Stadium.*

### **Sports as a Cultural Map**

Despite often repeated and purist claims by sports associations that sport is, and should, remain above or separate from politics and assertions of sport's humanitarianism and

political neutrality<sup>12</sup>, the relation between sport and politics is nevertheless a long and established one, be it at the local, national or international level. History is full of examples of the use of sports as an arena of political negotiation and expression, be it through boycotts and bans of Olympic games by international actors especially during the cold war, targeting of international sports events by political groups, protesting during sports events so as to benefit from media coverage, or use of sports by nation states to foster diplomatic relationships or convey political messages (Cha 2009). For decades social scientists have researched the overlap between sports, particularly football, and politics. Some have accused sports of being a de facto opium of the people and a tool used by the politically powerful to distract the masses from higher political activities (Brohm 1978; Hammond 1993; Lever 1969). Others have celebrated it as enabling protest against political power (MacClancy 1996), or have noted the many ways in which sport offers a space for the formation, manifestation or 'spectacularisation' of various social, spatial, and political identities, especially oppositional ones (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001).

The desire for, and perception of, sport as an entity separate from politics, or even a refuge from the political is not limited to Olympic committees and international sports associations, but is shared by many sportsmen, spectators and administrators. In discussing their motivation for joining football clubs and fan associations, many of my interviewees described football as a space where they could escape politics at a time when Lebanon was being ravaged by civil war, and they contested politicisation of the game or clubs they were involved with. Yet away from international relations and Politics with a capital P, football provided a unique arena where a wide spectrum of individuals from a variety of sects, political inclinations, and classes could negotiate and argue over their club's management, finances, performance, and identity, particularly at a time when much of the discussion in the public arena was stifled by conflict.

Giulianotti claims that football provides us with 'a kind of cultural map, a metaphorical representation' (1999: xii) which enhances our understanding of any society. A sports

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12 For example, The Olympic Charter (2013) stipulates that members of national and international Olympic committees need to preserve their autonomy from political pressure (charter available on [www.olympic.org/documents/olympic\\_charter\\_en.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf) accessed 8/11/2014) and FIFA's Code of Ethics (2012) stresses that all officials and players as well as match and players' agents need to remain politically neutral in dealings with government institutions, national and international organisations among others <http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/administration/50/02/82/codeofethics2012e.pdf> Accessed 8/11/2014.

event, according to him, condenses and dramatises the complexity of a society's social structure. What kind of 'cultural map' then does football in Lebanon provide? Empty stadiums and reluctant fans render Lebanese football an apparently unpromising subject for anthropological research and an unlikely entry point to understanding the formation and negotiation of political identities and antagonisms. Most of the anthropological literature on football I have read starts by highlighting the popularity of the game and its massive appeal - a popularity that the game in Lebanon enjoyed in the 1990s, but which had been lost by the time I started fieldwork. The story of football in Lebanon now is a very different one; it is one that concerns the absence of passion generated by fans, and the marginalization of fans themselves. It is a story in which some fans switch their football loyalties relatively easily, diverting their football passion towards political and economic gain. One could claim that there isn't even a cohesive story of football in Lebanon, given the mediocre national team, little if any state interest and support for the game, and declining revenues deriving from football advertising and broadcasting. Yet it is these very features of the Lebanese football situation that allow it to dramatise and 'metaphorically represent' the socio-political scene of a country consumed by its own political differences and tensions.

By examining Lebanese football as a 'repository of various identities' (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997) it is possible to trace both the formation of, and changes in, fans' and administrators' political and sectarian self-identification as well as their relation to, and spatial identification with the capital, Beirut, the city which their clubs claim as home. Beirut's disputed reconstruction process never managed to reconcile the divisions caused by fifteen years of civil war. Research into Beirut-based clubs and the spatial identities attached to them allows for an explanation of the negotiation and reformulation of the city's spaces, images and identities at a time when renewed crisis was plaguing the country and new lines of division were appearing within it. Through examining the sets of relations within one football club, I show how identities over spatial boundaries are negotiated. I also reveal relationships amongst members of the country's socio-political elite who led these clubs, and amongst the fans and members who supported the clubs. Importantly, my study also traces the reception and impact of some of late Prime Minister Hariri's involvement in sports patronage, and I document the parallel marginalisation of the role of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, a body which figured as the arena in which a broad, ambitious, and economically liberal reconstruction plan was devised.

The global football scene that parallels Lebanon's Hariri-led post war reconstruction period is described by Giulianotti as football's 'post-modern epoch' (1999: 168); a period characterised by the heightened commodification of football with more coverage and revenue from TV and advertising. Against this backdrop Giulianotti notes a 'disembedding of local and social political ties between club and community' - a process which has weakened the working class identification with football clubs and increasingly made football a cultural product belonging to the middle class. While attempts to steer the Lebanese football scene through this global post-modern trend exist, they have not managed to successfully commercialise football or recreate it as a middle class cultural product. This situation, which I discuss further in later chapters, reveals the resilience of pre-existing ties in both football and politics; it also explains their coexistence and at times their synergy with modern and post-modern political and economic models of governance. Post-modern global trends may have been adopted - even if only through mere discourse - but they appear to have been remodelled and thus incapable of redefining long-established sectarian and communitarian clientelistic systems. The relationships between the fans and the boards and management of their clubs (particularly Nejmeh Football Club) which this research covers offered valuable insights into these clientelistic relations and into their transformation over time as well as their negotiation among the various parties involved. In fact, Nejmeh football club was one of the few research spaces in urban Beirut where the interpersonal interaction within these relations was readily observable over an extended period of time.

My research into football in Lebanon also provides insights into spectator culture and enriches the broader discussion around one of the most extensively studied dimensions of football. In so doing it reveals the prospect of a greater and more direct role for politics in Lebanese football. Violence - real or constructed by the media - in British stadiums mobilised interest (see for example Harrington 1968 *The Working Party on Crowd Behaviour at Football Matches* report of 1969) and, by extension, funding for the study of football hooliganism in the 1970s and 1980s. This produced a wealth of literature that shed light on violence in football stadiums (Taylor 1969; Hargreaves 1982; Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1986; Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1988; Dunning 1994). The literature which examined class dimension and the process of embourgeoisement of football and which portrayed football violence as a working class response to both the commodification of football and the shift towards middle class patronage (Taylor 1971) are of relevance to the aims of this research. Also of relevance is literature that examines a change in spectator

culture and the redefinition of football to target 'respectable' passive football fans versus a hoped for 'participatory democracy' that allows more say to the traditionally loyal working class fans (Portelli 1993). My research into football violence in Lebanon enabled me, firstly, to transcend a simplified analysis positing violence as an instrument of the poor, and secondly, to examine the role political elites play in framing, recreating and contributing to violence.

A Lebanese football club is typically made up of several sub communities whose identities cannot be reduced to one political or sectarian affiliation. It can safely be said that no one club in Lebanon has its patron, board members, general assembly, technical and administrative body of staff, players, or the majority of its fans belonging to just one sectarian or political community. In addition, the reasons for, and levels of, identification with a certain sect or political camp vary within any given club's different components and are constantly changing. A club thus functions as a space where political relationships can be observed as a performance that is negotiated between the different actors. Seen in these terms, the stadium figures as a theatre that can be used not only by star players on the pitch, but also for the 'performances' of fans and political elites alike. However, the performance of sports and politics do not consist solely in the publicly performed match, but also involve in the back-stage amongst other things the politics of who manages the club, how the club identifies itself, where it gets its money from, and what advertisements it accepts. Leaving aside literature presenting the use of sport as a vehicle for political actors to widen their popular constituency (Armstrong and Mitchell 2008), the governance of sports clubs is a largely under-researched field.

Though sport can be used as a lens through which to examine broader social processes and structures, it does not necessarily follow that any sport is a mere reflection of the broader socio-political context in which it is played. Following Bourdieu's (1991) assertion that the history of sports is a relatively autonomous one despite being 'marked' by social, political and economic events, Giulianotti (1999) stresses its 'relative autonomy'. Giulianotti's theory adopts Gadmer's (1989) 'hermeneutic circle' as the analytical framework guiding his interpretation of the relationship between football and society: for Giulianotti football, as one particular feature of society, helps explain the wider social context, and in turn the broader social context helps in understanding the particular features of football (p. xv). As I will explain in following sections, Nejmeh, in particular, followed a trajectory that is relatively anomalous in Lebanese football and its uniqueness serves to support the claim for some autonomy for sports history as Bourdieu proposes.

## Sports Literature on Lebanon and the Surrounding Region

Documentation of Lebanese sports history to date has been produced mainly in Arabic by sports journalists, administrators, and the athletes themselves who have all invested their personal time and effort and have relied on their club's own funding, or on individual donations, to publish. Nejmeh's contribution is comparatively strong, consisting of two books focusing exclusively on the club. One of these, written by the club's Secretary General of the 1980s, documents the establishment of the club, particularly the era when Ghandour was its President (see Hamdan 1993). The other is a recently published history produced by the club's Administrative Director, Ahmad Kobrosly (2011). This work adopts a more enquiring approach and relies on material drawn from personal interviews. Both Riyadi club, for years Lebanon's champion basketball club, and Al-Ansar Sports Club (hereafter Al-Ansar), Nejmeh's football rival, have also published their histories (Al-Ansar 2000; Barbir 2002). A few more publications exist, mostly containing compilations of sports data and basic historical information (Sacre 1980; Sakr 1992). Data in the above compilations is often incomplete, and at times inaccurate<sup>13</sup> requiring verification from archival sources. Although these works unfortunately do not adopt an analytical approach, they do nevertheless provide an interesting subjective summary of the sports scene. A wealth of information also exists in Lebanese newspaper content devoted to football. At the time of my research, sports pages were edited by experienced journalists like Berjawi (As-Safir) Safa (Al-Akhbar) and Sakr (Almustaqbal) who have followed the sports scene for decades and who have been involved in it as players, fans and administrators. Other specialised sports publications and websites exist, although contemporary ones are often short lived<sup>14</sup>, and archives of older publications of this kind are not publicly available.<sup>15</sup>

Academic writing and research on sports in Lebanon and on relationships between sports and politics in particular are even more scarce with only a few graduate dissertations

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13 For example, Sacre (1980) mentions that Brazilian football player Pele played a friendly game with the Nejmeh team in 1973, whereas his visit and the game took place in 1975 (Assafir 6/4/2014, Hamdan 1993).

14 See for example <http://footballinlebanon.tumblr.com/> (Accessed 25/8/12) which only published in October and November 2011. The number one Lebanese magazine at the time of my fieldwork, 'Shoot' had a longer life span but published its last issue in April 2011, 17 years after it was launched. Financial difficulties caused its demise.

15 Al-Hayat Al-Riyadieh, a seminal sports magazine was published from 1931-1975 by Nassif Majdalani. Its archives today are not publicly available. In an interview I conducted in 2009 Majdalani's nephew expressed his family's willingness to make the archives publicly available, but he explained the problems of maintaining the archive in good condition and mentioned the lack of options for appropriate libraries to donate the archive to.

(Tohme Adaime 2002; McClenahan 2007; Nassif 2009), a handful of articles (Boukhatat 2004; Blanc 2004; Makdisi 2008; Reiche 2011; Lamoum 2011; Stanton 2012; Nassif and Amara 2015) and one book chapter of note (Montague 2008). Alongside other English language journalistic writing on sports and politics in Lebanon<sup>16</sup> most deal mainly with sports in the context of Lebanon's conflict, making the main subject of interest either sectarian and political division within the sports arena or sport's potential to bridge the sectarian divide and contribute to national unity (Makdissi 2008; Reiche 2011; Nassif and Amara 2015).

A tendency by journalists and some academics to simplify and essentialise the national sports scene is not limited to Lebanon, but pervades writing on sports in the Middle East, not only in journalistic writings (Montague 2008) but also in academic regional overviews (see Al-Rabady 1989; Wagg 1995). This tendency is understandable given the lack of an existing body of research to use as a basis. While the works I mention provide a simplified account, they do succeed in capturing the key issues in the sports scene in the country or sub region they discuss. In general, studies of sports and politics in the Middle East have focused on one of three broad themes. The first theme examines sport as a space in which national identities are expressed - a process understood variously as part of the decolonisation process, or as an assertion of newly established state independence, or as post conflict reintegration (as in the case of the newly united Yemen in the early 1990s; see Stevenson and Alaug 2000, 2008). A second theme focuses on sports as a space either of dissent and resistance to state oppression or expression of ethnicity, or as the outward expression of sectarian and political tensions. Alliances or identities are often overtly framed as oppositional thereby echoing a duality that football expresses too easily. Besides the literature on Lebanon, an example illustrating this strand of study is Tuastad's (1997) work examining the relationship between *Wihdat* team supported by Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Transjordanian *Faisali* team. A third theme, in line with a tendency in broader scholarship on the region, focuses on women and sports, especially in Iran and the gulf countries (Foer 2006). Accompanying the regional transformations effected since the Tunisian revolution in 2011, emerging documentation has begun to detail the role of the

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16 See for example: Moussaoui, Rana. 2009. 'Political Feuds are Own Goal for Lebanon Sport.'. *Middle East Online* 13/04/2009 <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/region/political-feuds-are-own-goal-lebanon-sport>; Alami, Mona. 2009. 'Religious about Football.' *Now Lebanon*. [https://nowmmmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/religious\\_about\\_football](https://nowmmmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/religious_about_football); 'Hezbollah shoots? on goal.' *Middle East*. 27 June 2008; <http://www.madeast.com/HezbollahStory.html> All accessed on 12/7/2012.

fans and the use of sports stadia as spaces for dissent - both aspects that have fed into revolutions particularly in Tunisia (Chomiak 2013) and Egypt (El-Sherif 2012; Tuastad 2014).

That said, most work on sport appears to be a one-off endeavour or a side activity paralleling the more serious academic activities of the authors. A few exceptions at the regional level exist, one being the work of Sorek on nationalism and Arab fandom in Israel (2003; 2007). The work of Amara is another exception, providing both overview and sustained examination of sports in Algeria (2011; 2012b), sports in Muslim societies (2010; 2012a), and Arab sports in the global arena (2008; 2005; 2011).

Despite these recent additions, the subject generally suffers from an absence of sustained and cumulative work and lack of empirical research reflecting full engagement with sports personnel and fans: too many studies are over-reliant on media accounts or are written from the distance of academic offices. Little, if any, documentation exists either of the micro-politics of sports in Arabic countries or of the governance of sports institutions - an imbalance that this thesis sets out to address.

## **Introducing the Research Community**

How can a football club be defined? As a novice in the sports world that I entered at the beginning of this research, I assumed that a club could be defined by the star players it boasts and the championships it has achieved. Yet if I did that, Nejmeh club would mean little; until the year 2010, and in a sixty-five year period it has boasted victory in only seven championships and its current players are not exactly global football stars. For anybody who has ever been involved in the game, be it a player, a fan, an administrator, or even as a social scientist, the club is a community which extends far beyond the field where the game is played and beyond the organisational structure that forms it. To be able to unfurl that which constitutes the club, I start by describing Nejmeh in detail so as to show the perspective the club provides into the work of micro-politics in Lebanon and, more specifically, in Beirut's Sunni community. I then describe the core organisational structures and the places which legally and materially form both the club and the different social groups that constitute it.

### **A Popular and Anomalous Club**

Within the dismal Lebanese sports scene, Nejmeh was exceptional in two ways. Firstly, and by consensus of all those I interviewed (including sports media personnel and members

and fans of rival clubs), Nejmeh was Lebanon's most popular football club. The club's fans, who are said to have once outnumbered the fans of all other football clubs in the first division put together, and who were dubbed by several media commentators as 'the backbone of Lebanese football' and 'the great people of Nejmeh', gave football in Lebanon its distinctive flavour for most of the 1990s.

Secondly, for over two decades the club has managed to escape a compartmentalised sectarian identity. As they occupied the stadiums, Nejmeh fans defined what a public stadium is and how a body of fans can occupy it. Through a serendipitous convergence of political events, demographic changes and exceptional leadership, Nejmeh managed to gather around it a large and diverse body of fans, as new migrants to the city from the country's impoverished margins found in the club a space they could call home<sup>17</sup>. The club had also triumphed over internal sectarian divisions for over two decades, and managed to contest the logic of politico-sectarian allotment that governed the Lebanese sports scene. Though, as individuals, people may have been members of sects and communities and possibly followers of this or that leader, they were in the stadium football fans of their own will and following their own rules. They spoke with their own voice and chose their own chants, and even organised among themselves the officers in charge of discipline in the stadium.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the change in Nejmeh's patronage repositioned the club's political and sectarian identity. The negotiations of fans, members, and leaders of the club prior to and accompanying that transition period provide a unique and rich record of how patronage is perceived and appraised. The diversity of the club's community along sectarian and class lines at the time of fieldwork allowed me to observe such negotiations between political elites in a way which few other Beirut institutions could have done.

In July 2008, as I was starting my involvement with Nejmeh, political scientist and football enthusiast, Makdisi, in a piece on sports and politics in Lebanon, concluded that it 'would be wise to keep a close eye on the fate of Nijme [Nejmeh] soccer club and the evolution of its support base that may turn out to be the best indicator of national reconciliation in the country' (Makdisi 2008).

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17 See Chapter Three for details on Nejmeh's history.

For Makdisi, Lebanon's ruling elite was bolstering sectarian identity and using Lebanon's football community to strengthen its stronghold on these communities. A close examination of the transformations in the last two decades in Nejmeh allows not only for the exploration of the validity of Makdisi's proposition, but also of the way in which power is negotiated, reproduced and subverted.



Figure 5: Electoral Poster of Zubeir el-Khatib. The slogan champions the diversity of Beirut and the renewal of its identity.



Figure 6: Electoral poster of Khodr Taba. Slogan reads 'Elect sports people, for Lebanon's sake'.

## **An Entry Point into Beirut's Sunni Communities**

Looking at the host of candidates that Nejmeh had provided for the 2009 parliamentary elections exemplifies ways in which the club offered a unique entry point for studying Beirut's Sunni communities in general, as well as relations existing between the city's residents and its elite in particular.

Electorally, Beirut in the year 2009 was divided into three districts. The first district included the majority Christian areas of East Beirut and had five allocated seats all reserved for Christian parliamentarians. The candidates for this area won uncontested, largely through the consensus of political groups at the time of agreeing on the distribution of the electoral districts. This was also the case for the second area which was a mixed one and candidates in it, although not officially uncontested, were already agreed on by ruling political groups.

The third district was the largest of Beirut's three electoral areas. The number of voters and parliamentary seats that it included exceeded those in districts 1 and 2 combined (see Table 4). The neighbourhoods it covered included Ras Beirut, the area where the club's stadium is located as well as Tariq Al-Jadidah, where the club's offices are situated. In electoral terms, Tariq Al-Jadidah carries special significance for leaders of the Sunni community. It is the repository of Sunni votes, decisive in conveying who represents the Sunni communities in Beirut and represents its leadership more broadly.

**Table 4 - Distribution of Parliamentary seats and registered voters in Beirut by District (2009)<sup>18</sup>**

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Number of seats</b>	<b>Of which reserved to members of the Sunni sect</b>	<b>Number of registered voters</b>
First District	5	0	92,764
Second District	4	1	101,787
Third District	10	5	252,165

Of the 22 candidates competing for the five parliamentary seats reserved for Sunnis in the third district, four had connections with Nejmeh. Heading the pro-government list which won all of the district's seats, was Saad Hariri, the club's Patron, and leading the opposition

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18 Source: <http://www.elections.gov.lb/Elections-Results/2009-Real-time-Results.aspx?lang=en-us> – Accessed 1/10/14.

list was Omar Ghandour, the club's president for 33 years, until 2003 when the club moved to the patronage of Ghandour's electoral opponent's father, late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Also competing for one of the five seats was Zuheir el-Khatib, who was on the club's board and coordinated the relationship with the Fans' Office between 2003-2005, as well as Khodr Taha who played for Nejmeh back in the 1960s. (See table 5).

**Table 5 - Nejmeh linked candidates in Beirut's 3<sup>rd</sup> district and number of votes received (parliamentary elections 2009)**

Candidate	Number of Votes
Saad Rafic Hariri	78,382
Omar Ghandour (Leading opposition candidate in terms of number of votes)	21,703
Zuheir Khatib	314
Khodr Taha	86
<b>Total number of voters in the third district</b>	<b>103,243</b>

Of course, among the club's members and fans there were voters for this candidate or the other as well as members of Hariri's electoral machine. It was thus no surprise, that in May 2008, Saad Hariri chose the grounds of Nejmeh Sports Club to announce the names of candidates running as part of his electoral bloc in Beirut's election, all of whom subsequently won their seats.

## **Nejmeh: The Organisation and Community**

### **The Organisational Structure**

The bylaws of the club stipulate a General Assembly and an elected board of 11 members, a structure which complies with regulations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the official governmental body entrusted with monitoring the administration of sports institutions in Lebanon. At the time of this research the General Assembly comprised around 200 members<sup>19</sup> and was legally the highest authority in the club. It was supposed to meet yearly to review the club's budget and plan, and every three years to elect a board. Voting rights were conditional on a person being a member for at least one year before election date, and paying a yearly fee. During fieldwork in the years 2009-2010, this fee was

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19 Based on news reports in *Almustaqbal* newspaper, the number of voting members in the club's elections of November 2008, there were 217 members, of which 100 attended the elections meeting. (*Almustaqbal* newspaper 17/11/2008).

set at 1,000 US dollars<sup>20</sup>. The board distributed responsibilities among its members, assigning a President / Chairman, Vice President, Secretary General, and a Treasurer. The board was responsible for overseeing the overall management of the club and in principle required to meet on a regular basis. Officially, all its posts are voluntary.

This simple organisational structure is the same one followed (possibly with minor amendments) by all other sports clubs in Lebanon. In principle the bylaws are closely adhered to, but often they are a mere formality and a facade to the actual governance process that I discuss in the following chapters. Elections did take place, for example, while I was doing fieldwork, but the members of the board nominated by the club's Patron were elected uncontested.

On the executive level, the club employed less than a dozen staff: four administrative employees who worked from the club's offices in Tariq Al-Jadidah, and a technical team that varied in size during my fieldwork (see table 6). However it always included a coach, his assistant and a stadium supervisor. Most staff were employed under precarious conditions, or on a part-time basis, with few, if any, guarantees in terms of social security and health insurance. A recurrent problem for all employees during fieldwork was the delay in receiving their monthly salaries which were sometimes late 4-5 months in a row.

A number of the club's staff had other jobs, often with little connection to their posts in the club. For example, the office messenger also worked in a security firm, and the PR officer organised tourist trips. Added to that, the majority were connected to the club by means other than their employment, often as fans.

**Table 6 - Nejme Club Personnel (2009)**

<b>Office Staff (Tariq Al-Jadidah)</b>	<b>Technical/Stadium Staff (Ras Beirut)</b>
Administrative manager	Sports team manager
Public Relations Officer	Coach
Admin assistant	Assistant coach
Messenger	Coach – youth team
Media Officer (not based in the office, performs media duties alongside his regular job as a journalist)	Stadium supervisor
	Messenger

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20 The formal organisational structures and regulations do not by necessity reflect the spirit by which the club is led and governed. As I will explain in chapter five, control over the club is maintained through a process of subverting the regulations 'through legal means'.

## **Financial Management and Funding**

The figure I was repeatedly given as the club's yearly budget was one million dollars. The truth of that figure, based on what I have seen, is open for debate, but a concocted figure suited the Patron's interest in presenting himself as a generous donor as much as it assisted the club's management in positioning Nejmeh as a larger, better-funded club.

According to the club's Media Officer, a third of the budget covered monthly salaries to players and staff. Other major expenditures included the purchase of players, yearly training camps that take place outside Lebanon, costs of participating in regional and international championships and hosting teams for games in Lebanon, yearly insurance, medical and kit expenses for the team, as well as daily administrative, communication, transportation and repairs costs.

The club's main sources of income included revenue from ticket sales at games, remuneration for television broadcasting, sale of advertising space in the stadium and on the player's shirts, the sale of players, rental of its stadium to other Lebanese and Arab teams, membership fees and of course the donations of the Patron, Saad Hariri, (son of assassinated Prime Minister Hariri) who was Lebanon's Prime Minister from 2009 to 2011 when this research was conducted. The club also possessed sizeable assets, particularly a long-standing rental contract for the stadium which is situated by the sea in an area where land prices are amongst the highest in the country.

Hariri's patronage of the club was to a great extent channelled through GroupMed SAL, a shareholders company in which Saad Hariri, Nazek Hariri<sup>21</sup> and Saad's brother Ayman were key stakeholders<sup>22</sup>. GroupMed for example is the main shareholder of BankMed which provides sponsorship to the club through its corporate social responsibility programme<sup>23</sup>. Another member company of the BankMed SAL group, GulfMed, provides insurance for the club and its players.

At the time of my research, income from ticket sales was negligible, given the ban on fans attending local football games. Ticket sales had traditionally been a major source of income

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21 Wife of Saad Hariri's late Father Rafic Hariri.

22 Information on BankMed SAL's shareholders is from the website of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) <http://www.difc.ae/groupmed-international-holding-ltd> Accessed 1/10/14.

23 According to BankMed's Annual report for the year 2009 – available on <http://www.bankmed.com.lb/Publications/AnnualReports.aspx> Accessed 1/10/2014

for Nejmeh due to its huge fan base. Revenue from television broadcasting had also fallen by around half what it was a decade ago. In part, this fall was caused by the deterioration in the level of Lebanese football, given the internal problems in the clubs and the lack of enthusiasm among both players and fans due to the absence of audiences in the stadiums.

On a day-to-day basis, small expenditures were dealt with by administrators. For example, teams who rented the stadium paid the administrator who managed the stadium's cash box. Because of the lack of cash flow caused by delays in payments, the administrator diverted the amounts received to cover expenses incurred in the stadium - a practice often undertaken without the board's permission. Procedures for handling larger payments, especially those coming from the Patron appeared relatively vague. A couple of times, when I witnessed the payment of salaries, these were received directly from a contact person in BankMed on an ad hoc basis, as were the salaries of many Hariri Establishment<sup>24</sup> employees.

### **The Players**

The *raison d'être* of the club, the players, were probably its weakest link. Football in Lebanon still exists in a shady area between amateur and professional sports. While not all football players in Lebanon were designated as professional and thus did not receive salaries, players of Nejmeh club's first team did and their salaries were set at a value of around 1,000 USD per month, only slightly above the average wages in Lebanon in the same period (CAS 2008). At times they too worked for several months without payment. The regulations under which they played afforded them little room to improve their situation; once a player signed with a club, he was bound by a contract for his whole working life and only able to leave if the club signs what are termed 'release papers'. Often, a club would 'sell' or 'buy' team members in the summer before the beginning of the new season, acquiring players from African, Arab or Eastern European countries where similar employment conditions applied.

The recruitment of new players usually followed a period of screening and involved the intervention of many middle men, at least two per player, one representing the selling

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24 I use the term the 'Hariri Establishment' when speaking about the political and familial institution lead by late prime minister Rafic Hariri, and by his son Saad Hariri after him, particularly when discussing issues and actions that cannot be clearly attributed to one person or institution within the establishment. For terminology used by participants when speaking about any of the constituting parts of the Hariri establishment, I translated the exact words used including 'Hariri family', 'Hariri people', 'Future Movement', and 'Hariri's parliamentary block'.

team and the other the buying one, both of whom got a significant share of the value of the 'transaction'. Players were bought and sold for prices equivalent to, if not more than what they could make throughout their years with Nejmeh. Their hopes and aspirations were related to the possibilities of being spotted by an international team so as to secure a better paid career, or at best receiving a percentage of the amount they had been sold for. Those involved as middlemen were often close to one of the clubs, possessing good knowledge of the local and global football scene, and some had pre-existing professional relationships with the players. These middlemen could be journalists, Lebanese Football Association (LFA) members, or even club board members, who made financial profit through the process of brokering sales and purchases. Some clubs, and especially those in poor rural areas invested in recruiting young players in their teens, developing their talent, and then selling some of them later as a way of financing the club.

Low monthly pay and difficulties in leaving the club rendered players relatively helpless and made them dependent on charitable initiatives run by the management, individual board members or even the club's Patron if they won a significant game. For players who wanted to transfer, the most effective way of controlling the process was by refusing to cooperate: failure to attend the daily training sessions rendered player contracts meaningless.

I observed that most players came from lower or lower-middle class backgrounds, and had chosen football because of a lack of other career options. During the time of my research and throughout the past decade, the majority of professional football players in Lebanon were Shiites, predominantly from South Lebanon. While most clubs were clearly identified through sectarian and political alliances, these identifications seemed to have little effect on the process by which players were chosen. The dominance of Shiite players was attributed by one of my informants to their rural background and lower economic status. This does not suffice to explain the reluctance of poor youth of other sects to professionally play football which merits further exploration beyond the scope of this thesis. One contributing factor, could be that with little on the government's agenda in terms of improving sports facilities and the lack of readily accessible sports spaces, players almost always originated from the furthest suburbs or the rural areas where population density is still low and space for football playing is available. Nejmeh had two other teams for aspiring younger enthusiasts who competed on its behalf but received no payment other than occasional financial rewards. These younger players represented a significant pool from which the club could in due course promote junior members to its first team without needing to pay large purchase fees. A recent example was in the transition between the 2009 / 2010 season to

the 2010 / 2011 one, when most players stopped showing up to train because they were not receiving their salaries, and the club eventually resorted to competing for the championship with the eldest members of its youth team.

Every year over a couple of months the management of the club organised a free summer football academy for young boys aged 9-15. Through the school, boys received daily football training, accompanied by recreational activities. Often, at the end of the summer, the club selected the star trainees to join its youth teams who continue weekly training throughout the year. Summer schools were implemented by many other clubs, and were used not only as a way of early training and recruitment of new talent, but also as a way of solidifying a club's fans base.

The children who joined the summer school were mostly sent by parents who were fans of the club and who chose Nejmeh regardless of the quality of the training or the location of the stadium. The mother of two boys in the school I met on one of the training days, explained in an irate tone that despite the summer school of another team being only meters away from her house in Beirut's suburbs, her husband would not allow his boys to be trained anywhere but with Nejmeh, a decision which forced them to make a daily one hour commute.



*Figure 7: Closing Ceremony of the Nejmeh Sports Club summer school. Parents and family members of the young participants in the football summer school take souvenir photos in Nejmeh club's stadium.*

A further interesting extension of the player cohort is a team of former Nejmeh players, who train once a week and play informal games, sometimes in Nejmeh's stadium.

### **The Fans**

This aspect of the club is probably the hardest to encompass, as being a Nejmeh fan – or that of any other club - is not quantifiable in any way other than the individual's own inclination or choice. In theory, the fans could be a community of over 40,000 people who have cheered in the past for Nejmeh in stadiums or carried its flag. The fans were many and they came from a variety of backgrounds, though more often than not, from the lower class ranks. Among that vast number, there was a core group that took on organisational and leadership responsibilities, again on a voluntary basis.

Today the size of this community is decidedly reduced, since fans have been excluded from stadiums by the security forces' decision, and distanced from their club by its internal conflicts. Officially there is still a 'Central Office of Fans Unions' - better known as the Fans' Office - a volunteer based structure under the board's administration which aims at improving communication between the fans and the club's board. The Office has a manager, and a number of specialised committees responsible for fan membership, discipline in the stadium, ticket sales and other issues. The Fans' Office was established in 1995, to replace a fans' union originally established by the fans themselves independently from the club management in 1970. The Fans' Office – and the union before it – have done a great deal of work to strengthen the Nejmeh fan community, facilitating transportation to the games, organising cheering by the crowds, and maintaining order in the stadiums. Over the years they have extended membership and opened over 40 branches all over Lebanon.

During the period of this research, the Fans' Office was little more than a room in the club, to which only one or two of its committee members came in the afternoons, and a shack selling refreshments in the stadium. Fans themselves could not come to the games without special LFA permission which was difficult to obtain. A small group did come to training sessions, especially when new players were being tried or when negotiations about which new foreign players to buy were in progress. The office was closed for about two years, by management decision, after clashes took place at a Nejmeh game in 2006.

Yet despite their exclusion from matches, many of the people I interviewed for this research described themselves as Nejmeh fans. I met many people who offered the club long-term dedication: as many told me 'once a Nejmeh Fan, always a Nejmeh fan'. The

number and loyalty of Nejmeh fans were unmatched by any other Lebanese football club. For a long time, fans were what defined Nejmeh Club's strong reputation, and more recently its current sorry situation has been defined precisely by their absence.

### **The Spaces the Club Occupies**

Nejmeh's stadium is relatively small, with 4-5 rows of seating on three sides, and offices, players' changing spaces, and a small cafeteria operated by the fans office on the fourth side. During the day, the stadium is often deserted, except for the administrator in charge. In the afternoon, players come for training, and so do some of the fans who are still interested and on good terms with the management. These people are curious to know the level of their team and to meet other fans. Board members also arrive, and this is a time where conversations and meetings are possible between board members and fans or players. A decade ago, a game played by Nejmeh in either the north or south of Lebanon caused congestion back in the Ras Beirut area where the stadium is located. Fans gathered there to go to games, or came back there after a win. At the time of my research, the stadium had its doors open most of the time, but those who entered were few, and the inquiring looks of those inside drew a line that outsiders did not cross.

The Club's office shares the same feeling of emptiness. It is not adjacent to the stadium but located on the first floor of a residential building in the Tariq Al-Jadidah area, a crowded, predominantly Sunni, and relatively poor neighbourhood of Beirut. Four administrative staff worked out of that office from 8:30 or 9:00 till around 2:00 pm Monday till Saturday. It was also, in theory, the space where the meetings of the elected executive committee took place and where the Fans' Office was hosted and their elected representatives could meet. The space consisted of a big meeting room and reception area with leather couches, three rooms serving as offices – though one is for the board and is mostly closed – and two outdated computers. In the hallway the trophies of club trophies are flaunted behind locked glass doors, and there is a notice-board on which the dates of upcoming games and other announcements are displayed, for almost nobody to see.

Yet despite the apparent emptiness, the office has a presence in the neighbourhood. During my first visit to the club in May 2009, I arrived to find the offices closed and the Nejmeh member I was supposed to meet unaware of our pre-arranged meeting. The nearby fruit seller who doubles up as a parking attendant, possibly out of sympathy for my wasted trip, offered alternative sports related suggestions to me. Indicating a radius of around 100 meters, he started pointing out the houses of football players belonging to both Nejmeh

and Al-Ansar clubs, and the homes of active fans, suggesting who might help and offering his son to show me the way to these houses. The owner of the clothes shop in the same building was a fan, as was the barber around the corner. Many fans sat in front of the barber's shop waiting to see if a member of staff or the board would come along on his way to or from the club and be willing to answer their questions or relay their complaints.

The actual space occupied by the club extended far beyond the immediate vicinities of the stadium, the office, and their surroundings. Most of my interviews did not take place on club premises, but in people's offices and work-places; even the current President and Secretary General asked me to come to their personal offices. Fans also had particular spaces where they met - for example, Café Abo el-'ezz in Beirut's Southern Suburbs. Such meeting places were sometimes mentioned in newspaper articles announcing the activities of the now 'dissident' fans.

The different elements described above are but a sketch of the club's make-up which I expand on in later chapters. Nejmeh is all of the above, but it has a wider existence located variously in the Lebanese football scene, in its rivals, in the presence it has in other stadiums where its team plays, in the articles written about it and in the tears shed for it. Besides this sketch of what it is now, Nejmeh is also all that is remembered of the past in terms of people who were once members and fans and the spirit that made it so popular. It is also an entity whose presence and promise extend forward into the future.

## **Research Methods**

My fieldwork took place in Beirut, Lebanon between November 2007 and December 2009. My interest and entry into football research began in May 2008, and only a month later I gained access to the Nejmeh Sports Club which became my primary research community.

Starting in the summer of 2008, my research was mainly with Nejmeh club staff, members and fans. Focusing on Nejmeh allowed me to have a focal point around which my ethnographic explorations revolved. The club represented a hard to define 'community' in Beirut's urban context and a nucleus selected from within its two million residents. In practice my research neither covered all of the activities of the club nor was it exclusively confined to them. As I explained earlier, defining a sports club is neither an easy nor an objective endeavour. Its essence and limits as a community vary depending on the perspective one takes, and given my interest in it as space for interaction between the political elite and the residents of Beirut, I focused on the club's management, members, and fans in leading positions but did little, if any, work with the players. To complement my

club-based work I made connections with other Hariri-affiliated sports and political entities, a strategy which enabled me to become attuned to the broader socio-political changes in the country as I explain in the following elaboration of the methods I used for data collection.

## **Participant Observation**

Field notes of my observations during fieldwork covered several spaces and themes, and if anything these notes highlighted the difficulty of limiting where and when fieldwork begins and ends, especially in an urban context during a time of crisis. I regarded watching a local sports programme from the comfort of my couch or going out for drinks with friends who had nothing to do with sports as valid and informative ‘research activities’ that I relied on as much as time spent in the stadium and the club. Fieldwork was further complicated by the fact that I was implementing research in the city where I have lived for the majority of my life. As I will explain in the next chapter, I was not always readily perceived as a researcher within my home city. In practice ‘participant observation’ often meant exercising an increased sensitivity to, and a critical examination of, certain issues. It also included the practice of keeping field notes about incidents and conversations – even with close friends - that in earlier times would have gone unnoticed as parts of my usual day-to-day life<sup>25</sup>. I lived in west Beirut, in an area neither particularly close to the sites of the Nejme club stadium and office nor of relevance to the sports scene. My position as a city insider exerted its own effects on the research process: whenever I finished an interview, or when the working day at the Nejme office ended, people automatically assumed that I would have other business to attend to or family that I needed to spend time with. Accordingly, my time with research participants had to be meticulously planned and carefully justified to them. ‘Community’ as well as ‘fieldwork’ were loosely defined and encompassed broader aspects of my life in Beirut at the time. Bearing the above in mind, I can highlight some of the more easily defined ‘spaces’ where my participant observation activities took place:

- Nejme Sports Club office and the surrounding neighbourhood: For the majority of my fieldwork, the office was rarely used by board members and fans, but was

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25 I obtained the consent of all friends I engaged in discussion about the social and political context in Lebanon. That said, the boundary between ordinary day-to-day conversations and research as a ‘participant observer’ in a city where I habitually resided is almost impossible to define. In addition, many of those friends were also researchers, writers, and activists who have provided feedback and advice as I was doing fieldwork and writing beyond that provided by a ‘research participant’.

mainly a space used by administrators. Occasionally players, or fans from the neighbourhood, visited if they had administrative concerns. These uses meant that it was not very easy for me to justify my presence there, unless I had interviews to conduct. Later, to get around this problem, I invented for myself the responsibility of supporting one of the staff members' efforts to publish a book about the club's history. My presence was legitimised by the hours I spent every day scanning this man's old photos of the club and its members. The office was located in Tariq Al-Jadidah, a predominantly Sunni neighbourhood and a stronghold of the Hariri Establishment at the time of my fieldwork. It was also home to the municipal stadium, the offices of rival Ansar football club, and the residence of several football fans I regularly encountered. Although I did not live in the neighbourhood, I kept note of developments I could observe and of the posters and banners its residents displayed, as well conversations I had with shopkeepers and residents.

- Nejmeh Club stadium was another place I visited regularly. It was open daily until sunset, and Anis, the staff member responsible for team logistics and the stadium lived on-site. I also spent some time there during the day, mostly in the afternoons when daily training took place, as at these times some fans and administrators were present. I also visited during special events like friendly matches or football summer schools.
- Other sports stadiums and spaces: I attended the majority of games played by Nejmeh during the time of my research, but such games were predominantly played in the absence of fans and I was only allowed in with LFA's special permission<sup>26</sup>. I also paid regular attention to local TV sports programs, sports pages in daily papers, Nejmeh and Lebanese sports Facebook groups and related websites. In researching sports fandom, one might assume that matches would provide primary research spaces, yet since fans were banned from attending games between Lebanese teams, matches instead offered opportunities for connecting with the privileged few administrators allowed to attend and for meeting media personnel. The same stadiums and spaces also figured as vibrant research sites

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26 Although the matches were being broadcast live, local sports matches were not publicly screened in sports bars and cafes, unlike for example European and world championship and I have not been told of any form of collective viewing of the matches while doing fieldwork.

when they hosted events like political rallies or the surrounding community's daily exercise routine.

In parallel to the research methods mentioned above, and for the duration of my fieldwork, I undertook part time work as a freelance consultant in the fields of human rights, development and peace-building. This work gave me access to information my football-based research alone would have not provided. In this role I conducted interviews and focus groups with members of Hariri owned institutions, Islamic charities and fundamentalist groups and arranged site visits to Sunni communities across the country. These activities allowed me to better situate what I observed at Nejmeh club in Beirut within the country-wide changes that Lebanon was witnessing.

## **Interviews**

I conducted over forty semi-structured interviews with past and present fans, members and administrators of the club, sports journalists and political analysts. These can roughly be divided into the following categories:

- Members and fans who had left the club before I started my research. These included, for example, Omar Ghandour, club president for 33 years from 1969 until 2003, Zuheir Baroudi, the Club's Secretary General until 2003, and Ahmad Fleifel, a board member until 2005. I also interviewed members of the Fans' Office, some of whom were also members of the General Assembly, who had distanced themselves from the club in the past decade for various reasons, often related to the change in the club's management in 2003. These interviews were always conducted in a place that the research participant chose, often their own work space. Although this allowed me access to that person's social and professional realm it did not give me the opportunity to observe how these interviewees situated themselves within the Nejmeh community. Interviews were usually recorded with the consent of interviewees. In a few cases I was allowed to take notes, but not to record, or was asked to turn off the recorder, or to agree that certain issues were not to be shared in my published material. In most cases the interviews were the only opportunity I had to meet with those individuals as research participants. I was not able to make any subsequent contact with those who had left the club or were not active in the sports scene. In most of these cases, the interviews were only conducted during the later stages of my fieldwork, by which time I had some knowledge, based on other fieldwork activities, about who to interview and what kind of questions to ask.

Delaying the interviews proved useful in terms of the questions I could raise, but it also meant that I had little time or chance to arrange further meetings if needed.

- Interviews with current members, fans and administrators: these interviews paralleled other data collection activities and were often an opportunity for the club administrators and members I met to give their 'official' version or understanding of how the club worked. Their accounts were rendered 'official' by the very fact that these were recorded conversations and not informal ones. These included several interviews, for example, with club administrator Ahmad Kobrosly, who recounted to me the history of the club as well as his own personal, professional and political trajectory. They also included one-off interviews with club officials, including the club's President at the time of my research, its General Secretary, and the coordinator of the Fans' Office. These one-off interviews were necessary first steps; in them I clarified my intentions and research plans, explained what I had done so far, and outlined what my writing and publishing plans were. This was very important in helping me tie loose ends and gave club officials assurance that their version of the story was heard.
- Sports journalists, fans and administrators of other clubs, and Ministry of Youth and Sports officials: Interviews with sports journalists were mostly conducted early on in my research, and were often used to develop my then very sketchy understanding of the sports scene in Lebanon, the main players, and the key critical events in Lebanon's sports history. These interviews were also conducted in interviewees' offices. I often ran into the same journalists in sports stadiums and matches, where they introduced me to other reporters and gave me pointers on what was happening in the matches - both on the field and off it.
- Political activists and analysts: I conducted a small number of interviews with journalists or members of the Future Movement, so as to understand their perspective on the political context, particularly the conflicts in the leadership and operation of the Hariri establishment. These interviews also gave important insights into the history of Rafic Hariri's ascent to power.

### **Archival Research**

To complement the accounts given to me by research participants, particularly concerning the period of crisis the club experienced between 2003 and 2006, I also carried out basic research in the archives of newspapers including the daily Hariri-owned *Almustaqbal*, and

the pro March 8 *As-Safir*, as well as those of *Al-Akhbar*, *Annahar*, and the *Daily Star* where relevant.

Both *Al-Akhbar* and *Almustaqbal* had comprehensive, easily searchable archives online, but *Al-Akhbar* was first published in 2006 and thus did not provide information to cover the time span I was interested in. *As-Safir*, with the longest history, was only accessible in print copies in the paper's headquarters or in certain libraries. While *As-Safir* took great care to classify and archive its past issues, the sports pages were not included - an omission which testified to the perceived insignificance of sports matters.

## **Summary of Thesis Chapters**

Each of the chapters in this thesis begins with an ethnographic vignette. All the events described in these vignettes - with the exception of that in the second chapter - take place in one of Lebanon's stadiums. The theatrical performance of both sports and politics in the space of a stadium paves the way for my analysis of underlying sets of social structures and dynamics. Such events also serve to reaffirm the importance of the performative in the workings of clientelism (Auyero 2000). While most of these vignettes are based on field notes and direct observations made during fieldwork in Lebanon between 2007 and 2009, in some instances, the ethnographic accounts are compositions which assemble material derived from the recollections of research participants, biographies, and both written and televised media accounts. This compositional tactic has been necessary because the thesis covers a historical timeframe that extends beyond the period of fieldwork. I have clearly indicated the sections where ethnographic accounts have been thus constructed rather than observed first-hand. I trust that these offer helpful perspectives of the events described because most of them deal with a relatively recent period which was well documented in the media. Each vignette is followed by a short introduction summarising the key themes presented in the subsequent ethnographic sections.

Chapter One briefly introduces the research questions and research community. It outlines the data collection methods used, and grounds the discussion within sports literature as well as in relation to anthropological literature dealing with clientelism and elites. I explain that the thesis builds on and seeks to contribute to a growing anthropological literature concerning elites, and I describe how the thesis explores in particular the relationship between political elites and their constituencies. Taking account of an extensive body of research which has explored political clientelism in Lebanon, the thesis also makes use of a relatively recent line of research in anthropology inspired by Bourdieu (Rutten 2007;

Auyero et al. 2009). These sources propose that clientelism encompasses instrumental dimensions of material and political exchange, as well as a symbolic dimension. The latter involves a 'clientelist habitus', or system of dispositions which guides or dictates the socio-political behaviours of individuals: both elite members and the masses contribute to the formation of this habitus.

Chapter One further argues for the study of the political as seen through the sports scene given this context's utility as a space for the formation, manifestation or 'spectacularisation' of various social, spatial, and political identities, especially oppositional ones. It shows the many ways in which Nejmeh was distinct in escaping compartmentalised sectarian identity. The chapter explains how through a serendipitous convergence of political events, demographic changes and exceptional leadership, Nejmeh managed to gather around it a large and diverse body of fans which enabled it to triumph over internal sectarian divisions. In so doing it contested the logic of politico-sectarian allotment that governed the Lebanese sports scene. The club's history, and more importantly, negotiations accompanying the change in its patronage into the hands of the Hariri establishment in the year 2003, provided a unique and rich record of how patronage is perceived and appraised.

Chapter Two discusses my field work experience and reflects on how my positionality influenced the research I conducted. I discuss the choice of research topic and explain how my 'insider' status firstly affected my motivation to implement research in Beirut and secondly how it shaped the questions I raised. I then describe the fieldwork experience itself; a highly emotive, sensory and memory-laden engagement. I end the chapter with a reflection on the epistemological contribution my research makes to the literature concerning a region and a field which continue to suffer from the effects of an orientalist gaze.

Through a narration of the history of Nejmeh in the third chapter, I introduce the social, demographic, and political context in the city of Beirut. I trace the historical development of an ambivalent relationship between Beirut and its suburbs showing how this has fed into the current political crisis in Lebanon and into a parallel schism within the club which is split along sectarian, political and spatial lines. The club's own development mirrors the evolving political sentiments of Beirut's residents, starting with anti-colonial nationalism in the 1940s, through the rise of Arab nationalist and leftist parties, the Palestinian resistance movement, and later Shiite political bodies. Nejmeh's evolution highlights the complexities of inclusion and exclusion amid historical and politically driven claims of rootedness in the

city and representations of the immigrants from the rural communities as intruders on urban living. Nejmeh, which for decades was an inclusive space for members of several religious communities of Lebanon and had striven to be a club for 'the whole of Lebanon', was at a crucial turning point in the years 2006 -2006 which for many fans was a time of rupture which split club fandom and membership and confined the club within one political leader's faction.

Chapters Four to Seven present both accounts and analysis of ethnographic research implemented with Nejmeh members and fans. The chapters follow a rough chronology of events which took place in the club since 1990 in the post civil war period. The same chapters also go down the hierarchy of the clientelistic relations woven around the Hariri Establishment, starting with the patronage or the top rank of the elite, moving to discuss the position of the bourgeoisie and then the clients or member of the lower class.

In Chapter Four, I describe the transition of the club into the patronage of the Hariri Establishment and I show the economic and social conditions of the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century which necessitated such a transition. I present what I call the 'Hariri model'; large scale performative use of wealth in politics, business, and philanthropy which have continued to characterise the leadership style of Lebanon's post war entrepreneurial elite. The model weds neoliberal economic policies and the myth of the ability to make dreams a reality with the long established clientelistic and sectarian networks. Together these work to establish the emergent leader's constituency and support base and to produce what Baumann calls a 'super za'im' (2012a). The chapter reveals how Hariri emerged as the only possible candidate who could ensure the viability of the club as its management struggled with the demands posed by increasing commercialisation of sports and the dwindling of economic resources.

Chapter Five moves away from examination of the club's patrons and focuses on the next tier down in the hierarchy, the management which consists predominantly of members of Beirut's bourgeoisie. I trace the difference in both the power and the attitude of board members in the pre and post Hariri periods before briefly presenting two contrasting models of club presidents. The pre-Hariri model of board members who I call the 'charitable industrialists' belonged to the industrial bourgeoisie and I argue that they exhibited relative independence from the political and financial patronage of the za'im. The second model, present under Hariri patronage, is that of the 'professional entrepreneur'

who is at the service of the za'im and dependent on him for both club funding and access to lucrative business opportunities.

In the following two chapters I look at the relationship between the Hariri establishment and their constituency at the popular level. In Chapter Six I explore both the practice and the understanding of elections and the functioning of the tools and structures of 'democracy'. Tracing the voting process for electing board members within the club, as well as the national parliamentary elections, I argue that far from being tools to ensure democratic representation, elections are instruments for elite consolidation. I show how the 2009 parliamentary elections were used to consolidate clientelistic ties through the provision of one-off opportunities for the disbursement of money by the patrons. I suggest that the distribution of funds also strengthened the clientelist habitus by creating affective and performative bonds that tied Hariri to his constituency. I argue that the elite benefited from a fantasy of the state constructed around the neoliberal ideology of 'the good life' and the bureaucratic performance of democratic elections. In parallel, the two elections which took place in the club during the 'Hariri Era' also rhetorically adhered to official bureaucratic democratic systems, which were effectively used to ensure the Hariri establishment's complete control over the club.

In Chapter Seven I discuss in more depth the incongruity which existed between the rhetoric of state institutions and the real life prevalence of corruption. Against the backdrop of escalating violence in Beirut, the chapter explores the rhetorical and symbolic aspects of the vocal (and at times violent) performance of loyalty by football fans within Nejmeh as well as the role played by strong-arm men in their support of the Hariri Establishment. I highlight the duality of the Hariri Establishment's approach of adopting a discourse which publicly rejected sectarianism and violence whilst relying heavily on armed men who worked under the guise of being legitimate employees of a private security firm. The result of this duplicity was rupture along sectarian lines within both the club and the city.

I conclude the thesis by summarising the ways in which apparently contradictory practices and rhetoric hold within them the inherent potential to sustain a seemingly fickle political system. Against the backdrop of a dystopic sports and political scene in Lebanon, I highlight the key transformation in the relationship between political elites and their constituencies brought forward by the emergence of the new model of entrepreneurial elite. I summarise ways in which the consolidation of power, facilitated by the spectacular

use of wealth in politics, and promises of a better future has reshaped the clientelistic hierarchies in the post-war period. I end by presenting some prospects for further related research.

# 2

## The Researcher within the Context

*'Every theoretical explanation is a reduction of intuition'*  
(Høeg 1993: 39)

*'There is no Escape  
Said the fugitive when the roads closed-on on him  
Oh God, where can I hide  
When the city is full of my friends?'*  
Mourid Barghouti (1997: 144)<sup>27</sup>

### Beirut Streets: Snapshots of the Political Scene

*Saturday night, during the first week of February 2008. Saad Rafic Hariri was on TV mobilising his followers to join the demonstration planned to take place a few days later in the central Martyr Square. As had been the custom since 2005, huge demonstrations were planned for February 14 to commemorate the third anniversary of the assassination of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.*

*This was one of the 'ordinary' Saturday nights of that turbulent time in Beirut. I was planning to go out with friends for a drink, but I delayed leaving to listen to the televised speech by the young wannabe *za'im*. From less than 100 meters away outside, I could hear gunshots being continuously fired into the air by supporters celebrating their leader's on-screen appearance: a practice which was becoming a standard accompaniment to every speech of every Lebanese political leader.*

*The politico-sectarian allegiance within the neighbourhood I was living in was not clearly defined at the time; we, the residents, expected bullets to be fired not only when Hariri spoke, but also when his political opponent Nasrallah appeared on TV. Qantari, my neighbourhood which borders downtown Beirut, had a*

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27 Poem by Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti is originally in Arabic – translation is mine.

mostly Christian Armenian and Muslim Sunni population before the war. As in many west Beirut neighbourhoods, a significant percentage of the Christian population was displaced, by will or by force, during the civil war and the space they abandoned was subsequently taken over by predominantly Shiite families who had also been displaced from their own southern Lebanese villages by the war with Israel (Beyhum 1991). While the majority of the Shiite families left after being compensated during the post war period, the Christian population did not return. Instead, most of the members of the Christian community sold the now valuable town centre properties to developers who replaced small scale antiquated buildings with hideous new residential apartment blocks now inhabited by mostly Sunni and Shiite Muslim families. On one side of the street I lived on stood the run down houses of mostly Sunni Muslims; inherited humble dwellings whose sites could offer the residents a chance of prosperity if sold for high rise residential redevelopment. On the other side of the street were houses still inhabited by a small mostly Shiite population who remained in the shabby houses whose owners never reclaimed them after the war<sup>28</sup>.

Heavy firing continued after the speech was completed, its sound oppressing the neighbourhood residents who had endured many years of civil war. For them the sound of bullets and fireworks in Beirut inevitably reawakened the memories and fears of many past wars. I heard the sounds immediately audible that moment as well as remembered sounds that lingered in my memory from the Lebanese civil war which ended in 1990. That February night in 2008 I heard the cacophonous rhythmic firing, caught the smell of gun powder, felt the acuteness of the silence of everything but the bullets once the firing started, and was aware of the increase in my heart rate. All my other senses joined in the listening, and I heard the bullets not through my ears alone, but through my whole body.

After suffering this auditory agony for more than fifteen minutes, one of my neighbours went on to her balcony and shouted at the exultant young men: 'Do you not have any manners, don't you know that there are people who would be troubled by the firing?' The young men took this as an opportunity to further establish their authority by asserting their masculinity: 'Do you not have any men who could come and talk to us? Is it only women who speak in your household?' Those firing the bullets won, as the single young woman retreated to her empty house.

I left the house after the speech ended, and came back late that night to find the same group of men, who were in their early twenties, standing at one of the corners as is the habit of young men in Beirut who have little else to do. Yet this time I felt their dominance and the threat of their presence. In a few months they had transformed from the familiar young kids of the neighbourhood to become its menaces. They had

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28 While the description of the neighbourhood is based on my personal observations and conversations with residents, it is in line with literature on the demographic changes in Beirut, particularly in areas adjacent to Beirut Central District. See for example Gebhardt, et. al (2005) and Sawalha (2010).

*succeeded in putting the neighbourhood under their control, using the authority of weapons even if not firing at any particular person; they dominated the place by displaying violence and masculinity. Much of their power was achieved through the production of noise, just as a police car gains power through the sound of its sirens.*

*The war's memory gave potency to their intimidating gunfire despite local peoples' implicit knowledge that none of the neighbours in particular were direct targets. The fear people lived with then was not of the bullets themselves or of the threat of being subjected to violence then and there, but more of the growing power of those trigger-happy young men on the streets and the possibility that the country might descend into chaos, again.*

## **Introduction**

I describe this incident which took place early in my field work so as to give the reader a glimpse of the political scene on the streets of Lebanon when I embarked on this research. Although not an incident directly related to football or one where I had a central role, the events of that evening are useful in introducing the key elements that have shaped how I defined my research and how I have approached it methodologically.

In the sections that follow, I make use of the concept of 'relational positionality' proposed by Crossa who argues that a 'researcher's identities are shaped by multiple mobile and flexible relations' (2012: 115). My research also recognises that 'the insider/outsider binary in reality is a boundary that is not only highly unstable but also one that ignores the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space' (Mullings 1999: 340). While aware of the fluidity of identity and the limitations of a simplified labelling of my position in the field as 'insider', I still posit myself as an insider in the research I conducted. I was born in Beirut and spent most of my adult life there and knew the city and its people more than any other place in the world. Critical to my research experience though, were a number of themes that speak to the concept of relational positionality and seek to complicate what this positing entails and the dynamism that it incorporates.

A key theme is that of distance. I knew Beirut well, not only at an intellectual level, but also in an intimate, sensory and emotive way. At different stages of the research I negotiated the distance between myself and the city. I was mindful of the ways in which this distance could either enlighten or obscure my understanding of the place and its people. In conducting research I sought intellectual distance that would allow me insights that might have been obscured by my intimacy with the city, yet I also recognised that my intimate knowledge of the place often contributed directly to my understanding. At other times I

was distanced not through my intellectual effort as a researcher, but by the armed men on Beirut's streets, or by youths in my neighbourhood as I described at the beginning of this chapter. Beirut then was not the city I perceived as mine, and it often appeared alien and obscure as I was pushed out to its margin. Although less familiar to me then, I found in ethnographic research a path that enabled me to approach the transformed space of the city. Beyond fieldwork, I struggled when I wrote about Beirut. It was difficult to condense my knowledge of the city or choose only a snippet to narrate, in English linear prose as a background chapter for this thesis.

A second theme concerns the temporality of the research. While fieldwork was conducted within a clearly defined time-frame constructed around my need to travel to Beirut to start fieldwork and then to return to the UK to start the writing process, the actual temporality of the research extends well beyond the fieldwork phase itself and touches on both the past and the future. Having lived in Beirut for most of my life, I inevitably drew on a fund of memories which tinged both the research process and my relationship to the city. My knowledge of Beirut and of past events there influenced the way I came to understand the city during fieldwork. Similarly, as an 'insider', I was embroiled in the city's future and present concerns; the perceived consequences of any given event affected how I interpreted and valued it. My insider status therefore guided my choice of topics to research, and it also influenced my intention that this research might contribute to the city's future.

A third theme related to my positionality involves the degree to which I, as a researcher, am implicated in the research and the research site. While closely related to both distance – or lack of it in this case – and the historical knowledge, identification with the malaise of and concern for Lebanon highlights an added emotional layer. I had decided Lebanon was the site of my research before I even formulated the questions with which I was concerned. The knowledge I produced had to contribute to a process of knowledge production about Lebanon and the Levant; it in fact had to provide answers that contribute to its betterment. As I will explain, in all stages my engagement in this research was highly emotively charged, sensory, and historically laden. It was influenced by an overriding desire to contribute to knowledge relevant to the society I was living in and, more broadly, to understandings of the crises Lebanon has been experiencing. The research was largely shaped by a sense of 'we-ness'; I lived and experienced this sense of belonging to a collective in which memories

and concerns for the future were shared among a larger community whose parameters are difficult to define.

In his examination of the researcher's emotions in the field, Hage stresses the importance of subjecting emotions to the 'rational analytical order', but without 'reducing them to "analysable" data' (2010: 152). He argues that a process of vacillation needs to take place in regard to emotional immersion, where 'ethnographers have to continuously negotiate the terms under which emotions are subjected to "observation" and constantly "safeguard them in their savage state" in the very process through which they are experienced' (Hage 2010: 152). As a researcher and anthropologist, I found it necessary to bring to the surface not only my emotional and temporal involvement with my research community, but for the duration of the research process, to also embrace the process of 'ethnographic vacillation' that Hage describes. This process applied not only with regard to emotions, but also extended to the degree of my implication with, and distance from, the context and communities of the people I was researching.

This chapter is divided into three sections which parallel the three stages of knowledge construction proposed by Altorki and El-Solh (1988), namely (i) choice of topic, (ii) acquisition of data, and (iii) data analysis and interpretation. I use this model to elaborate on my own field work experience, to consider my positionality as a researcher, and to reflect on how that positionality influenced the research I conducted (England 1994; Crossa 2012). The first section explains my motivation for choosing to implement research in Beirut. It outlines the growing antagonism between Beirut's political and sectarian communities, and describes how my knowledge of the city and its history, as well as my intellectual investment in its future has shaped the research questions I raised. In the second section I explore ways in which the researcher as an 'insider' experiences - rather than conducts- the 'participation' side of participant observation, participation being a sensory, emotive, and memory-laden engagement. In the third section I consider some of the limitations of writing within a field, and about a region, that continues to struggle with the effects of being the subject of an epistemological orientalist gaze.

## **Choosing the Research Topic: Reframing What is 'Already Known' and Felt**

Narayan, in her critique of the classification of the native anthropologist, notes a difference in the researcher's starting point when she is studying her own society; a critique that resonated well with my own experience in approaching this research:

'In some ways, the study of one's own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known.' (Narayan 2003: 678)

Although not of Lebanese origin, I have lived in Lebanon for the best part of my life including ten years during the civil war as a child, and consider Beirut my home city. At the outset of research I was in search of conceptual explanations that would help me analyse the fractures and changes taking place in the already fragmented Lebanese socio-political situation - changes that I expected to make a direct impact on my day-to-day life and future. Engaging in this research was thus motivated by the need to make use of academic literature to disambiguate a long, personal, and intense experience of living through conflict. While this aim echoes the ideas of Narayan, my personal motivation involved an additional emotional layer, meaning that my quest was not purely cognitive, but heightened by a sense of urgency and importance which was driven by the growing possibility of Lebanon returning to civil war.

Before I focus more closely on the particular concerns that have shaped the formulation of my research questions, it might be useful to briefly situate the incident described at the start of this chapter within the broader political dynamics in Lebanon at the time. As I will explain in Chapter Three, the country was divided politically between two camps; firstly, the March 14 political camp, represented by Hariri, leader of Future Movement, and secondly, the March 8 camp led by Hezbollah.

On the afore mentioned Saturday night, Hariri's speech was unexceptional and his TV appearances were not scarce. Fireworks and bullets as a show of force on almost every street corner where Hariri had supporters had been the usual accompaniment to each of his speeches. Parallel sets of bullets accompanied the speeches of his political opponents, fired by their own supporters. On my street there was yet another group – a dozen young men who lived down the road and cheered for Nasrallah, Hezbollah's chairman, whenever he appeared on TV. With the tightening of the political debacle, the competition between the political groups and their supporters' shows of force became worse.

On the narrow streets of Beirut, firing in the air was only one of many manifestations of the re-militarisation of the city. Young men dressed in civilian or military clothes, some

openly and some covertly carrying weapons, occupied every corner. There were checkpoints at every intersection manned by the army, the internal security forces, and by private security firms around the houses of political leaders. Every day I passed two army tanks on my way to an internet cafe which was a mere five minute walk from my house. My friends joked that one day, they would wake up to find a check point between their bedroom and the bathroom; a joke that shows just how intrusive and imposing that militarised presence felt.

In that same period early in 2008, and for about a year previously Beirut had also been witnessing street clashes between - and at times within - the conflicting political factions. While some escalated into gunfights and caused death and injury that papers reported, many never made it to the news. Militarisation of the streets and ensuing street clashes meant that discussion in that period was dominated by speculation about how and when a new civil war would break out, and if it did, who would control which area of the city<sup>29</sup>. Especially important were the questions of which party would control the area where you lived, and whether or not your political or sectarian allegiance coincided with that of that party. To answer such questions people examined the sectarian composition of their neighbourhood's population and the militias that dominated it during the war. More current factors were the allegiance of the armed groups on its streets, and if they were many groups, which of these groups fired more loudly and / or prevailed when street clashes occurred. Also of prime importance was the visual marking of the space, and the examination of which za'im's, or faction's, graffiti, banners and pictures prevailed on the street. Posting a picture of a certain za'im or removing that of another was often enough to spark a clash.

Ironically, the public discourse of all political parties was against militarisation. At the core of the political conflict ravaging the country was the dispute as to who had legitimate authority to hold arms, particularly after the 2004 UN Security Council resolution 1559 which centred around Hezbollah disarmament. Hezbollah's public message was that its arms were justified as they were only for the 'legitimate resistance against Israel'. Hezbollah claimed that the Israeli occupation continued in the disputed Chebaa farms, and that past experience with Israel made a military presence near the mostly Shiite border areas

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29 See for example Ghaddar, Hanin (2008). "A Recipe for War?" *NowMedia*  
[https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/a\\_recipe\\_for\\_war](https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/a_recipe_for_war) - Accessed 9/11/2014.

necessary for its own protection - a task they rightly argued that the Lebanese army had never been able or willing to take responsibility for. The political argument used by the pro-Hariri camp was that since the withdrawal of the Israeli army from South Lebanon in 2000, there was no longer a need for any armed resistance in Lebanon. They argued that one party holding on to its weapons undermined the sovereignty of the state and endangered civil peace and members of other sectarian groups. Hezbollah pledged that its arms would never be used internally, but accused the Future Movement and its March 14 allies of secretly attempting to form a militia. In a similar way, Hariri and March 14 denied such accusations and maintained a rhetoric that affirmed state sovereignty and emphasised both the history of the Hariri establishment in social and educational philanthropy and its non-involvement in the Lebanese civil war.

It was from this context of escalation and increased militarisation of the Lebanese conflicts that my research questions emerged. My questions were motivated by ‘personal anguish over social and political conditions’ in the country I normally called home (Altorki and El-Solh 1988: 10). The situation instigated my quest for answers, and as questions emerged, I was at that stage not looking conceptually at writing on clientelism, power, and corruption and I could not readily identify that this was the body of literature best suited for my inquiries - nor could I see how my research might contribute to this literature. I was, as Narayan points out, in the middle, looking from the opposite direction; looking out from a live and fluid situation and searching for conceptual frameworks with which to understand it. This process though was not a linear one with a conceptual starting point and an empirical end point – or vice versa - but a dialogical one that continues to vacillate between the two poles in anthropological scholarly work.

The sections below further explain some of the background for this research, providing a sense of the context from which research questions emerged. I shall explain how I engaged with events, and show how events themselves shaped my enquiry.

### **The Za‘im and His Strong-Arm Men**

As the antagonism and division within the city grew, one area that I questioned was the negotiation of relationships between political leaders, the loud youths on the streets, and other residents of Beirut who were affected by the conflict and militarisation

Peteet in her work on Palestinian graffiti during the first intifada, asserted its role as a ‘territorial marker’ (1996: 149). She explains that ‘territorialisation read through political signs encoded an ability not only to be there but to mobilise youths in an area to undertake

risky actions' (1996: 149); political signs - like bullets fired in the air – are ways of showing power within, and hegemony over, a certain area. Who was it though that chose the streets of Beirut as the site where power would be displayed, and who or what was behind this territorialisation?

On the one hand, it was safe to say that the militarisation I saw was an organised process; political groups were arming youths despite their public anti-violence rhetoric. I knew those squabbles on the street were not accidental; they did not happen only because there was tension between the various politico-sectarian groups but because some leaders were paying and arming their supporters. While youths on the street were the ones in arms, few of them actually bought the bullets they wasted, the guns they fired from, or even the fireworks that lit up the neighbourhood. The Lebanese *zu'ama* had reserved an appropriate budget to ensure they were heard. While some youths took part because of financial compensation from political leaders and because of a lack of other economic opportunities, they still were supporters of the leader they cheered for, be it Hariri as a Sunni leader or any of his opponents. Without such political and monetary support they would probably not have joined because their loyalty was not sufficient in itself for them to pay for arms to hold on their leader's behalf.

Yet there were incidents that indicated more of a bottom-up dynamic. As with domination through the production of noise, which only needed one or two young men with a gun and sufficient bullets, domination through pictures and banners required neither wide approval from the population nor the efforts of many supporters. The day after the May 2008 street clashes in Beirut, on a visit to the contested and mixed neighbourhood of Muṣayṭībah, I was surprised to find the flags of one political faction on top of every column. Knowing well the sectarian and political diversity of the small neighbourhood, I asked my local friend who put up the flags, and was told that it was a single young man, who bought the flags himself and went about putting them up. He was a young trouble-maker who had previously covered one of the walls with graffiti and made sure to paint over any other graffiti he did not like. Single-handed he imposed his loyalties on the neighbourhood and gave the impression that a more powerful group dominated the area. After my friend made contact with the political party that the trouble-maker advocated for and advised that the flags would cause unnecessary tension, the same young guy eventually took them down. The incidents in both my own and my friend's neighbourhoods encapsulate a key set of questions that this research raised. They also provide relevant insights into the context

from which the questions emerged, and into the relationship between political elites and their constituencies at times of conflict. My questions specifically explore the role of actors at various levels of political power in shaping or resisting the growing antagonism in Beirut. I questioned how power was negotiated by the young men in arms, by the agents trying to recruit them, by the neighbour who tries to silence them, by my friend who used his political contacts to minimise their power, or by the political leader whose smile radiated out from the posters and over the tense streets.

### **Private Sector Led Militias**

Another aspect which characterised the context in Lebanon in the period before and during my field work was what appeared to be a novel model adopted by the Hariri Establishment for 'building a militia'. This model relied on 'subcontracting' a private company to recruit, arm, and train youths, an arrangement which did not fit with how those of us who had experienced the Lebanese war knew militias to be formed, but which was nevertheless in line with the establishment's approach to the private sector's role in governance – apparently in both war and peace.

At the time, the media reported on shipments of arms entering the country and young men being trained for this or that militia. While Hezbollah was clearly armed, its allies and opponents alike were rumoured to be establishing militias. The Hariri establishment, like other political groups, was rumoured to be arming and training groups recruited from members of the Sunni sect. Some of this was obviously true, but there were also many exaggerated semi-truths. Yet the Hariri establishment, in keeping with its economic and institutional approach, had commissioned a private security firm to implement its 'security' tasks. The company chosen for that task was Secure Plus, which provided security services to private firms and individuals. Secure Plus recruited personnel in both Sunni urban quarters and rural villages. In a visit to Bab al-Tabbaneh, a poor urban quarter of the predominantly Sunni northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, I heard about this recruitment process. Applications were being received from young men in the area for positions as security personnel with monthly salaries of less than 500 USD. I heard the same on trips to other Sunni, mostly rural areas, for example in the north Lebanese villages of the Akkar district, in the south eastern village of Chebaa, and amongst residents of the villages in the Iqlim al-Kharub district. All of these were areas where poverty was acute. Young men from these villages who lacked other employment opportunities were attracted by the promise of 'good' monthly remuneration.

While I did not study the Secure Plus security company, its activities shaped another key research question. A neoliberal mode of operation was characteristic of the Hariri Establishment, in which the private sector was granted a greater role not only in how it approached national policy, but also in its internal management. With respect to the Hariri model in which business and politics were mutually entangled, I asked ‘how do economic modes of operation shape the ways in which power is negotiated, and how are political relations and alliances constructed?’ It seemed that reliance on the private sector in militia-building, (an approach in line with a global trend towards privatisation of security), was incompatible with the parallel use of sectarian discourse, along with kinship and territorial ties, in strengthening the establishment’s popular support base. These factors encouraged me to also direct my research towards exploring continuities that existed between seemingly distinct institutional or modern modes of governance and long-entrenched sectarianism and clientelistic modes of governance.

### **Beyond the Moment of Crisis**

The moment of crisis that Lebanon was going through was not the country’s first, and like others around me who had lived in Lebanon for decades, I could connect the present political tension with longer term trends and socio-political changes which the country had experienced in the post war period. While the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005 signalled the escalation of the political crisis, I chose not to limit my research to covering this timespan alone. The combination of these events certainly affected my choice of research community and topic, but I wanted to identify a space or a group that would allow me to explore events and relationships that predated the current crisis and to observe how they have shaped it.

I had already ‘started’ fieldwork when I decided on the football community as my main research interest. I originally went to the field to study mobility patterns of service drivers within the city’s growing territorial divisions. One of the drivers I interviewed referred to football and to conflict within and between clubs and fans over the past decade, well before the overt political crisis, and his remarks led me to football. After one interview with a sports journalist, I realised that the set of relationships and power structures that existed in football clubs would enable me to achieve some historical depth - an approach that I thought would protect my analysis from becoming constrained to current allegiances and formations alone. At any moment in time political and sectarian antagonism can appear wholly rigid and divisive, yet my examination of the same sets of relationships over a

longer period allowed me to avoid reproducing any simplistic binary division between the two political camps, March 8 and March 14. By adopting an approach that took account of historical dimensions I was able to explore how flux and transformation were continuous and on-going processes.

To return to Peteet's (1996) work on graffiti: in Lebanon, unlike the West Bank, battles involving competitive displays of graffiti, banners, and territorial control achieved via the use of aggressive sound were waged between two relatively equal actors who had various arenas of competition. These spaces included the media, elections and broader political processes. The clashes and competition staged on the streets were not separate from the national level electoral competition and regional political disputes. Searching beyond the moment of crisis, I sought to understand the relationship between public and exceptional moments of political crisis which were often characterised by violence, on the one hand, and often unseen dynamics and relationships operating in other institutional and political arenas, on the other.

## **Acquisition of Data: Studying Nejme Football Club (and Beyond)**

Crossa stresses that recognising positionality as a 'central component in the production of knowledge entails a self-introspective or critical reflexive exercise which is necessary to identify power relations embedded in the research process' (2012: 115). In the first subsection I reflect on my positionality at the time of data collection, looking at how different identities – and / or perceptions of such identities – have influenced my access to, and role within, the field especially as a woman in a mostly male context (Altorki and El-Solh, 1988). In the second subsection I also seek to expand this reflexive exercise further, by discussing how being an insider influenced what I perceived as 'data' and how, as an insider, I 'experienced' the field.

### **Questions of Access and Positionality**

I did fieldwork in what I defined as my home city. My 'research community' was even closer; Nejme club stadium was situated a mere ten- minute walk from the house where I was born and had spent my childhood. It was in the electoral district where I voted, that is the one in which Hariri was elected as a member of parliament. I knew Beirut well and I have studied, worked and lived in different neighbourhoods within it. As such I could easily be categorised as an 'insider' researcher, yet defining oneself as an insider is merely one of the identities that have influenced my position in the field.

With reference to the stage of data acquisition for the 'indigenous' researcher, Altorki and El-Solh (1988) discuss issues of 'access' as being influenced by kinship ties. They also consider how a 'role in the field' can be influenced by class origin, education, indigeneity and gender in addition to a multiplicity of variables including age, marital status, religious affiliation, ethnic/minority status, topic, location, political realities, personality and sex segregation.

My access to the sports community and my role within it were no doubt shaped by several of the variables better summarised as a web of relations and connections that I was part of or had access to. While kinship ties were of importance to many of my research participants, I had little recourse to such ties as I am of Palestinian origin with no extended family in Lebanon. Instead I found that my network of personal and professional relationships was far more instrumental. To give a few examples, my first sports related interview was secured for me by a football referee who I had previously worked with; this man also worked as a driver in a non-governmental organisation in which I was employed. Access to Nejmeh was through another ex-colleague, whose work with the Ministry of Youth and Sports on youth-related legislation put him in contact with a Nejmeh official to whom he introduced me. I had not realised the power of such personal networks until I tried to get access to Al-Ansar Sporting Club, Nejmeh's rival football club. After months of unsuccessfully trying to get access to the club management, I discovered that the club's Vice President at the time, Karim Diab, attended university with the husband of a close friend of mine. This connection meant that I was granted access to the club from the highest authority: the Vice President's personal email address and phone number were made available to me almost immediately following a one line email sent by that friend.

Reflecting on such networks is important to both 'identify power relations embedded in the research process' as Crossa suggests (2012: 115), and to understand how I as a researcher became part of the web of clientelist relationships that I ended up studying. Returning to the example of Al-Ansar sporting Club, it was my educated middle class background and not my family ties that allowed me access to Karim Diab and through him to Al-Ansar club.

The implications of these relationships on my perceived role in the field were only evident later. Having such informal access to Diab led club members and fans to assume that I had

the same political views as Diab<sup>30</sup>. This might have been the result not only of my choice of gate-keeper, but also how I related to that gate-keeper. For example, during one of the earliest Al-Ansar football games, making use of the small size of the stadium we were in, I left my seat in the ranks with the fans to thank Diab for allowing me access and to update him on the progress of the research. Still new to the football community at the time, I only noticed later the performative aspect of that move, and the impression that it projected of me and my ability to casually approach and talk to Diab.

While my access to Diab was possible because of class and personal relations, it was perceived by fans as representing political and sectarian belonging and, by implication, placed me in a position of power, as a broker who has direct links to people with authority, that I did not necessarily have or use. I soon realised that some fans were trying to send messages to Diab about the performance of the club or the politics of Future Movement through me; messages that I not only missed at the beginning of my research, but that were never relayed.

The second key element that influenced my role in the field and is worth elaborating on is my position as a female researcher studying a predominantly male community in a relatively sex segregated cultural context. This has at times meant easier access to some research participants, but it has also required me to be vigilant about maintaining the limits of relationships with the mostly male research participants. The period at the beginning of my research was mired by too many unwanted sexual advances and continuous scrutiny of the 'appropriateness' of my behaviour to the perceived gender roles I was supposed to play. Looking at day-to-day conflicts within the football community that I have witnessed or been told about, I know that often these were small inter-personal power struggles that were deliberately exaggerated or staged as performances of 'masculinity' for my benefit.

My limited knowledge of football was another element which situated me as an outsider in the Nejme community. Until I started this research I had not been to a single football match and did not know much about the rules, technique, or history. I did not know the names of star players nor those of the Lebanese Football Association members, but most important of all, I did not know what football fandom really meant and how is it that an individual comes to love a club so deeply.

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30 Karim Diab was politically aligned with Sunni leader Saad Hariri and is the son of the coordinator of the Future Movement at the time Salim Diab.

A fourth element to take into consideration was the familiarity of research participants with anthropological research and their past experiences with inquiring visitors. Within a community that was little researched, my interest in the club and my research participants' experiences and perspectives were a source of pride for many. Most fans were eager to speak to me about the club they cherished despite not fully comprehending what it was I was attempting to do. My role approximated to that of others they knew, like reporters and filmmakers. I was often introduced by them as a journalist, who as one fan expressed it 'has been trying for two years to do a reportage about Nejme'. My presence reinforced for them the value of the club; it was worthy of research and documentation.

The above are but a few of many examples of the web of relations that I was entangled in, and they show some of the factors which influenced both my access to the field and perceptions of my role within it. These examples support Crossa's affirmation of the importance of the 'relational aspect of a researcher's position', or 'how researchers' identities are shaped by multiple mobile and flexible relations and how that makes a difference to the research process.' (2012: 115). I was perceived by some as insider, a Beirut, Lebanese, Arab, who was assumed to share similar world views and beliefs, while for others I was also an outsider to the world of football, a Palestinian, an academic, a woman, and a member of a higher social class. There was no one role that was assigned to me unanimously by all research participants nor one that lasted for the duration of my fieldwork. The implications of my many supposed roles and perceptions varied from one research participant to another as I worked across various social classes as well as different political and sectarian affiliations. Bearing in mind anthropology's reflexive tradition, I was constantly engaged in negotiation and reflection both on these roles themselves and on the influence they exerted over the ways I perceived the context within which I was doing research.

### **The 'Participant' in Participant Observation**

As I sat down that night in February to write ethnographic notes on the incident described at the beginning of this chapter, I wondered to what extent it could be described as an ethnographic encounter and I questioned myself about its value in my research. What I wrote about was personal, subjective, and largely experienced in my own mind and body and not in my encounters with research participants. The value of the incident only emerged as I discussed it with friends who had lived in Lebanon during the war and experienced shooting in the city in a similar way. They also spoke of the way that hearing

gunfire simultaneously evoked memories of the civil war and fear of its return. This was a subjective experience, and I needed not only to be reflexive about it as a researcher and understand its limits, but also to appreciate its value in problematising how war and violence are lived over time. It seemed that the experience might assist me in expanding understanding of the 'participation' of the researcher when she is an insider.

Following Adorno, Bull and Back assert that 'sounds are embedded with both cultural and personal meanings; sounds do not come at us merely raw' (2003: 9). The noise of gunfire on that night carried with it cultural meanings that I could understand, interpret and work with in my writing. My flatmate at the time, who was raised in Germany and had little direct experience of war, heard the bullets as mere noise. For her the shooting did not bear the burden of significance that it did for me, nor the threat of an imminent war, or the possibility of daily life becoming constrained by the whims of young men in arms.

The experience also heightened my awareness of how I 'take in' the world around me as I do research, and the importance of 'broadening the senses of sense' as Bull and Back suggest (2003: 2). The soundscape of not only my neighbourhood, but also that of the stadium and the offices of sports clubs became important parts of my research. As I will describe the silence of the stadiums during football games, much more than the sight of the empty seats, encapsulated what the sports scene in Beirut looked like. In their introduction to 'The Auditory Reader' (2003) Bull and Back argue that research dependent on sight and vision objectifies the world, and that the 'engulfing multi-directionality' of sound allows us 'to perceive the relationship between subject and object, inside and outside, and the public and private altogether differently' (2003: 4). Adding to that, the authors describe the 'states of 'we-ness' or 'being with' which are inherent in experiencing sound.

They propose that 'sound connects us in ways that vision does not' and argue for the existence of a 'we-ness' beyond the present moment that connects past, present and future in just the way my experience of the shooting indicates. Bull and Back again argue that 'it may be that within the registers of aural culture that memories are carried'. In the case of

Lebanon, that register of aural culture extends beyond music and song, to a soundscape of bombs, bullets and chaos<sup>31</sup>.

That 'state of we-ness' extends beyond sound and is at the heart of some of the lived experiences of conflict and war. Doing research in Beirut at the time was like being on an aeroplane that is about to crash; there was imminent danger and you were scared and so were others around you. Brought together by these feelings of insecurity the people on the plane are a collective of a sort even if a temporary one with little besides the plane travel to connect them. The fear itself is collective, for everyone asks themselves 'what will happen to us?' knowing that individual survival is not possible. Unlike a plane journey where the members and boundaries of the collective are known, in Beirut the 'we' or collective was difficult to define. Yet a great part of the experience of fear is collective and cannot be lived individually. Whatever choice you personally made you were bound to be greatly affected by the war if it took place and the gravity of the events. Even if you had the choice to protect yourself or your family, your community would be affected, and so would your spaces of memory and your expectations for the future. In this sense, 'participant observation' gains a different meaning; participation here extends well beyond taking part in the here and now and comes to involve too the sharing of memories, as well as future expectations and concerns.

## **Data Analysis and Engaging with Anthropological Theory**

Moving forward through the cycle of knowledge production I described previously and benefiting from anthropological theory prompted another set of reflection and questions. For example, what body of knowledge am I as a researcher making use of and contributing to? How has my 'insider' status as well as my professional background impacted on analysis of the data I obtained in the field and the conceptual frameworks I chose to relate to? While Crossa affirms that 'the literature on positionality says little about how the selection of a research topic and theoretical framework is also a positionality issue' (2012: 117), feminist as well as postcolonial literatures have long affirmed the importance of critical reflection on the epistemological field within which one writes. While engaged in fieldwork

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31 It is no coincidence then that Ziad Rahbani, in the 1987 song '*Oudak rannan*' ('Your Lute is Resonant' – my translation) sung by the Lebanese diva Fairouz finishes the lively song with an emulation of the sound of firing bullets to accompany other musical instruments, recreating in part the country's soundscape during the war.

the researcher might be capable of maintaining a consciousness of her own positionality, but this practice is a much more difficult one to sustain once one starts analysis and writing. In the two short sections below I present the difficulties I encountered in the analysis stage of my work. I show how these issues sometimes limited my theoretical engagement with the material - a problem that I am aware I have yet to overcome.

### **Beyond Policy Oriented Research and Analysis**

At the beginning of this chapter I noted how my research questions were motivated by my concern about political developments within Lebanon and by my desire to comprehend existing experiences. This 'concern', alongside the pressure exerted by informants for research to produce remedies to the ills of the sports scene and to the increasing violence and the derelict Lebanese political system, often cast a shadow over the analysis process. With reference to the concept of relational positionality, my professional background further exacerbated these difficulties and impacted on the perspective with which I approached the work I was doing. Working in the fields of human rights, development, and peace-building for over a decade, I had been accustomed to a perspective that asks for research to provide 'recommendations' and 'policies'. I was used to the idea that understanding needed to be closely followed by providing answers that allow for intervention.

The chosen subject matter itself contributes to this compulsion. Clientelism has been central in policy literature which has dealt with Lebanon's predicaments in terms of good governance and peace-building. Such literature has presented clientelism as a key element of sectarian antagonism (Picard and Ramsbotham 2012) and as an obstacle to democratisation and horizontal mobilisation (Abou Assi 2006). Critiques of the concept have long paralleled the production of scholarly literature about it, and anthropological and social writing have further problematised the concept, noting its ubiquity and its endurance even in so called modern democratic societies. Yet policy writing remains entrapped in a dominant trope of the literature, which sees clientelism as an ill of 'traditional' societies and fundamentally opposed to the construction of the 'modern' state and its institutions. Clientelism, according to reports, was one of eleven core problems leading to conflict in Lebanon (Kraft et al. 2008), one of four building blocks which reinforce communal tensions (ESCWA 2009) and one of the main causes for any financial crisis (Abou Assi 2006).

Such understandings of clientelism in Lebanon at the time of my research were also popular ones, reflected in the media and the discourse of politicians, and even shared with me by informants. The evolutionary understanding that ‘clientelism’ was a disease that is sure to be remedied by a modernisation process which includes systems of accountability, the rule of law and popular democratic elections, is a notion that is backed by generously funded development and democratisation organisations working under economically and politically liberal agendas.

Although findings from my research supported extant anthropological analysis that blurred the boundaries between the so called ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ forms of socio-political organisation, deconstructing this discourse<sup>32</sup> was only possible through engaging with other literature that has examined the development agenda more critically. What I needed during my analysis, was not only to work with compelling anthropological literature and findings from field research, but also to deconstruct the widespread discourse that simplified this network of power relations and restricted its understanding to clientelism’s instrumental value.

### **Epistemological Field**

Approaching the literature from ‘the other side of the table’ as mentioned earlier, that is through a path that starts with experience and searches for conceptual explanations, two limitations are apparent in relation to the epistemological field on which I am as a researcher relying on and contributing to.

One limitation is that anthropological contributions committed to the ethnographic, to ‘everydayness’, are still limited in a region where the political - in particular - has often been studied from an international relations perspective, and / or in academic departments in distant campuses. In fact, today, possibly the best ethnographic material on Arab countries is available in Arabic novels<sup>33</sup>. It was necessary therefore to adopt a broad multidisciplinary approach and make use of regional literature from other disciplines, including literature, the arts, urban studies, in addition to the fields of sociology and political science.

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32 It is important to note that myself and most other social science graduates working in the not-for profit sector in Lebanon – and across many other countries – work within this discourse regardless of whether or not we adhere to it, or have ever reflected on it to start with.

33 Possibly the best examples of such novels are the books of Saudi writer Abdul Rahman Munif, particularly the Cities of Salt quintet, the many novels of Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz and Palestinian writer Ibrahim Nasrallah. For Lebanon the work of Rabih Jaber, particularly his Beirut Trilogy and that of Hoda Barakat have been of particular value for this research.

Another limitation is related to anthropology as a field of study. Critical perspectives on anthropology's orientalist gaze have long been available (Said 1978; Asad 1973), yet the quest of Arab anthropologists for an ethnographic voice is only just materialising. While indeed, 'an anthropological approach is needed to claim the present tense of Arab everydayness in all its cultural manifestations, to bring it to the fore so that it is assured of its time, its being (...)' (Sabry 2011: 11), the potential for anthropology in the Arab countries to produce knowledge of relevance to its societies is still largely untapped, so is its contribution to broader anthropological explorations.

Deeb and Winegar assert that in the past two decades, 'scholarly and geopolitical developments have inspired new research agendas [within "Arab-majority societies"] and approaches that are poised to make significant contributions to anthropology as a whole' (2012: 538). These sources affirm the significant growth in both quantity and scope of anthropological work on Arab countries and by Arab anthropologists (Deeb and Winegar, 2012). Deeb and Winegar also elaborate on significant shifts away from the 'metonyms' which dominated literature on the region, namely 'tribes', 'gender' and 'Islam' as summarised by Abu-Lughod two decades earlier (1989).

Anthropology of societies of the Arab countries has yet to escape both 'orientalist' perspectives and 'reverse orientalist' ones, and to become epistemologically 'conscious of itself or its parts-of-the-whole' and 'conscious of the historical and conjunctural moments to which it is responding' (Sabry 2011: 2). As a researcher, this 'epistemological consciousness' or in other words, and according to Sabry again, identifying 'the plane upon which one writes and creates' is necessary lest the researcher 'unconsciously, naïvely and glibly offer one's services as a native orientalist' (2011: 20). This consciousness requires effort that is at once critical and creative (Hage 2013), and is, I think, by necessity a product of collective endeavour rather than a merely personal one. Attempting to bring to consciousness the mental or intellectual plane upon which this Phd thesis has been written, although a necessary endeavour, is a project beyond the scope of this chapter (or even the entire thesis). Awareness for its need and a commitment to contribute to claiming 'the present tense of Arab everydayness in all its cultural manifestation' is not.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how my positionality, in its several manifestations and forms, has influenced the way this thesis has been written, and I have also shown how the research that it covers has been implemented. I have highlighted how personal and

academic investment in a society's future has impacted not only on the research questions raised and on my methods of analysis, but also on the emotive and sensory dimensions of fieldwork. Left unfinished is a reflection on the epistemological field one makes use of and contributes to.

In the next chapter I return to the football stadium, introducing both Nejmeh club and its history, as well as the history of the club's home city, Beirut. The context for the mobilisation and tension described at the beginning of this chapter is further explained, as are their manifestations within Nejmeh football club, my main research community.

# 3

## Contested Club, Contested City

*Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.'*  
Edward Said (1994)

*Have you ever entered an empty stadium? Try it. Stand in the middle of the field and listen. There is nothing less empty than an empty stadium. There is nothing less mute than stands bereft of spectators.'*  
Eduardo Galeano (1998)

### Hariri and Tariq Al-Jadidah vs Nasrallah and Al-Dahiyah

*2009, Beirut Municipal Stadium; I am there with the municipal employee responsible for the sports stadium. Guarding all entry points are army officers and vehicles - they have been stationed around the stadium for years now. In one corner, young boys are playing football, not on the pitch itself but on an open space at the edge of the stadium. In another corner two men are performing the Muslim prayer in what appears to be a break from work. Men and veiled middle-aged women in sports shoes are walking around the ranks as part of their daily exercise routine. In the densely populated area of Tariq Al-Jadidah, tall residential buildings surround the stadium. Their balconies look like extensions of the stadium's terraces; the flags of favourite teams hang there and residents have the luxury of watching matches free of charge.*

*As we stand in the directors box, where sports and state officials as well as media personnel usually sit, my host points towards the middle block of yellow seats within which a few blue seats form the words 'Beirut Municipal Stadium'. He then points to the blue coloured chairs in the middle saying 'It is there that they used to sit, there where the word 'Beirut' is'. He is talking about Nejmeh fans, particularly the 'zu'ran' (thugs) of the Chiah neighbourhood. According to him, they are the troublemakers of the club, the loud fans who create havoc in the stadium and in the neighbourhood on their way out. They would come early,*

*hours before the match, not just to book that place but in anticipation and excitement for the game. The space they chose in the centre of the stadium allowed them a good view of the game. It was also in full sight of sports officials, their club's administrators and the media: fans knew that the messages that they sent from here would be seen and heard by all.*

*There was a time when Nejmeh matches, particularly those held in Beirut's Municipal Stadium, defined the football scene in Lebanon. Today, the stadium which was established in the 1930's no longer hosts sports matches between local teams as it does not provide minimum safety standards for either players or officials on their way out or in. There is a long-standing ban on the matches of Nejmeh Sport Club in particular because the misbehaviour of fans proved too difficult to contain in such a densely crowded residential neighbourhood. Indeed for five consecutive seasons, fans were banned from attending all local football matches, no matter which team was playing in any stadium.*

*I try to imagine a day back in the nineties when a Nejmeh match against its long term rival, Al-Ansar, took place in the municipal stadium. I construct an imaginary game from the many stories I heard, the news I read and the images I saw. Some Nejmeh fans would have walked from the many poor neighbourhoods of Al-Dahiyah, Beirut's Southern Suburbs, making their way along the Souleiman Bosutani road through the Tariq Al-Jadidab neighbourhood, home of both their club and that of its rival, Al-Ansar. Other fans of both Nejmeh and Al-Ansar would have come from close by. Nejmeh's fans would have always outnumbered those of their rivals no matter which team the club was playing against, and they would come well prepared with flags and banners, and yelling or singing many slogans and chants. Some fans would pay a donation to the club in addition to the price of the ticket, while others with little money to spare would find ways to climb into the stadium. Some would elicit the sympathy of the ticket officer and persuade him to let them in.*

*The stadium would reverberate with the cheering of the 'Great Fans of Nejmeh' who have impressed sports media personnel and other sports teams by their number, their devotion, and their creativity in the stadium. The chants would not all be to the media's taste. Some of the Shiite Nejmeh fans would chant - to the dismay of some of the other fans of the same club - 'Allah, Nasrallah, and Al-Dahiyah' (the Southern Suburbs) declaring triple loyalties, a religious one to Allah, to Nasrallah the leader of the political and militant group Hezbollah and to the mostly Shiite neighbourhoods of the suburbs. The predominantly Sunni fans of rival Al-Ansar club would chant for their leader and neighbourhood: 'Allah, Hariri, Tariq Al-Jadidab'. These two slogans anticipated the division which the city experienced a decade later and were used in many later demonstrations, although it was at sports matches that they were first heard.*

*Nejmeh fans would probably not leave the stadium as winners, especially not when facing Al-Ansar, the club that won all of Lebanon's Football Association's (LFA) championships in the 1990s. Al-Ansar's*

*success was often attributed by many Nejmeh fans to the LEA's favouritism towards Al-Ansar which was at the time under the patronage of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Departing en masse from Tariq Al-Jadidab, home of their rival club, Nejmeh fans' anger was expressed in the destruction of shops and cars presumed to belong to Al-Ansar fans, acts which earned them the title of the zu'ran, or the mischievous football fans.*



*Figure 8: School children watching an Asia cup match. The words 'Beirut Municipal Stadium' appear in the background, spelled out by blue seats amongst yellow seats.*

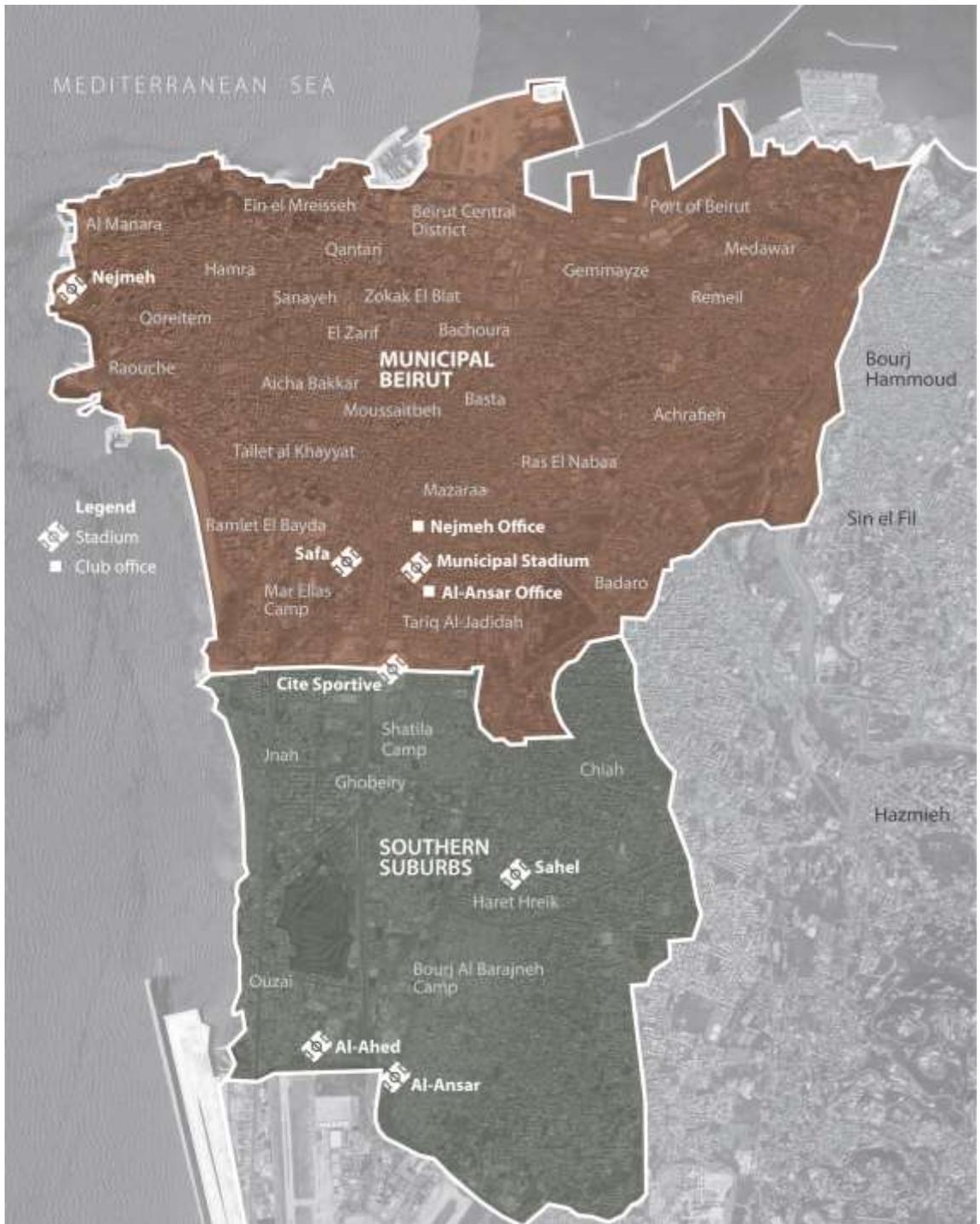


Figure 9: Map of Neighbourhoods in Beirut and the Southern Suburbs. Location of offices and stadiums of selected clubs is indicated.

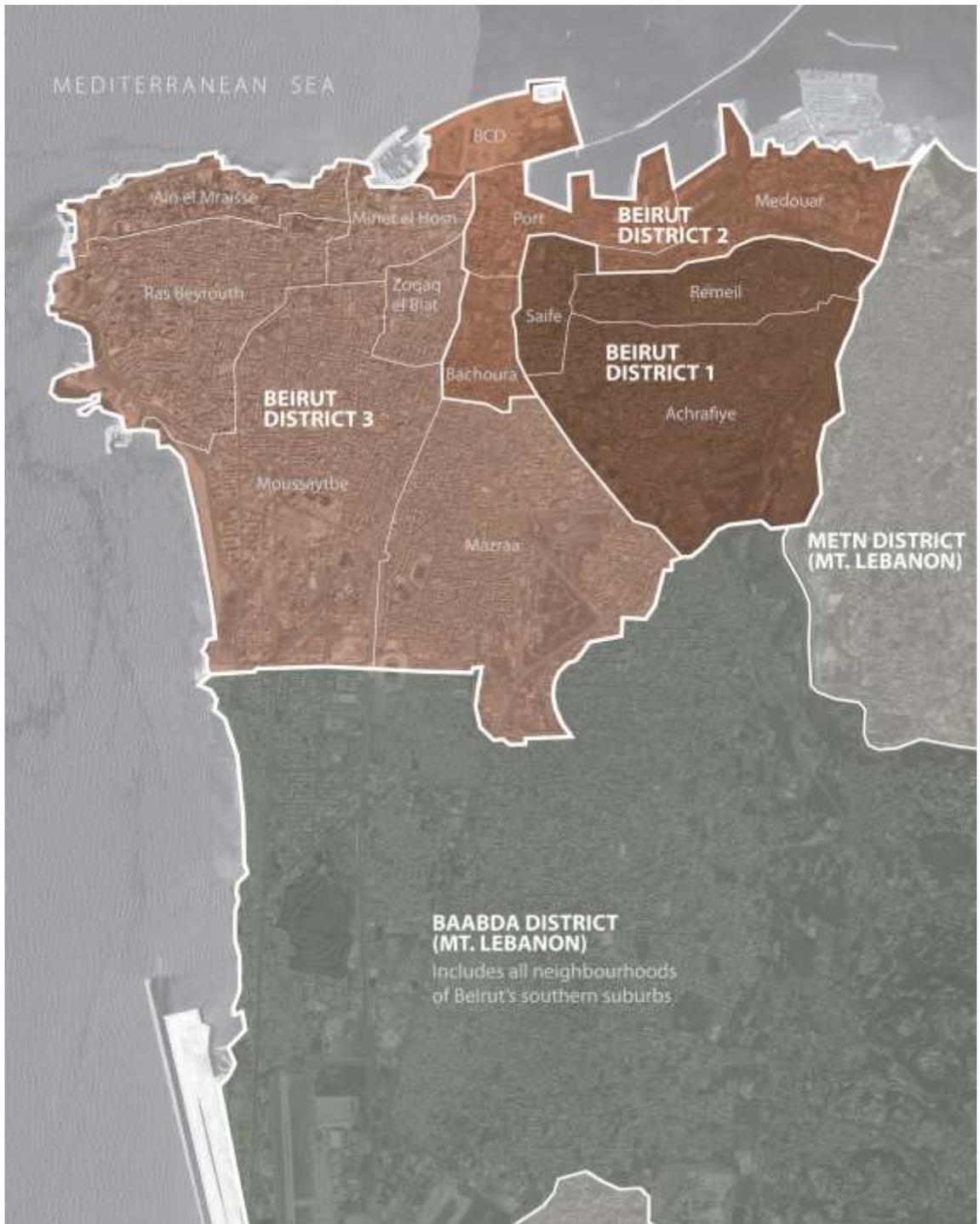


Figure 10: Map of the 2009 distribution of electoral districts in Beirut and the Southern Suburbs.

## Introduction

In this chapter I introduce Nejmeh Sports Club and its history, a Beirut institution through which the social, demographic, and political changes that the city has experienced can be observed. The chapter also introduces the background necessary to contextualise the remainder of the chapters of this thesis. In particular, it describes the political crisis Lebanon was experiencing at the time of this research, showing the tension between the Shiite and Sunni communities of Beirut. I highlight how Sunni communities' historic claims of rootedness in the city, together with the representation of Shiite communities as alien to – and even unsuited for – urban living, have been used by both factions to lay claim over Beirut. The chapter explains how these issues have fed into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the city.

As noted, sports stadia and clubs – and Nejmeh in particular – are some of the few spaces that can condense the socio-political conflict that Beirut, and Lebanon more broadly, experienced in the post civil-war period, particularly in the period preceding the conflict's political escalation in 2005. To explain that conflict, we might start with the two slogans that competing sports teams, and later, opposing militant groups and political activists adopted, namely 'Allah, Hariri, and Tariq Al-Jadidah' and 'Allah, Nasrallah, and the Al-Dahiya'. In voicing these chants, fans brought together the three pillars around which the conflicts were constructed; first is Allah, through which they affirm their religious identity, then the name of the political leader with whom they are allied, either Nasrallah head of Hezbollah or Rafic Hariri (and after his assassination Saad Hariri, his son) leaders of the Future Movement, and finally their spatial and territorial claims over Beirut's neighbourhoods, either the predominantly Sunni area of Tariq Al-Jadidah or the predominantly Shiite Southern Suburbs or as the Lebanese call it 'Al-Dahiyah'.

At the time of this research both Nejmeh Sport Club and Beirut, the city, appeared to be contested between two seemingly well defined groups. The first is that of the March 8 political camp led by Hezbollah and made up of predominantly Shiite members and fans who, spatially, belong to the Southern Suburbs. The second group consists of the March 14 political camp, led by Hariri of the Future Movement, and made up of predominantly Sunni members and fans who spatially belong to the city of Beirut. The following background seeks to provide a more nuanced and historically deep understanding of these 'divisions'.

**Spatially**, the city of Beirut has always had an ambivalent relationship with the rest of the country, not least with its suburbs. The uneven development policies of pre-civil war Lebanon marginalised the rural areas and resulted in mass rural to urban migration which brought about the development of ‘misery belts’ around Beirut. These migrations thereby contributed to the growth of the city of Beirut as a capital city or a ‘head’ that is bigger than the ‘body’ or the rest of the country (Kassir 2006: 468). The growth in Nejmeh’s popularity in the 1950s and 1960s was, to a large extent, a result of this rural-to-urban migration. The post-civil war reconstruction reinforced the division between Beirut, its suburbs, and the rest of the country - as reflected in the slogans of football fans. The process of division took place at the planning stage which designed the city centre as an ‘island’ devoid of ties with the rest of the city itself and the countryside beyond – that is, excepting the highway that links Beirut to the airport (Sarkis 1993). The reconstructed city centre appears as a ‘separate enclave, abruptly severed from the rest of the city by a network of highways that constitute solid physical barriers’ (Ghandour and Fawaz 2010: unpaginated). These changes were due to economic and urban policy as well as demographic changes, but some writers have discussed the role of the political dynamics within the suburbs themselves which were understood to have ‘withdrawn from the state’ of Lebanon (Toufiq 2005). The current control of the Al-Dahiya by Hezbollah presents the Southern Suburbs as ‘a largely autonomous, strong, self-sufficient and self-governing state’ which ‘can easily survive outside or without the Lebanese state’ (Toufiq, in NowLebanon 2007, see also Charara 1998).

The spatial divisions I describe were paralleled by **political** divisions which preceded both the ascent of Hezbollah as a political force and the strengthening of the current March 8 and March 14 camps. In the following sections I trace the popularity of Nejmeh, positing the club as a representative voice of leftist and Arab Nationalist political consciousness in the pre civil-war period. At this time as the club representing the political underdog, Nejmeh had only brief moments of sports glory. In the post war period, it is once again represented by its fans as the ‘oppressed club’, victim of the marginalising policies of the Prime Minister at the time, Rafic Hariri. This division became more problematic for club fans as the line of political antagonism was drawn between the predominantly Shiite Hezbollah and the predominantly Sunni Future Movement, both of whom had supporters within Nejmeh’s body of fans.

The political and spatial lines of division reflected what Mermier termed the ‘territorialization of communitarian affiliation’ (2013: 383), where the Southern Suburbs

became synonymous with membership of the Shiite communities, whereas other areas of Beirut, particularly Tariq Al-Jadidah, became known as Sunni enclaves. Looking at the broader **social and sectarian elements**, these labels are connotative of associated social, and at times degrading, stereotypes. Depicted by the leftist movement at one point as the ‘barefoot in the city’<sup>34</sup>, (bare-footedness being the symbol of the proletariat), the Shiites were also seen by some of Beirut’s residents as the uncivilised rural population that had not managed to integrate into city life (see Mermier 2013). Within the ranks of Nejmeh fans, this translated into Shiite fans from the Southern Suburbs being labelled as the *zu‘ran* (the thugs and troublemakers) fans. While ‘many Sunni Muslims and Christians tended to regard Shi’i as socially inferior’, the Sunnis, particularly in the post war period, were represented as the original inhabitants of the city, following a conception of Beirut’s urban life that ‘ranks the degree of the urban affiliation of the Beirutis according to their religious affiliation’ (Mermier 2013: 377). Nejmeh moved early in the twenty first century into patronage of the Hariri establishment which redefined the club as a ‘Beirut club’. This definition brought with it a redefinition of the club as a Sunni one, exclusive to the Sunni fans.

The following sections of the chapter provide a chronological overview of Nejmeh, situating the club’s fortunes within the national and regional events of the time<sup>35</sup>. Each time period describes the three cross-cutting elements noted above which the fans themselves highlighted in their chants; namely, the spatial, the political and the social/sectarian.

## **Football in Lebanon before Nejmeh (1900 - 1945)**

In contrast to the situation in the majority of neighbouring Arab states, football – and organised sports more broadly - were not introduced in Lebanon by European territorial colonial rule. They were, rather, introduced by the Syrian Protestant College (hereafter SPC), now the American University of Beirut, when Lebanon was still part of the Ottoman Empire (Loughran 1972). Founded by American missionaries in Lebanon and Syria, the SPC started its operation in Beirut in 1866. McClenahan (2007), drawing on research in SPC’s archives, describes football and basketball games attended by thousands in the college’s annual field day as early as 1903. He presents a history of the development

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34 As described in a 1970s poem by Abbas Beydoun sung by Marcel Khalife, who was at one point the musical voice of the Lebanese Communist Party.

35 The historical overview provides no information about the players of various clubs as the focus of the thesis is on the political side of the development of Nejmeh and football more broadly and not on the athletic aspect.

of organised sports as one rooted in the Christian religious missions of both the SPC and the YMCA – hosted by the College since 1913. A few decades later, both the SPC and the YMCA – in Lebanon and internationally - started to divert from their religious tradition and took a more secular turn, under the pressure of the religiously diverse student body that they accommodated or, as McClenahan puts it, ‘the relative valuations and plural identities demanded by the modern industrial cosmopolitan cities from London to Beirut’ (2007: 86). The genesis I describe prompted football’s competitive development within other missionary and communitarian contexts, for example the Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), a Jesuit university established in Beirut in 1875<sup>36</sup>, and schools of The Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association (hereafter Makassed), established in 1878<sup>37</sup>; both institutions imprinted the game with the communitarian and sectarian mark that defines it today.

It was two decades after the 1903 SPC game described by McClenahan that Lebanon was to be recognised within its current borders. The end of World War I brought about the formalisation of the French mandate on Syria and Lebanon in 1923. Lebanon’s borders were set by the mandate to ensure a delicate 50/50 balance between its Christian and Muslim inhabitants. However, these borders were problematic to some of the Muslim communities which nurtured Arab Nationalist sentiments. They did not see Lebanon - which until then had been part of a greater Arab East Mediterranean area under Ottoman and then French rule - as a nation state separate from its Arab surroundings. It was only after the adoption by some Muslim leaders, notably the al-Sulh family, of a position that promoted an ‘Arab, but fully independent Lebanon’ (Salibi 1965: 187) that the emergence of this new Lebanon became possible, governed by ‘a full partnership between the various Christian and Muslim sects in which no one sect alone could determine policy’ (Salibi 1965: 188). Lebanon finally gained independence from the French mandate at the end of 1943. Football in the same period witnessed significant growth. Many new clubs were registered, which led to the establishment of the Lebanese Football Association (LFA). The LFA was founded in 1933 and was made up of 13 clubs (Sakr 1992). Several prominent figures in the LFA’s establishment had been introduced to football within the above mentioned missionary and communitarian institutions. Mr Hussein Beik Saj’an whose home was the

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36 <http://www.usj.edu.lb/en/files/history.html> Accessed 9/11/2014.

37 <http://www.makassed.org.lb/home.html> Accessed 9/11/2014.

site of the LFA's first meeting, for example, was elected the association's first President. He represented the Riyadi Club, which was supported by the Makassed. Sheikh Pierre Gemayel, a former student of the Saint-Joseph University, representing the 'Cercle Jésuite' club, was elected the LFA's Vice President, and became its President for a second term starting in 1937.

The establishment of these new clubs was not necessarily encouraged or moderated through the missionary institutions themselves: some clubs were founded precisely because of religious sectarian, or nationalistic opposition to missionary institutional influence. The novelist, Najjar, in his 'Beirut Novel' comically sketches a game in the late 1930s between AUB and USJ, as the Catholic priest and trainer of USJ resorts to whatever means he can to win over AUB's varsity, in the certainty that in a game with the Protestant school, 'God will be with the good Catholics' (2010: 180).

With some exceptions, the Lebanese football scene was dominated by Christian and Armenian teams, with only two of the thirteen club representatives who established the LFA in 1993 belonging to Muslim sects (Sakr 1992). This could possibly be because Christian communities in Lebanon, through enjoying stronger relations with colonial France and having been educated in the Christian missionary institutions, had come to football much earlier than their Muslim compatriots. Just as Najjar describes the enthusiasm of the team of the Catholic USJ to beat the perceived Protestant team of AUB, sports in Muslim institutions were introduced in reaction to, but often emulating, Christian missionary ones (McClenahan 2007).

Clubs emerging from the Muslim communities did not readily position themselves as 'Muslim clubs', but as Arab Nationalist or anti-colonial ones. Nahda Club for example, described by sports journalist Ali Hamidi Sakr as the most popular in the early 1930s, was established in 1926, in the words of one of its founders, by a youth group as a national sports club free of any foreign hegemony (Sakr 1992). Renowned sports journalist Majdalani, echoes that spirit in a 1976 article where he recalls watching the game in 1929 when Nahda team 'snatches the representation of Lebanese football from the French associated club Union Sportive, attracts fans from various social classes, and writes with letters made of light the first pages of the glorious history of Lebanese football' (Majdalani 1976 – in Hamdan 1993: 152).

One member of the football community in that period, who exemplifies the entwinement of the sports and political communities is the aforementioned Sheikh Pierre Gemayel. He

was the second President of the Lebanese Football Association and at the same time, founder of the Lebanese Kataeb Party (the Lebanese Phalange Party, hereafter Kataeb), a Christian party, and at times a military group, which has been a key player in Lebanese politics through to today. In fact, inspiration for founding the party in 1936 came from sports, after the founder's visit to the 1936 Berlin Olympics<sup>38</sup>. The Kataeb had a Lebanese Nationalist agenda which, was vehemently opposed to Arab Nationalist sentiments as well as to armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon, seeing in both these political positions a threat to Lebanon as a nation state. In contrast, both the Arab Nationalist sentiments and the Palestinian cause enjoyed significant support from amongst Lebanese Muslim communities, particularly in Beirut and the South. Disagreement over Lebanon's position vis-a-vis its Arab identity and the Palestinian cause later became key issues of national discord which underlaid violent political conflict in the country, particularly the Lebanese Civil War which started in 1975.

## **Nejmeh, the rising star (1945 - 1975)**

Shortly after Lebanese independence in 1945, Nejmeh Sport Club was established. The club emerged from the union of two informal football teams who played and competed in the Ras Beirut neighbourhood. Officially licensed in 1947, the club's first board included a group of Muslim Sunni and Druze members (Hamdan 1993). According to Hamdan (1993) the establishing board was constituted primarily of young team players who sought to institutionalise their passion for football. These players resided and played mostly in the Ras Beirut area, a religiously mixed neighbourhood<sup>39</sup> close to the city's centre. The area was also home to the American University of Beirut, a location which is now at the heart of the crowded city, but which was then still considered to be a suburb with enough open space in which to practice the game.

Nejmeh's popularity grew rapidly in Beirut and across Lebanon as the club rose to the LFA's first division in 1951, winning its first championship in 1973<sup>40</sup>. Nejmeh fans began to

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38 In an interview reported in journalist Robert Fisk's 'Pity the Nation' (Fisk 2001: 65), Gemayal elaborates on this inspiration to establish the Kataeb: 'I was the captain of the Lebanese football team and the president of the Lebanese Football Federation. We went to the Olympic Games of 1936 in Berlin. And I saw then this discipline and order. And I said to myself: "Why can't we do the same thing in Lebanon?" So when we came back to Lebanon, we created this youth movement.'

39 At the time Ras Beirut included predominantly Sunni, Druze and Greek Orthodox residents.

40 Second in the LFA's championship ranks for that year was Racing Club. See [http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page\\_id=2134](http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page_id=2134) Accessed 9/11/14.

organise themselves in the same period. In 1970 the Union of NejmeH Fans (hereafter Fans' Union) was established. This body organised the transportation of fans to and from NejmeH matches and orchestrated supportive cheering for the club (Hamdan 1993). On a broader political level, NejmeH's rise occurred at a time when the football scene was dominated – possibly because of its original emergence from within missionary institutions - by clubs that emerged from the Christian communities. Looking at the list of clubs which have held the LFA championship title from 1951, when NejmeH rose to the first division, until 1973 when it first won the championship, we find that seven out of the eleven championships were won by Armenian teams, and the rest by teams originating from the Christian communities.

One reason for NejmeH's growth in popularity was that, against the backdrop of demographic and political changes in Lebanon and regionally, NejmeH was posited as a 'Muslim' club, or at least the only one in the first division which members of the Muslim community could claim as their own. Although its fans were drawn from a variety of sects and political affiliations, the club's board members mostly belonged to Muslim sects – Sunni, Shia, and Druze. In addition to territorial and kinship ties that rooted the club in the Muslim community, NejmeH also cultivated strong links with the successive Lebanese Prime Ministers – a position traditionally reserved to members of the Sunni sect, especially the prominent Sunni leader of Beirut, Mr. Saeb Salam, who was the club's Honorary President for many years. The speeches of club President Omar Ghandour, elected in 1969, often included religious references and quotations from the Qur'an as well as Islamic Sunni and Shi'ite tradition, confirming the importance of sports in the Islamic tradition. The club even celebrated Islamic occasions, including for example an Iftar in the holy month of Ramadan in 1971, which was attended by the two highest Muslim religious authorities in the country<sup>41</sup>.

However, classifying NejmeH Club as 'Muslim' misleadingly simplifies the construction of sectarian communitarian identities in Lebanon. The reality was that although the club was defined by its religious identity during my research in 2007-2009, I have no evidence to indicate the club was perceived in the same way in the 1960s and 1970s prior to the Lebanese war. In the Iftar held in 1971, Ghandour himself took pride in the fact that the

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41 Namely Sunni Mufti of the Lebanese republic, Sheikh Hassan Khaled who was assassinated in 1989, and head of the High Islamic Shi'ite Council, and Imam Musa al-Sadr, who disappeared in 1978.

majority of people found representation and a safe haven in the club at a time when clubs in Lebanon 'associated themselves, one way or the other with political parties and religious sects' (quoted in Hamdan 1993: 112). In a 1970 speech, Ghandour heads his list of the club's achievements with a mention of 'keeping the club away from political movements' (quoted in Hamdan 1993: 91). In addition, the meaning of 'Muslim' as an identity is susceptible to many interpretations particularly as the political disposition of the Sunni communities varied and changed over time. For example, the club's Honorary President, Saeb Salam, was historically in the pro Saudi Islamist camp, which opposed the growing Arab Nationalist sentiment. At the time the country was politically split between the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), the leftist pro-Palestinian secular Arab Nationalist coalition with a large following from Muslim communities on the one hand, and on the other, the Lebanese Front, comprised of Lebanese national parties and spearheaded by the Kataeb party.

The popularity of Nejmech then can be explained in broader demographic terms and in relation to the political discord that the country was experiencing. To explain Nejmech's growth in popularity I will briefly introduce the situation of the Muslim communities in Beirut and the ways in which the various socio-political changes fuelled their loyalty to Nejmech.

The Shia community, which was marginalised by the political system but nevertheless undergoing various socio-economic shifts and gaining in power, probably saw in the club an image of success that emulated their own political rise within Lebanon. Since the establishment of Nejmech, Beirut's population, traditionally composed of members of the Sunni and Greek Orthodox communities, grew rapidly as the result of an influx of refugees and the arrival of internal and external migrants<sup>42</sup>. The majority of new residents in the growing city were rural migrants, in particular the mostly Shiite residents of the Bekaa and South Lebanon, who were attracted to the city by the centralised development policy, which had marginalised agriculture and rural areas (Kassir 2006). The proportion of the country's population living in Beirut rose from 22% in 1930 to 50% in 1975 (Kassir

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42 These migrations included the waves of Druze and Maronite residents of Mount Lebanon following conflict in 1860, then in 1917, Armenian refugees from present day Turkey fleeing the Armenian genocide, followed in 1948 by Palestinian refugees from present day Israel, as well as affluent families – and their capital – escaping nationalisation policies in Syria and Iraq in the 1950s (Kassir 2006).

2006: 468)<sup>43</sup>, a trend that continues until the present day making the capital, Beirut, the centre of development policies and host to at least 50% of the country's population. This influx of migrants from the south and the Bekaa to Beirut signified and caused more than demographic changes. The Lebanese Shiite communities, who in 1948 accounted for only 3.5% of Beirut's population and were peripheral in social, economic, cultural and political<sup>44</sup> terms, have grown significantly in political and economic power. By 1975, the Shiite community figured as a 'new migrant bourgeoisie, a layer of middle-level salaried workers in the cities, an industrial proletariat in the suburbs of Beirut and a community of migrant workers in the Arab oil producing countries' (Nasr 1987: 154)<sup>45</sup>.

These developments fuelled Nejmeh's popularity. The new migrants to the city found in the club an anchor and a space which fostered a sense of belonging in the city; a space that provided relief from 'the impersonality of urban existence' (Giulianotti and Armstrong 1997: 6). In other words, the club helped to 'counteract the feelings of atomisation and alienation that corrupt individuals within large, impersonal cities' (Giulianotti 1999: 15). The sentiment of 'belonging' was echoed repeatedly by fans I spoke to. They portrayed the club as 'home', an idea especially prevalent among the older fans who had remained loyal to the club for decades. One fan, born in 1952 to a family that had recently migrated from the South of Lebanon to the Chiah neighbourhood of the Southern Suburbs, recalled how he had loved Nejmeh from the age of seven. In part fascinated by Nejmeh because one of the players lived on his own street, he recalled being a 'ball boy' in some of Nejmeh's games and spoke of the many times police caught him trying to sneak into games because he did not have the money to pay. Similarly, other fans I interviewed told me that those who joined Nejmeh in that period (the 1950s and 1960s) chose it over other clubs because it was the one that that 'belonged to their neighbourhood', the one that their families and neighbours belonged to, or the one where a footballer familiar from their own neighbourhood played.

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43 40% of the rural population had migrated to Beirut by the same year, a number significantly higher in the south of Lebanon out of which 60% of the population had migrated (Nasr 1987: 154).

44 The Shiite were a largely rural community which lived off subsistence farming in land plots they did not own, and suffered an illiteracy rate at 68.9% in 1943 (Nasr 1987: 154). Their political representation was monopolised from the 1920s to the 1950s by a handful of feudal landowning families (Nasr 1987).

45 Politically, Shiite communities organised primarily within one of two broad camps, first they 'provided the cannon fodder for leftist parties and fought alongside the Palestinians' (Mermier 2013: 379) and soon after organised politically and militarily under the Amal Movement which rose as a primarily Shia movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Nasr 1987), and soon after under Hezbollah.

For supporters of Arab Nationalism – the group to which most of Beirut’s Sunnis belonged - and members of leftist political groups, the club symbolised popular ‘working class’ success and stood in symbolic opposition to the right-wing political camp, represented by the Racing Club<sup>46</sup>. Regionally, Arab Nationalism was at its peak. Nasser, with a strong Arab Nationalist agenda, came to power in Egypt in 1956 when the Palestinian political and military organisation was growing fast, especially amongst refugees in Lebanon. Arab Nationalism, along with strong pro-Palestinian sentiment, dominated the popular political disposition of the Lebanese leftist and Muslim, particularly Sunni, communities.

In 1969 Nejmeh Sport Club established its office in Tariq Al-Jadidah, a neighbourhood which until recently was a suburb of Beirut. The area is a predominantly Sunni neighbourhood and, not surprisingly, home to the Beirut Arab University which was founded in 1960 by a Muslim charity<sup>47</sup> and funded by Egypt’s President Nasser. The district is also home to the offices of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, founded in 1964, as well as to the city’s municipal stadium.

The same period witnessed the establishment, in 1954, of Al-Ansar Sporting Club, (hereafter Al-Ansar) by a group of football enthusiasts who were also based in the Tariq Al-Jadidah neighbourhood. Al-Ansar rose to the first division in 1967 and displayed a clearly defined Muslim identity, not least through the choice of its name Al-Ansar (Arabic for Patrons) after the Patrons of Prophet Mohammed<sup>48</sup>. Although at the time still a budding club, it became Nejmeh club’s main sports rival a decade or so later.

The peak of Nejmeh’s popularity came when the club won its first championship in 1973 and its second in 1975 - the last championship held before the Lebanese civil war interrupted the official championships through to 1988. Nejmeh’s achievement at the time of the growing local political tension which ignited the civil war in 1975 remained etched in the memory of fans for decades to come, as a symbol of what Nejmeh was and could have been.

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46 According to some Lebanese sports pages the Racing Club had Pierre Gemayal as its Honorary President in the year 1960 – see <http://www.abdogedon.com/volleyball/NOUJOUR/racing%20club%20beirut.html> Accessed 21/10/14.

47 <http://www.bau.edu.lb/History1> Accessed 20/10/14.

48 According to Al-Ansar club's official website [http://www.alansar-club.com/Template\\_En.aspx?PageId=9](http://www.alansar-club.com/Template_En.aspx?PageId=9) Accessed 21/10/14.



*Figure 11: Nejmeh club stickers on the windscreen of the infamous 'ayn al-rummaneh bus. The shooting on the bus on 13th April, 1975 marked the beginning of the fifteen year Lebanese civil war.<sup>49</sup>*

## **Nejmeh as a Haven in War-Time (1975 - 1990)**

In 1975 Nejmeh was at the peak of its glory, or in its 'golden age' as the ex-Secretary General of the club described it (Hamdan 1993). Only one week before the shooting at the 'ayn al-Rummaneh bus on 13th April, 1975<sup>50</sup> by members of the Kataeb Militia (Traboulsi 2007) – the incident that has come to mark the beginning of the fifteen year Lebanese civil war - Nejmeh club played against the Universities of France Team. Amongst Nejmeh's

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49 Picture widely circulated online and is used here as made available under a 'fair use' licence by Ashoola on [https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Bus\\_massacre.jpg#filelinks](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81:Bus_massacre.jpg#filelinks) Accessed 12/10/2015.

50 Incidentally, this bus, which became the symbol of the war, displayed Nejmeh club stickers which were clearly evident in the many pictures taken of it. In fact, according to the son of the bus's driver, that same bus had transported Nejmeh players to Sidon only hours before it was shot at (Almustaqbal: 13/4/05).

ranks was Pele<sup>51</sup>, the most popular international player of the period – although by then he was retired and past his prime. It was said that the match drew around 50,000 spectators to the Cite Sportive (As-Safir 7/4/75) - a huge number of fans for that time in Lebanon. One year earlier, Nejmeh had beaten the Ararat Club, national champion of the Soviet Union in 1973, in a much celebrated match that made the headlines of most Lebanese papers. Ararat had until then played 24 times in Lebanon, and this was the first time they had lost (Hamdan 1993). I only realised the significance of those two matches after interviewing fans who were active in the Fans' Office. A good number of them had been in their early teens when these matches took place, and they recalled one or the other match as the first football game they ever went to. In addition to the two recent LFA Championships, the above described matches have etched themselves into the memories of football fans as moments epitomising the glory and grandeur of Nejmeh.

The club's ascendancy was abruptly halted with the start of the Lebanese civil war and the ensuing interruption of the national LFA championships. There were several area-specific tournaments, some of which were organised under the names of specific leaders or political groups, but the talents of Nejmeh club team members seemed to be going to waste during the war which prevented the club from realising its full potential. Fans speak of Nejmeh in that period as if it was suspended in time. While the championships were halted and the war raged, the club kept its title as champion for thirteen years. Nejmeh continued to inspire fans and many of them adopted it as a space of refuge separate from the militarisation and antagonisms of the war. Yet the war brought changes to Beirut and to the communities from which many of these fans hailed. In the summer of 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, in a war that was devastating to Beirut as the city was under siege for seven weeks. The Tariq Al-Jadidah neighbourhood, home of Nejmeh and now also of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), was devastated. The invasion, which was achieved with the complicity of the USA, some Arab countries and Lebanese factions, brought about the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon.

The 1982-1983 period marked important transitions in both the Lebanese political scene and in Beirut's social fabric - changes which formed the basis of the crisis Lebanon lived through from 2005. West Beirut, separated from its east side early in the war, underwent

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51 Although I have not managed to collect first hand information about Pele's visit or his willingness to play on Nejmeh's team, he probably played in return for significant sums of money paid by the club in an effort to boost its popularity.

demographical changes. The majority of the area's Christian residents left the now predominantly Muslim side for the city's east side. The central areas of the city where the Christians used to reside were taken over by members of the Shiite sect who had been driven out of the poor suburban neighbourhoods they occupied in east Beirut (Beyhum 1990). Cantonization of various regions of Beirut and Lebanon, based on sectarian lines, had been achieved (Traboulsi 2007). Until the 1980s the 'Sunnis were the leading Muslim Community, in terms of both their political influence and their control of key economic resources' (Johnson 1986: 1) but the second half of the 1980s witnessed a sharp decline in their power in favour of the rising political and military power of Shiite parties. PLO's withdrawal in 1982 and the defeat of the Al-Murabitun<sup>52</sup> in 1984 by the mostly Shiite Amal Movement<sup>53</sup> and the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party marked the end of any military group that could have claimed to represent the Sunnis in Beirut. This military defeat created, according to one political analyst I interviewed in 2009, an atmosphere in which the Sunnis were cast a weak and battered community in Lebanon. At the same time, both the Amal Movement and Hezbollah – officially established in 1984 - were growing powers which, backed by the Syrian regime, gained the military upper hand.

In 1985 the LFA, like Beirut, was split into two; one part made up of predominantly 'Muslim' clubs in the west, and the other of 'Christian' clubs in the east. According to my interviews with club administrators, Nejmeh club did not take a clear side with either association, a stance which put the club out of favour with the Muslim LFA. The disagreement – along with a long-established custom of the LFA being made up of predominantly Christian members – was later resolved via FIFA intervention. The west Beirut association was recognised as the official one in 1988, and key figures who came to power in 1985 were still in office in 2010 when this research was under way. The war-time disagreement between Nejmeh and the LFA continued and deepened in the post war period adversely affecting Nejmeh Sports Club's position in the football scene.

## **Injustice and Nejmeh club's popularity (1990 - 2003)**

The civil war came to an end in 1990. Under the Ta'if agreement the warring militias agreed on a power sharing system which kept the same militia leaders in control and

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52 Al-Murabitun, is the military wing of the Independent Nasserist Movement.

53 Amal Movement (Haraket al-Mahrumin or the Movement of the Dispossessed) was established in the early 1970s by Imam Musa Sadr, Head of the Supreme Shi'i council at the time (Nasr 1987).

reinforced the sectarian political arrangement - albeit with some redistribution of power. A large post-war reconstruction project was initiated, spearheaded by businessman, Rafic Hariri, who entered politics and then became Prime Minister in 1992. At this time Nejmeh club embarked on its own process of internal reorganisation<sup>54</sup>. The club had been worn down by a combination of factors; the many years of fighting, an inability to recruit and train a team of the standard it had enjoyed before, and an ageing management team. New young board members from various religious backgrounds were recruited to complement the existing board who had governed the club since the late 1960s. Many of the pre-existing board members were well established businessmen or industrialists, who, besides governing the club, contributed significantly to it financially. The Fans Union, which had ceased operations in 1975 when the war started, was also rekindled with new elections taking place in 1991. In 1995 the Fans Union was integrated into the club's organisational structure as part of the Fans' Office. This body was governed and supported by the club's board, and organised its work through regional offices and central committees which promoted the idea of fans having a stronger presence in the stadiums.

The institutional situation did not affect the club's fan base and Nejmeh was as popular as ever. The French film director, Laffont, arriving in Beirut in 1991, was fascinated by the abundant graffiti of Nejmeh's star logo emblazoned on the walls of the devastated city. In his 1992 film, 'Beyrouth: des Balles et des Ballons' about 'a people's hope for reconciliation', he documented the popularity of the club, as well as its unique ability to bring together so many Lebanese from a variety of backgrounds (Laffont 1992)<sup>55</sup>. Nejmeh continued to be the country's most popular team and the one that brought the largest number of supporters to the stadium when it played.

According to sports journalist Hussein Hijazi in a 2009 interview I conducted with him, organised sports in Lebanon flourished in the 1990s with the advent of live television broadcasting of matches and greater potential for financial return from advertising. However, Nejmeh club's popularity grew not because of its victories, but through the perceived discrimination it faced, particularly from the LFA. Fans claimed that the LFA unjustly penalised the club and its fans on several occasions and that it favoured Nejmeh's

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54 History of the club in the 1990s is based on interviews with Nejmeh's President at the time, Omar Ghandour, club board members Zuheir Baroudi and Saadeddine Itani and Nejmeh's administrative manager Ahmad Kobrosly.

55 For further information about the film see Hamdan (1993) and [http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm\\_gen\\_cfilm=8412.html](http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=8412.html) Accessed 9/11/14.

rival, Al-Ansar, which competed against Nejmeh in Beirut's local derby throughout the 1980s and 1990s<sup>56</sup>.

In 1988, the West Beirut LFA organised the first officially recognised tournament to have taken place since 1975. The war was in its last days, but clubs from Christian areas boycotted the championship until September 1991 when they rejoined the LFA (Sakr 1992)<sup>57</sup>. For the first time in its history Al-Ansar won the title<sup>58</sup>. From that first championship in 1988 until 2000, Al-Ansar won Lebanon's title eleven consecutive times, a feat much boasted by its fans as the only such achievement in the world and documented as such by the Guinness Book of World Records. The Nejmeh fans I interviewed spoke of these consecutive championships being a result of LFA's favouritism because, as they claimed, the LFA Secretary General was close to Al-Ansar's President. Newspaper reports of the time assert that Nejmeh was often penalised by the LFA, mainly for fans' misbehaviour during the games; penalisation of Nejmeh which was often unjustified.

Nejmeh's large and enthusiastic fan-base, built up over these years a reputation for hooliganism and fans were often forbidden from attending the games, especially those taking place in the municipal stadium in Tariq Al-Jadidah<sup>59</sup>. Every penalisation of this kind doubled the financial losses suffered by the club: it not only had to pay the fine, but lost the substantial revenue that it usually secured from ticket sales. This perception of injustice had significant appeal to the club fans, especially those from lower economic classes or those who felt that the political system discriminated against them. In the words of one fan, 'the more injustice it [Nejmeh] suffered, the more we loved it'. The idea that the club was discriminated against was nothing new though, as the perception is clearly documented by one of the club's Secretary Generals in a book charting the club's history. Among other

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56 In the 1960s and 1970s, it was matches between Nejmeh and Racing Club that were cheered as Beirut's local derby. The move for the competition to take place between Nejmeh and Al-Ansar signalled shifts in the nature of the competition for spatial control over the city.

57 With the boycott of clubs based in Christian areas during the 1988 championship, and many reported disputes in that championship that led to several clubs, including Nejmeh, pulling out, the championship ended with only three clubs competing for the title. See Sahmarani (2006). <http://www.elaph.com/Web/ElaphGuys/2006/6/152665.htm> Accessed 21/10/14.

58 Information about Al-Ansar club is based on interviews with the club's manager in 2009, Mr Bilal Farraj, and with its 2009 Vice President (and current President) Mr Karim Diab, as well as information on the club's official website <http://www.alansar-club.com/> Accessed 21/10/14.

59 Examples of the source of such a reputation are two incidents that the LFA had flagged in a press conference in 1999, one that took place on December 28, 1997 after a match against al-Ansar when several cars in the Tariq Al-Jadidah area were destroyed and again after a match against Safa Club on 27 February 1998 – despite Nejmeh's victory over Safa with a six goals difference (As-Safir 4/1/99). As-Safir's press coverage of these two games only mentions in passing some damage to cars after the December 1997 game, and records nothing about hooliganism in the second game.

examples, Hamdan (1993) claims that Nejmeh could have won the 1961 LFA championship had the LFA not cancelled the rest of the games in the very season when Nejmeh was in the lead. The 1973 and 1975 victories materialised the club's ability to overcome the discrimination practices which were finally halted in the 1990s.

Yet the Nejmeh – Al-Ansar rivalry had broader socio-political dimensions that reflect some of the key issues of political contention in the post war period. Al-Ansar's President from 1977 until 2008, Salim Diab, belonged to Hariri's political establishment. He was elected to parliament in 1996 as part of Rafic Hariri's political camp and led both Rafic Hariri's electoral campaign in 2000 and that of his son Saad Hariri in the years 2005 and 2009 (Al-Akhbar 14/7/2009). Al-Ansar club received significant funding from the Hariri Establishment in the 1990s and was perceived as the club representing Beirut's Sunni community - not least because of its name. Because of these loyalties Al-Ansar fans chose the chant 'Allah, Hariri and Tariq Al-Jadidah'<sup>60</sup>, tying their religious belief to Hariri as a political patron and to the mostly Sunni neighbourhood that is home to their club.

Nejmeh's history as well as its rivalry with Al-Ansar - perceived to be the club of possibly the most powerful political individual in Lebanon at the time; Rafic Hariri – made it 'home' for many of the country's discontented youth. Some of that discontent dated back to the period of rural to urban migration at the time of Nejmeh's golden era and to the war-time demographic changes that brought the once rural population into Beirut's neighbourhoods. The largest portion of this mostly Shiite population had, by the 1990s, been in the city for decades and their youngest generation had even been born in Beirut. Yet, in great part they continued to be presented as outsiders to the city. For sociologist, Waddah Charara, 'those who had moved to the city did not really live there, neither as residents nor as a culture' (Charara 1985: 13 quoted in Mermier 2013: 379 ), and for sociologist, Samir Khalaf, they were 'strangers to city life' (1993: 119). The Southern Suburbs, or Al-Dahiyah, home of the majority of the Shiite migrant community in Beirut was also stigmatised as a 'misery belt characterised by illegal urbanisation, squatters and underdevelopment' as well as a 'Shiite ghetto' and 'Hezbollah's suburb' (Harb 2001: 114).

Shiite Nejmeh fans from Al-Dahiya were then doubly stigmatised, firstly by virtue of being hooligans and then again by being from Al-Dahiyah. In parallel, many of the Shiites who

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60 Of note is the fact that Al-Ansar has had 7 different offices to date, but all of them have been located in the Tariq Al-Jadidah neighbourhood within an area of less than one kilometre in radius.

had lived in Beirut during the war were later evicted by programmes for the resettlement of the displaced and by the ambitious Beirut Central District reconstruction project spearheaded by Hariri and implemented by The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District s.a.l (Solidere).

A 'tendency to tie the urban entity to patronymic groups' in Beirut (Mermier 2013: 378) was reinforced by Solidere's motto, 'Beirut, an Ancient City of the Future'. Key to the above described tendency is the Arabic word *'araqab*, translated as 'ancient' in the motto 'an ancient city for the future', though more accurately translated as the city having 'rootage'. Describing the city as 'rooted' is not a mere temporal adjective, but one that assumes a connection with a certain familial, ethnic or cultural 'origin'. In that sense the city is not in the possession of all of its inhabitants, and definitely not in that of the new rural immigrants.

The reconstruction process I describe reinforced a long existing 'incongruity' and a lack of balance in the distribution of resources between the city and the rest of the country (Sarkis 1993), especially as Project Elyssar<sup>61</sup>, the reconstruction project planned for parts of Al-Dahiya faltered. Socially, it further alienated the city's Shiite population reinforcing their feeling that there was no space for them in the city, except within Nejmeh.

In 1999, Nejmeh's conflict with the LFA escalated<sup>62</sup>. After a series of games which Nejmeh fans were not allowed to attend because of yet another LFA penalty, Nejmeh pulled out of an Asian Cup match because of a last minute change in location dictated by the LFA which made it almost impossible for the fans to attend. The penalty on Nejmeh for this withdrawal caused a loss of over 200,000 dollars. Further escalation involved a series of press conferences given by Nejmeh and the LFA, along with an LFA-imposed prohibition on Yahia Jrab practicing in his role as Nejmeh's Secretary General for six months.

Additionally, the club's President, Omar Ghandour, was banned from attending any sports games for a year. Following a management appeal, the fans marched in a 15,000 strong demonstration to the house of the Prime Minister requesting his intervention in the face

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61 For information on the Elyssar Project see Harb 2001, who claims that in contrast to the Down-town reconstruction project, Elyssar received little public and scholarly attention in part because of the stigmatisation of Dahiyah and its residents who 'inspire strong negative sentiments related to their presumed rural roots, their supposed squatter status, and the notions that they should "return to their village"' (Harb 2001: 112)

62 Information in these paragraphs is based on As-Safir's coverage of the conflict during December 1998 and January 1999, as well as on interviews with several members and fans who were active in Nejmeh at that period.

of the perceived injustice of the LFA. These incidents were rooted in the much older conflict between Nejmeh and the LFA that started in 1985 and was described in the previous section, when key current LFA figures were elected without the support of Nejmeh. The conflict also had a political character, as it took place at the unique time in that decade when Hariri was not Prime Minister following a dispute and escalation in political conflict with Lebanese President Lahoud who was backed by the Syrian regime. Lahoud, and the appointed Prime Minister Hoss, promoted a reform agenda and vowed to rid the country of the corruption that the Hariri era had brought. The slogans of the Nejmeh demonstrators appealed to that agenda, demanding that any reform should start with reformation of the LFA itself.

Despite the dispute, Nejmeh club won the title of Lebanon's champion in 2000 - a long awaited victory that increased Nejmeh's popularity. The LFA was eventually forced to resign in 2001 – not because of Nejmeh's efforts, but due to disputes with a South Lebanon team whose 'patron' was Nabih Berri, head of the parliament and the Amal Movement. Still, Nejmeh's long conflict with the LFA and the club's internal financial problems left the club, as ex-Secretary General Baroudi recalls, 'completely worn out'.



*Figure 12: Side wall of Beirut's Municipal Stadium. The banner of Al-Ansar Sports Club appears on the balcony of the club's headquarters, on the third floor of the building across the street (to right of the photo).*



Fig

*ure 13: Leisurely time at Beirut's Municipal Stadium. Balconies of the high-rise adjacent buildings, typical of Beirut's dense urban landscape, become an extension of the stadium during some games allowing local residents to watch matches for free.*



*Figure 14: Taking time off to perform the Muslim prayer at Beirut's Municipal Stadium.*

## **Nejmeh under new patronage (2003 - 2009)**

In 2002, to the unknowing eye, Nejmeh club appeared to be doing really well. It had finally ousted Al-Ansar from the top of the league, and won the country's championship for the years 2000 and 2002. The club's long battle with the LFA had concluded in a satisfying outcome, and its popularity remained as robust as ever with fans filling the stadiums in every match. For many years the board had managed to sustain itself financially whilst treading the tightrope of cooperating with the political elite without being completely under their wing, yet upholding the club's motto - which its fan base no doubt reflected; 'from Beirut, for the whole of Lebanon'.

Yet internally, according to Nejmeh's management at the time, the board had reached a point where it could not continue to sustain the club financially. At the economic level, Hariri's economic policy had weakened the financial standing of many of Beirut's traditional families and industrialists – the very people who provided the majority of the club's funding. In parallel in the local football scene, the Olympic Beirut club was rising fast, with a budget that far exceeded that of other clubs. Led by Taha Klaylat, an aspiring businessman who bought out the licence of a marginal club, Olympic Beirut had managed in one year to climb its way up the premier league and, in the spring of 2003, won the national championship. The salaries paid by the newly emerging club to its players were double and triple the salaries paid by Nejmeh or any other Lebanese team, and thus raised the bar of what a club budget should be. In the stadiums, Nejmeh fans had gained themselves the reputation of being trouble makers. The fans were highly susceptible to being mobilised by various intermediary leaders within the club and the Fans' Office, and the problem of managing the fans was wearing the club down. Throughout the 1990s, the security forces and the LFA were doing little to make this task easier.

In 2003, the thirty-four year reign of Omar Ghandour, club President since 1969, came to an end primarily because of his financial inability to sustain the club. Surprisingly, the person chosen to take on patronage and leadership of the club was Hariri himself, patron of long-time rival club, Al-Ansar. This transition and the period that followed is the main subject of this thesis, and I elaborate on these issues in detail in later chapters.

Nevertheless, it is useful at this point to give a brief overview of the transformations that have taken place in the club in the twenty-first century and to situate these changes within the broader political context.

With the aim of securing the club and ensuring its viability, from the late 1990s the board discussed many options and approached several funders and patrons, including various members of the Hariri family, for support, but most of these approaches were unfruitful. Hariri, who was a successful politician and businessman, with the required financial resources, was one of the few who were, according to Ghandour, ‘up to that responsibility’. On Nejmeh’s board, members were varied: some were supporters of Hariri, but several others were not, yet at the beginning no real objection to acceptance of Hariri’s support on political grounds was voiced so long as the club could be sustained financially. Following the decision to approach Hariri, negotiations began between Nejmeh board members and Hariri’s representatives. The initial intention was to create a team which combined some of the old board members with a group chosen by Hariri’s negotiators. As the negotiations proceeded, discontent started to arise among some of the board members, but despite this, the deal was completed. In March 2003, elections of a new board representing the new patron took place with only a minor quibble (see table 7). As these arrangements were being made the second Gulf War was on the horizon. While the country was divided politically in its own position towards the war, Saudi Arabia, a long time supporter of Hariri, was backing the US in the war that started in March 2003, only two weeks after the change in Nejmeh’s management took place.

**Table 7 - Leadership of Nejmeh Club (1969 - 2011)**

1969 – March 2003	Omar Ghandour – President Zuheir Baroudi – Secretary General (for term ending March 2003)
9 March 2003 – 26 July 2005 (resigned before end of term)	Mohammad Fanj - President Abdulhafiz Mansour - Secretary General
23 October, 2005 - 16 November 2008	Mohammad Amin Daouk - President Abdul Latif Farshoukh - Secretary General
16 November 2008 – Present (Serving a second term - First term ended 2011)	Mohammad Amin Daouk – President Saadeddine Itani – Secretary General

The process of organising the club in a form that suited the new patron followed. New members joined the General Assembly, membership fees were raised and the Fans’ Office was restructured. In a much publicised move, the Nejmeh stadium was renovated soon after the club changed hands, most of its debts were cleared, and in both 2004 and 2005, it won the national championship again. The period witnessed various club conflicts between, on the one hand, older fans and some board members who had for decades been part of

the club, and the new management on the other. Once again these conflicts were resolved in favour of the new patron and his appointed management. At this time Lebanon was also experiencing internal division in reaction to parliament agreeing on an unconstitutional extension of term for Syrian-supported President Lahoud in 2004; a decision which Hariri opposed.

In February 2005, Hariri was assassinated by a car bomb, an event that marked the beginning of a period of intense political division and turmoil. As a result of the assassination, the political scene, and a large part of the Lebanese population were sharply divided into two camps, the March 8 Alliance and the March 14 Alliance, names adopted from the dates on which protagonists of each of the groups led massive popular marches in Beirut's city centre in March 2005.

In exacerbating the pre-existing political tensions, the division I describe only crystalized in the two months following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. I elaborate further on this situation as it was instrumental in dividing Nejmeh club and its fans.

The March 14 Alliance was headed by the Future Movement, and composed of political groups who accused the Syrian regime of being behind Hariri's killing; it also protested against Syria's presence in Lebanon. Regionally, March 14 allied itself with the Saudi political agenda. According to members of the alliance, military resistance to Israel had not been a priority since the liberation of the south of Lebanon in 2000, therefore calls for disarming Hezbollah were made. Besides the mostly Sunni Future Movement, members of the alliance included some of the Christian political groups, namely the Lebanese Forces, and the Kataeb.

The March 8 political camp, represented by Hezbollah, adopted a strong pro-resistance to Israel position and allied itself with the regimes of Iran and Syria. It contested the claims that the Syrian regime was responsible for Hariri's assassination and saw in it support for the resistance against Israel. It also refused calls for disarmament of Hezbollah's resistance, asserting that Israel continued to be a threat to Lebanon and that some areas of Lebanese land continued to be occupied. Its members included another Shiite political group, the

Amal movement, the Free Patriotic Movement as well as some of the communist and nationalist parties.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the involvement of most political actors in one camp or the other, the poles of the two groups remained the predominantly Shiite Hezbollah, and the predominantly Sunni Future Movement<sup>64</sup>, giving the divide a sectarian as well as a political character. At the same time, and although this political conflict appeared as ‘a conflict between two incompatible visions for the country’ (ICG, 1) close examination of the key sectors of public concern to voters and the political discourse around them, reveals that the differences, besides the regional allegiances, between the two competing camps were not flagrant. Saad Hariri and the March 14 political camps promoted a capitalist economic agenda, heavily reliant on privatisation, international aid, and stability of the Lebanese currency - all continuations of late Prime Minister’s Rafic Hariri’s policies. Saad Hariri’s political opponents criticised the focus on the services and financial sector as opposed to agricultural and industrial sectors, and called for decentralised development beyond the capital, Beirut. That said, none of them truly provided an alternative economic vision, nor did they fundamentally disagree with the country’s free market economy or the massive external debt it had accumulated. During the June 2009 elections, March 8 championed an anti-corruption agenda and then accused the Hariri camp of corruption, despite the fact that ‘corruption in the country was pervasive at all levels of society and state’ (Daily Star 18/11/2009) and was well documented and publicly acknowledged<sup>65</sup>. Both the accusations of corruption, as well as the denial of such accusations by Hariri, were mere performances. Politically, despite their diverging agendas, both parties voiced support for the ‘Palestinian Cause’, the legitimacy of resistance to Israel, and the centrality of Lebanon’s Arab identity.

After Rafic Hariri’s assassination, contrary to established traditions, Saad, his second son, took on the political leadership of the Hariri Establishment. The role entailed leadership

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63 Some changes did occur in the composition of each of the groups with parties and political groups changing alliances. The FPM which stood with Future Movement in their opposition to the Syrian regime in 2005 and secured the return of its leader, General Aoun, from exile in the same year, switched political sides and signed a memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah in February 2006. The Druze leader and head of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) changed sides on several occasions and was often key in tipping the balance in favour of one or the other of the alliances.

64 Future Movement is the political group led by Saad Hariri, and the largest political group within the March 14<sup>th</sup> coalition. Although long-standing, it was only officially established in 2007. For details see the movement’s official website <http://www.almustaqbal.org/> Accessed 21/10/14.

65 Leenders (2012) provides a summary of numerous studies concerning the prevalence and perception of corruption in Lebanon.

not only of the Sunni communities and the parliamentarian coalition his father had brought together, but also *Almustaqbal* newspaper, Future Television, Future Movement - the political movement established by Rafic Hariri - several social and philanthropic organisations, and, of course, Nejmeh club. In view of the numerous heirs and entourage members surrounding the inexperienced young leader, the transition took time and was embroiled with internal conflicts.

In the period that followed, violent clashes took place within Nejmeh club and on the streets of Beirut. The city centre, the cherished reconstruction model of the slain leader Hariri, was the site of demonstrations and extended sit-ins by hundreds of thousands of people. The country was overwhelmed by reports of the assassinations of politicians and journalists, of bombs in commercial and residential areas, street clashes between followers of different camps, violent confrontations in the north between the Lebanese army and an Islamic militant group based in the Palestinian refugee camps, and most significantly, the 2006 summer war with Israel. The 2006 war, besides causing over a thousand deaths and leaving a million people displaced, served to worsen the rupture between conflicting Lebanese parties, as well as inflicting significant damage in certain neighbourhoods of Beirut. Less than two months after the end of the summer Israeli war on Lebanon, and in one of the first sports matches to be played in the war shattered country, Nejmeh fans, like the country, demonstrated their own internal divisions. In two of the Asian Cup games played in Beirut in September and October 2006, Nejmeh fans exchanged political and sectarian insults. The response of the club's management at the time further widened the divide and placed the club squarely in the pro-Hariri camp, thus alienating a great number of fans.

It was after this series of events that many Nejmeh fans claimed that 'Nejmeh Club was dead'. Fans told me it was a time when fans who did not belong to the pro-Hariri camp felt that they no longer belonged to the club that they had for decades called home. The club, according to the Hariri appointed club President, was a 'rooted' Beirut club - it had 'araqah (rootage) like the city in Solider's motto - and no longer championed the motto 'from Beirut, for the whole of Lebanon'. The conflicts in the club emerged against the background of a city already experiencing a sharp divide between a Beirut depicted as Sunni, and the Shi'ite Southern Suburbs. The long-standing stereotype of Shi'ites as socially inferior and intruders on the city's urban life was best exemplified by the jokes popular during the sit-in by March 8 forces protesting at the policies of the March 14 led government in the city centre from December 2006 until 25 May 2008; the jokes claimed

that the city centre was now ‘smelly’ and they mocked the cheaper services now available to the hundreds participating in the sit-in. For many participating in the sit-in, this was the first time that the city centre, until then an expensive neighbourhood attracting tourists from Gulf areas, appeared to be a welcome space. For many of Beirut’s Sunni, the sit-in was an ‘occupation’ of the city by the Shiites, who were regarded as not belonging in it to start with.

In 2007, due to the recurrence of similar clashes, the Internal Security Forces decided that football games were to be played without spectators in the stadiums, a ban that remained in force throughout the period of my field work and lasted for four consecutive seasons. This decision distanced the club even further from its fans and significantly weakened the football scene in Lebanon.



*Figure 15: Pro-Hariri and Salim Diab electoral banner in Tariq Al-Jadidah. The banner reads ‘Beirut of Arabism, Beirut of Rafik Hariri says “thank you Salim Diab”’. The banner is signed by the ‘sons of Beirut’.*

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced Nejme Sport Club’s long history and its contested spatial, social and political positioning within the city. About sixty years after its establishment, the club’s identity was being disputed and many of its fans were finding themselves distant from the club that they had identified with for decades. The turmoil which the club and its host city were going through was the result of longer processes of invention and reinvention of the city’s identity, and of the processes of inclusion and exclusion that defined who had the right to belong to the city and who didn’t. I have described how the

club was for decades an inclusive space for members of the various religious communities of Lebanon, one that had striven to be a club for ‘the whole of Lebanon’, yet at the time of the research was at a crucial turning point and more clearly confined within one political leader’s faction.

In the following chapter I examine the first stages of transformation within the popular club, particularly the process by which Rafic Hariri established his position as a political and communitarian leader. The chapter examines specifically the transition of the club from the thirty year reign of Ghandour into a new era – one which brought a new model of leadership to the club and to Lebanon.

# 4

## Philanthropy and the Performance of Wealth

*'He who has no big-man, should buy himself one'*  
Lebanese proverb

*'Philanthropy is the gateway to power'*  
Bert Cooper in *Mad Men* (Season 2, Episode 7)

### Bulldozers in the Municipal Stadium

*September 1982<sup>66</sup>. Around 300 heavy-duty vehicles occupied the municipal stadium of Beirut. The vehicles, thirty of which have been ordered brand new from Saudi Arabia at a cost of thirteen million dollars and delivered within the same day, manoeuvred their way out of the stadium's only exit with difficulty. Every day, as early as six in the morning, the vehicles accompanied by around 700 'volunteers'<sup>67</sup>, begin their daily mission of cleaning up the rubble on the streets of a war-torn Beirut<sup>68</sup>. As the vehicles*

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66 The description of the cleaning project in this vignette is based on the memoir of Al-Fadel Shalaq (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006), manager of the cleaning project at the time and for a long time a key figure in the Hariri Establishment. Shalaq managed many of the establishment's institutions including Oger Liban, the Hariri Foundation and *Almustaqbal* newspaper. He acted as a minister in Hariri's government as well as being head of the Council for Development and Reconstruction.

67 While Shalaq described the workers as 'volunteers', he indicated that they were given remuneration, the amount of which was not specified. Of note is that those 'volunteers' included Ahmad Kobrosly, who was both a Nejmeh fan and the club's administrative director for decades. He was still in office at the time of my research.

68 The text provides an uncritical account of the events as narrated by Shalaq himself. It is essential though to point out the broader political context within which the project was taking place. The project officially started on 6th September, 1982, but according to Shalaq's memoir (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006: 50-68) Hariri first proposed the idea on September 1<sup>st</sup>, while Beirut was still under siege by the Israeli Forces for over two months. Hariri's proposal was made only two days after PLO leader Yasser Arafat left Beirut, and a week after Bachir Gemayal was elected, with Israeli support, as Lebanon's President.

*find their way in and out of the stadium, in what Hariri's close aid at the time and the engineer responsible for the work, Al-Fadal Shalaq describes in his memoir as a 'fascinating daily spectacle that could have been in the best of Hollywood movies' (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006: 110), they are watched by the amazed eyes of the stadium's neighbours, the residents of Tariq al-Jadidah. The cleaning project is Rafic Hariri's first engagement in a public project in the city of Beirut, and for it he has the blessing of Saeb Salam, the city's *za'im* at the time, as well as Saudi funding that he acknowledged in the stickers on the sides of all the vehicles. It is the 'project of a lifetime' as Hariri repeatedly tells Shalaq.*

*The budget of the cleaning project has no limits. Shalaq claims that an account was opened in his name in a local bank, which he used without once monitoring how much he spent nor checking what the balance was (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006). The demands on the tempo of the performance are high; at the time when 160 truck loads per day are being moved, Rafic Hariri requires that they reach a target of thousand loads. In narrating the events of that period and the spirit by which the project was implemented, Shalaq speaks of it as a charitable one motivated by devotion for the city and an interest in its welfare as well as that of its people<sup>69</sup>.*

*The handling of the project did not always follow these high ideals. When for example one of the many warring militias requested that the vehicles or project workers carry out certain services for it, the drivers usually obliged. Similarly, when the Lebanese President needed to install a tennis court at the presidential palace, the same team of workers and engineers, using the same funding, unquestioningly complied.*

*The project provides an example of the model that Hariri, and his establishment more broadly, adopted later on in their business, charity and political enterprises. In addition to signalling Hariri's entry into the public domain, the importance of this early phase of contracting and philanthropic work is that it marked the moment when Hariri built a network of workers who later formed the core of his team when he embarked on his political career. Amongst those, interviewed and employed by Shalaq himself in 1980, was engineer Muheib Itani who later acted as Hariri's 'client representative' in the negotiations for the change in Nejmeh's patronage and the transfer of its management into Hariri's hands in 2002 – 2003.*

*I met Muheib Itani many years ago when he was director of Electricite du Liban (EDL) in the mid 1990s. Talking about the EDL's most recent achievement of installing thousands of new electricity poles across Lebanon, Itani described how he was advised by Hariri to paint the poles the same colour as his*

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69 The same 'cleaning efforts' are argued by sociologist Nabil Beyhum and several of Beirut's intellectuals to be part of a pretext for the demolition of large areas of downtown Beirut. Clearances in 1983 made way for the later implementation of Beirut's city centre reconstruction plan under Solidere, which in practice allowed Solidere to seize ownership of all the land in downtown Beirut. These events are documented in an untranslated work by Beyhum et al., *I'amar Beirut wa'l fursa al-da'ia* [The Reconstruction of Beirut and the Lost Opportunity] (1992:16).

bright orange lighter. He took that lighter out of his pocket to show the flashy colour, and explained that this way, both the new poles and the achievements of the Prime Minister at the time, Rafic Hariri, were made highly visible. In the following weeks, as I drove through the villages of South Lebanon, I saw the newly erected bright orange poles everywhere – an army of them dominating the arid hilly landscape.



Figure 16: Poster celebrating Rafic Hariri as the 'man of construction'.<sup>70</sup>

## Introduction

When I first began my research, I was repeatedly told, not only by random fans who might have known little about the legislation of football clubs, but also by sports journalists and football referees, that Rafic Hariri had 'bought' Nejmeh Club. The significance of the use of the term is that, in people's general opinion, Hariri had obtained the club in direct

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<sup>70</sup> Source: RaficBHariri Instagram account <https://instagram.com/p/yMnB8HtLmu/> accessed 19/9/2015.

exchange for financial payment rather than following the route for club presidents or patrons who are more usually chosen or nominated before undergoing formal election or appointment processes. Given that the club, like all other sports clubs in Lebanon, was registered as a sports association and therefore could not be legally bought, the use of the idiom of 'buying' is indicative of the key factor that gave Hariri control over the club. 'Buying' in the broad sense of the term, and not merely the legal or technical term, is descriptive of many of Hariri's engagements in the public sphere. The instrumental use of wealth was key in forwarding Hariri's public and political career.

According to political scientist El-Husseini, Hariri was 'representative of a new trend in politics – the importance of wealth' (2004: 249); he belonged to a category of elite which she calls 'the entrepreneurs'. Members of such entrepreneurial elites enjoy 'international experience, attitudes, and behaviour different from those of traditional politicians' and are surrounded by 'teams of experts educated in the west'. These people establish philanthropic foundations specifically to create the clientele base and networks which they would have otherwise inherited (El-Husseini 2004: 249). This chapter provides an ethnographic exploration of Hariri's use of philanthropy to create a leadership position. Through describing the transition from what fans popularly called the 'Ghandour Era' to the 'Hariri Era' within Nejmeh Sport Club, I analyse the ascent of Rafic Hariri into leadership in Lebanon and the new model of socio-political *za'im* he presented. I do this by examining how the discourse and images of Hariri as a person, and 'Harirism' more broadly, were presented and consumed by Nejmeh members and fans. I trace the ways in which the 'Hariri approach' coincided with and built on existing understandings of leadership and social capital, while at the same time highlighting what is distinctive about the approach.

In his philanthropy, as in politics, Hariri was distinguished by his wealth. His charitable endeavours resembled global trends of mega-philanthropy, a phenomenon which has shown marked growth with the significant increase in the income of the richest 1% and the emergence of philanthrocapitalism understood as 'the application of business techniques to philanthropy by a new generation of self-made, hands-on donors—and strategic grantmaking' (Jenkins 2011:3). Philanthropy has long been discussed as a tool of hegemony of the capitalist class (Gramsci 1971), or at least as a gift which entails reciprocity (Mauss 1967) [1923] and contributes to accumulation of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). Recent research which has examined the contributions of philanthrocapitalists within specific sectors has made clear the ways in which their financial contributions allow them to

promote the political agenda they support (Morvaridi 2012a). Research into the individual trajectories of philanthrocapitalists such as Carnegie provides a more nuanced understanding of the ‘symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship and philanthropy’ and ways in which philanthropy ‘serves as a mechanism both for capital conversion and capital accumulation’ (Harvey et al 2011: 445). Seen in these terms, economic capital is used to generate social and cultural capital, thereby increasing a philanthropist’s field of power and enabling them to contribute to decision-making on a grand scale. In turn, their involvement in such decision-making serves to bolster their entrepreneurial and economic endeavours.

The chapter consists of two sections: the first explores how Hariri’s philanthropy was presented and consumed and ways in which it contributed to his accumulation of political capital. Like the project mentioned in the vignette, Hariri’s endeavours were typically performative, characterised by exceptional scale, and the ostentatious expenditure of huge amounts of money. They were also porous, giving way for some ‘favours’ and ‘losses’, or in other words, were permissive of a certain degree of corruption which at times was instrumentally used to serve Hariri’s political agenda. In addition to the instrumental political value of Hariri’s philanthropy - and beyond the simplified understanding of philanthropy as a way of securing political support in a dyadic patron-client relationship - I explore the symbolic and idealistic underpinnings of Hariri’s philanthropy. I also examine the impact of Hariri’s philanthropy not only on what would become Hariri’s constituencies, but also its effects on his relationship with other members of the elite.

In the second section, I focus on the experience of Nejme Sport Club, especially the conditions that led its management to approach Hariri as a patron and the process by which they handed the club over to him. The club had always enjoyed political patronage, predominantly from Beirut’s traditional leader Saeb Salam, yet that patronage often only provided political cover and support when administrative and political problems were pressing. The patronage of Hariri that began in 2003 was of a significantly different nature, in that full responsibility for the club was entrusted to the new patron whose remit included ensuring both proper management and sustainable funding. The second section also presents the contrast that existed between the desired financial stability and sustainability from Hariri’s patronage, and the fickle precarious situation of the club while this research was being implemented. Most of the time-period that this chapter is concerned with is the phase preceding the transition of the club into the hands of the Hariri establishment. The chapter scrutinizes the ‘Hariri approach’ and illuminates the

underlying logic of the way the club later came to be managed – an issue I pursue further in later chapters.

## Point of Departure: The Characteristics of the Hariri Style

Philanthropy, as described by Cammett and Issar (2010) and Baumann (2012a), was Hariri's starting point for building a constituency, particularly among the Sunni communities of Beirut. Hariri's charitable initiatives, like the cleaning-up of Beirut in 1982, were either implemented by his contracting company, OGER Liban, or more often by the 'Hariri Foundation' which was established in 1979. The Foundation's programmes included delivery of large scale educational grants in the 1980s and 1990s, and the establishment of educational and health centres that continue to be active<sup>71</sup>. Several other charitable donations were made under different institutional and personal capacities<sup>72</sup>, not least in the field of sports.

Building on Johnson's (1986) earlier work on the leadership of the Salam family, which presented philanthropy as part of the clientelist exchange of services of a leader for political support, political scientist Baumann argues that philanthropy is more than 'material exchange' and includes a 'set of practices whereby a community is being "imagined"'<sup>73</sup> (2012c: 83) and out of which a leader gains symbolic power. Sectarianism, 'a nationalist creation that dates back no further than the beginnings of the modern era when European powers and local elites forged a politics of religion amid the emerging nation-state system' (Makdisi 1996) was a readily available 'cultural artefact' (Anderson 2006: 48) around which symbolic communal imagination could be mobilised. In these mobilization efforts Baumann argues that 'Hariri deployed political and financial "capital" derived from the fields of international relations and the economy in the field of political culture' particularly through his philanthropy (2012a: 83), or in other words in the generation of

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71 After the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, two organizations have evolved from the Hariri Foundation, the 'Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Development' <http://www.hariri-foundation.org> which is presided over by Hariri's sister Bahia and the 'Rafic Hariri Foundation', which has the late Hariri's wife, Nazek, as president <http://www.rhf.org.lb> - both websites accessed 28/12/2014.

72 One example is the 'Beirut Association for Social Development', which according to its website 'was founded in Lebanon upon a decision taken by the Martyr Prime Minister Rafic Hariri' though without reference to how its management and funding today relates to Hariri's other charitable endeavours <http://beirutassociation.org/about-us.html> - Accessed 28/12/2014.

73 As per Anderson's understanding of the 'imagined community' (2006)

symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). In that sense Hariri chose to ‘confirm rather than transform’ the Lebanese socio-political order and the culture of sectarianism in Lebanon, by using the same techniques as previous Lebanese political leaders and positing himself as a Sunni leader or za‘im (Baumann 2012a: 84).

With regard to Hariri’s supporters and his clients within this philanthropic exchange, I agree with Baumann’s ideas on the centrality of philanthropy in Hariri’s path to leadership, as well as the importance of looking at both the material and symbolic aspects of that exchange (Auyero 2007). At the same time, following Shore (2002), and examining Hariri’s ascendance to power beyond the sectarian perspective which dominates the analysis of Lebanese politics, Hariri’s power and status as an emerging member of the elite needs to be understood as part of a set of dynamic processes ‘rather than static or bounded entities’ embedded in broader sets of economic and social changes (Shore 2002:13). In fact Hariri, as a member of the ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Baumann 2012b: 129), resembles as much the model of the Lebanese pre-war philanthropist za‘im as he does that of the neoliberal ‘philanthrocapitalist’<sup>74</sup>. Through consideration of Hariri’s political and philanthropic trajectory, particularly his patronage of Nejme, I examine ways in which the above two models converge and diverge, particularly looking at (1) the scale of philanthropic contributions (2) sources of funding and (3) the ideals of philanthropic endeavours.

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74 The Hariri family is one of the few Middle Eastern capitalist philanthropists to have signed, according to Morvaridi (2012b: 254), the ‘Giving Pledge’, which the initiative’s website describes as ‘a commitment by the world’s wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to philanthropy’. Interestingly, going to the website of the Giving Pledge in 2014, the name of the Hariri family no longer features as one of the current pledgers – see <http://givingpledge.org/> - Accessed 20/12/2014.



*Figure 17: The tomb of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in downtown Beirut. Picture in the top left corner is of the Prime Minister kissing the hand of his father as a sign of respect.*



*Figure 18: Wreaths next to Hariri's tomb, each given in the name of one family member, including his sons, daughters, their spouses and his grandchildren.*



*Figure 19: The tomb of Yabha Mustafa al-Arab, head of Rafic Hariri's private security. Al-Arab, who was a board member of Al-Ansar, was killed with Hariri on the same day and buried next to him.*

## Mega-Philanthropy: Scale and Performance

Let me start with a description given by Mahmoud, a Nejmeh club fan<sup>75</sup> who outlines the particulars of Hariri's use of philanthropy in his public and political career.

'Some people criticise Hariri, they say he robbed the country, but I don't think he did. It does not require much thinking. Let me put myself, or any ordinary person, in his shoes. I find a country completely destroyed, I buy it all, reconstruct it, I borrow money from here and there to make it a beautiful place. I would have benefited people through that; employed people in reconstruction, started a restaurant here and employed people, established institutions to employ youths who are on the streets. As long as those young people are on the streets, they will be looking to carry arms. No, some people want to educate their kids... Their kids were sent abroad for an education. This I know really well, I have personally experienced it. Hariri came to a destroyed country. There was no za'im and he established himself as one. He reconstructed the country [...]. Look at the Hariri institutions, how many families do they employ? I have been to Hariri's house, to his palace; He probably has 200-300 employees there. That is 300 families... imagine he leaves the country, imagine he gets upset and quits politics, those three hundred will go home, have no income, and will become either thieves or smugglers or .. or.. let alone those employed in the institutions, the banks, and the companies. Should I not see the benefit of all of that?'

What is distinctive about Hariri in Mahmoud's description is that he 'bought' the country to be able to 'fix it', just like he 'bought the club', according to popular discourse, as described in the introduction to this chapter. Hariri, with his extensive wealth and his image as a successful businessman, was capable not only of ruling or governing the country on its path to recovery, but of buying it. According to Baumann, one of the ways in which Hariri's charitable endeavours differ from those of the pre-war elite is in scale: he succeeded in building 'a truly national presence by spending amounts that were beyond the financial capability of the zua'ma' (2012b: 134). Evidence of this approach showed in the

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75 Interview with Nejmeh club fan Mahmoud on 6/6/09. The interview was one of several recorded with Mahmoud and took place when I had already known him for a year. It was part of a wider discussion of Nejmeh club, its history, and Lebanese politics. The interview was conducted in Arabic and the translation is mine.

way he entered the public domain in 1982 and in his takeover of the club, as described in the vignette. It also showed again repeatedly throughout his career as I will detail in following sections. Large scale expenditure, or mega-philanthropy, was not only a characteristic of Hariri's giving, but also a trend present in philanthropic expenditure more generally over the past two decades, and it parallels the rise in wealth creation of the past twenty-five years (McGoey 2012)<sup>76</sup>.

One of the ways that mega-philanthropy achieves presence and utility in the public sphere is via its performative aspect; expenditure needs not only be made on a large scale, but also – like the orange electricity poles - it needs to be flagrantly visible in its largesse. To achieve these ends Hariri built a media empire, which, using sophisticated advertising strategies, succeeded in creating the popular image and myth of Hariri as both self-made man and the country's saviour in the post war period (Zaraket 2009). Zaraket argues that the backbone of Hariri's media image was that of 'making dreams a reality', an image that, as she argues, captured the imagination of the Lebanese in the post-war period. Of particular interest is Hariri's choice of the magical word 'Future' which he used as the name of the television station, newspaper, and political movement he established. Zaraket states that Hariri rejected claims that he had secured his popularity through the use of wealth, and that according to him, his following was based on his ability to 'implant hope in people' (Zaraket 2009). This ability to 'make dreams a reality' is rooted in the presentation of Hariri's own trajectory, as a poor farmer's son who acquired his fortune through his own personal efforts. This story of the successful entrepreneur who comes from a humble background accords with what Godelier describes as one of the most common 'cultural mythologies' which are used to 'legitimize the status and power' of the globalized entrepreneurial elite (2010: 76). The utility of Hariri's wealth at the popular level is thus tied to the performative aspect of it, not only in the scale of expenditure and the ability of that expenditure to make dreams a reality, but also in his presentation as coming from a humble origin<sup>77</sup>.

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76 The year 2006 for example, has been described as a 'blockbuster year for American philanthropy' where only 21 wealthy Americans donated over \$100 million to charity <http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/mega-philanthropy-hits-new-highs-in-2006> - Accessed 22/12/2014.

77 See for example Rafic Hariri's biography on his website: 'Mr. Hariri is a philanthropist, a self-made man who built his businesses single-handedly on the basis of his reputation as an honest, credible and trustworthy partner in all his endeavours.' <http://www.rhariri.com/general.aspx?pagecontent=biography> - Accessed 22/12/2014

The implications of the performative and large-scale philanthropy I describe went well beyond securing the political loyalty and votes of recipients of Hariri's aid, and dwarfed any competition he might have faced. The scale of his expenditure actually raised the standard of what was expected and accepted and it filtered out any other actors who could not match it thus establishing him as a 'super-zai'm' (Bauman 2012b: 134). In his relationship with other members of the elite, Hariri's scale of expenditure posited him as belonging to a higher rank. From this position of authority he used his wealth tactically and instrumentally, making payments either directly or indirectly to other elite members, and to allies and competitors alike (Baumann 2012c; El-Husseini 2012).

### **Sources of Funding**

Another characteristic which distinguished Hariri's approach from the pre-war clientelistic relations in Beirut concerned the sources of funding. According to Johnson (1986) the zu'ama of Beirut traditionally relied on donations by Beirut's bourgeoisie and middle class families, primarily through the institutional setup of the Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association of Beirut (hereafter Makassed). Originally Makassed was a Muslim charity established in 1878 which, over time, transformed into a bureaucratic institution with a corporate structure which relied as much on religious endowments as on the commercial endeavours led by its members who were drawn from amongst Beirut's business communities and notables (Johnson 1986: 110-114). In the post-war period of independent Lebanon, Makassed's resources were increasingly an 'important source of patronage for Sunni politicians' (Johnson 1986: 111) not only through charitable distribution, but also through employment provision and in providing structure for the recruitment of emerging leaders' and their incorporation into the political machines of existing zu'ama.

By contrast, Hariri relied - like other philanthrocapitalists - in his philanthropy on the combination of his own wealth and support from Saudi Arabia (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006; Baumann 2012c). This, as I discuss in Chapter Five, allowed Hariri to maintain greater independence and power in his relations with other elite members and with Beirut's bourgeoisie. Important to note though is that the decline in the power of Makassed in particular is largely due to the role played by Hariri during his political career: he diverted Saudi Arabia's funding away from Makassed, re-channelling it either towards his own charitable efforts or towards property acquisition and Solidere's reconstruction projects in downtown Beirut (Baumann 2012b).

## **The Ideals: the Capitalist, Professional, and Moderate Muslim**

In Mahmoud's quotation above, Hariri 'benefits' the people and the country not only through charity, but also through his economic enterprises; he is doing the country and its people a service by borrowing money and starting new businesses that provide employment opportunities. In Mahmoud's description, Hariri's charitable efforts are mixed with his role as Prime Minister and his private business endeavours; the mix includes the education grants he provided, the public reconstruction efforts that are largely paid for by the Lebanese government, or Hariri's privately owned businesses, including banks, companies and even his own house which Mahmoud describes as the 'palace'. The intermixing of these various interests resembles the tactics of other philanthrocapitalists who justify such an approach by emphasising that the pursuit of a capitalist's own self interest is in itself a contribution to collective social interests or, as McGoey summarizes it, the notion that 'the more financially profitable and market-savvy an organization is, the more social good it will inevitably create' (McGoey 2012:193).

Hariri's approach brought significant changes to the practice and ideals of philanthropy, not least in scale, the sources of funding, and the performative aspects of it, but it also built on many ideals widely held by the constituency he aimed to represent. The above mentioned belief that economic enterprise in itself produces social good, and the acceptance of the conflation of public and private interest is central to the ideals which underpinned Hariri's charitable endeavours and 'resonates with long-held economic assumptions of the moral advantages of capitalism' (McGoey 2012:186). Confirming McGoey's argument that 'Philanthrocapitalism is both less novel than proponents claim, and more novel in ways that proponents have either failed to envision or are reluctant to articulate' (2012:186), is the third characteristic of Hariri's philanthropy, namely that these ideals seem also to have been widely held by many of Beirut's entrepreneurs and bourgeoisies, even before Hariri's ascent to power. As early as 1948 for example, Makassed, which was established as a Muslim Sunni charity relying on religious endowments – *waqf* – and presided over by the Mufti, went through a process of secularization and moved into management by salaried professional staff and a board of directors. Beside *waqf*, it also made use of the 'commercial talents of its members and leaders, and entered the world of high finance and property speculation' and generated income from the rental of office space in Beirut's down town area (Johnson 1986: 111). Members of Nejmeh, who served on the board before the club moved into Hariri's patronage, echo the same sentiment; their skills as businessmen testified to their ability to manage the sports club. Baroudi, a board

member in the early 1990s, who joined the club's board upon the invitation of a friend to take on the responsibility of leading and funding it, echoes such logic: 'we all had managed our own businesses and institutions successfully, how difficult can managing a football club be? Hariri was by far richer and more successful, so sure to be able to take on that role.' This parallels the reform efforts of modern philanthropy, including the use of 'scientific methods to the promotion of human welfare, explicitly distinguishing their practices from acts of alms-giving prevalent within religious orders which viewed charity as valuable in itself regardless of observable benefits' which McGoey summarises (2012: 189).

The business ethos described above comes replete with a discourse of institutional development, professional and efficient operation, as well as computerisation and use of the latest technology in day-to-day operations. This trend is evinced in the way in which Shalaq (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006) boasts of Oger Liban's efficient implementation of the cleaning operation and all later projects and even his work with CDR in the 1990s, as well as in the public image of the Hariri Foundation and institutional set-up of his charitable organizations.

That said, a religious image and discourse remains central in the self-presentation of most of Beirut's elite, not least Hariri himself. Indeed, the image that Hariri constructed for himself as a 'moderate Muslim'; the 'son who kisses his father's hand and takes his children to Hajj' who also 'takes part in international business conferences and meets with world leaders' (Zaraket 2009) does not differ from the way that many of the older members of Nejme from Beirut's entrepreneurial elite – and possibly Arab urban elite more broadly - also presented themselves. It could even be argued that all such players, old and new, from among Beirut's entrepreneurial elite belonged to what Arab intellectual Al-Azam calls 'good-for-business-Islam'; 'Arab middle-class commercial Islam as represented by the bourgeoisies of various key Arab countries and led by an assortment of agencies such as the chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture, multiple forms of Arab Islamic banking, investment houses, venture capital and so on' (2014: 283).

The extent to which the discourse and image of the 'moderate Muslim' mirrors personal beliefs, cultural norms or constructed instrumental presentations for different members of Beirut's elite is impossible to gauge. The discussion in the next chapter, on the self-described motivation of different board members to engage with Nejme, further illuminates this issue as well as ways in which the characteristics of Hariri's philanthropy,

namely scale, sources of funding, and ideals impacted on governance of the club and on the practice of politics more broadly.

### **The Corrupt and Porous**

Alongside representations of grand, professional and idealistic performative aspects of Hariri and his philanthropy, the name of Hariri has been also closely associated with widespread corruption in Lebanon. Leenders (2014) shows how political corruption was endemic in post-war Lebanon: his account details Hariri's strategies and his involvement in the politics of reconstruction which included the establishment of Solidere and the implementation of the downtown reconstruction project. The corruption in Hariri's philanthropic and political endeavours was in fact a strategic choice rather than the result of oversight. Most his projects were permissive of a certain degree of corruption, and thus described as porous in that they allowed individuals involved in them a certain degree of unaccounted for profit. At the same time, corruption within the broader Lebanese political system allowed Hariri to instrumentally use his wealth to push forward his political agenda. Indeed Hariri is presented by some sources as a model of 'effective corrupt leadership' (Neal and Tansey 2010). As early as 1982, Hariri's expenditure in the public sphere, as described by his close aid at the time, Shalaq (Shalaq and Farshakh 2006), appears to have been porous, incapable and unwilling to thwart the abuse of the resources allocated for the clean-up by members of the militias and allowing for unplanned 'services' to be implemented for other politicians. Allowing such favours to fellow members of the elite and the 'leakage' of funds appears to have worked more as an instrumental tool of governance and management rather than as an unintended consequence. Even before arriving in office, Hariri was known for employing 'cheque book diplomacy' (Baumann 2012b: 130) not least in supporting the materialisation of the Ta'if agreement that ended the Lebanese civil war.

Tolerance of a significant level of corruption was evident at the popular level. In Mahmoud's description of Hariri's aid-giving, he gave me many examples of the distribution of aid he had personally facilitated. He told me how, for example, a guy could come to him wanting help in paying for hospitalisation costs for one of his kids, and Mahmoud would send the applicant to acquaintances in the appropriate Hariri office who would see that around 50% of the medical expenses were covered once the person in need indicated that he had come on Mahmoud's recommendation. This is not necessarily an indication of any great authority that Mahmoud held at the Hariri establishment, but

possibly reflects the existence of Mahmoud's good network of relationships which enabled him to play that sort of brokerage role. He was relied on to facilitate the process of distribution of food aid in the month of Ramadan when this research was being implemented. Mahmoud recounted to me how he surveyed needy families on behalf of what he called the 'Hariri Aid Bureau'<sup>78</sup> and later gave each family a voucher entitling them to receive a box containing food aid worth around fifty US dollars. He admitted that around half of those who received such aid were not really in need, and according to him they would often sell the food they had received to a local shop for around two thirds of its value. 'It would not matter to them that they are selling it for cheaper' he explained, 'they have paid nothing for it to start with'. In other instances, instead of giving vouchers to needy families, the aid office would deliver an aid box direct to people's houses. When this happened, Mahmoud described how, often, one of the recipients would bribe the distributor to bring more boxes which had originally been allocated to other families. Mahmoud did not condemn this small-scale business transaction disguised as charity; it is what was expected or at best a side effect of Hariri's generosity. 'Games always take place', he said, 'but if a person plans to give charitable aid, he continues to help people as much as he can regardless.'

## **The Transition of Nejmeh Club into Hariri's Patronage**

### **Starving the Club and the Increasing Costs of Football**

'There were people who robbed us of [Nejmeh], they starved it so they can take it away from us. They starved it and controlled the club through money'. These were the words of long-time club fan Sami on the transition of the club into Hariri patronage. Along with the accusation that Sami's words imply, this section explores the changes in the post-war period within the club and within Beirut's sports, political and economic scene – all of which necessitated a change in the club's patronage, or the process of 'starvation' as Sami described it.

Contrary to popular rumours Hariri did not seek to acquire the club, but rather attended to it upon the board's request. One of the main reasons was the inability of board members

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78 The 'Hariri Aid & Relief Bureau', is part of the Hariri Foundation and is the branch of the Foundation that appears to provide 'on-demand' humanitarian – and at times political - assistance. After the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005 it was renamed: 'Martyr Rafic Hariri Assistance Office'. For details see <http://www.rhf.org.lb/content/office-hariri-relief-services-0#overlay-context=content/office-hariri-relief-services-0> - Accessed 2/1/2015.

to adequately fund the club as they had done for the past decades. In a 2009 interview I conducted with former club President Omar Ghandour, six years after he left the club, he explained the economic difficulty faced by club board members which motivated the decision to appeal to Hariri for help:

‘As board members, those of us who used to be able to pay a pound now could only pay a penny. Donors who used to pay a thousand now only paid a hundred or could not pay at all. So we only had one of two choices, we either hold on to the club although this could be its end since we no longer could cover its financial needs, or we find somebody capable of supporting it financially. This is why we went to Sheikh Rafic Hariri, God bless his soul, and told him that we wanted his son to take charge of the club and become the club’s president. Even then, Bahaa [Hariri’s son] did not come as club president, but as a benefactor’.

The change in Ghandour’s and other board members’ economic status was not coincidental, but indicative of the broader economic changes in the post-war period. Club donors and board members mostly belonged to the upper and upper-middle classes of Beirut society, many of them were industrialists. For most of its modern history, Lebanon’s economy has generally been dominated by its service sector - the country’s largest employer. The 1940s and 1950s had witnessed growth in the urban industries (Gaspard 2004), which Ghandour and his family had considerable position in (Johnson 1986: 35-36). The industry’s work force, mostly new immigrants to Beirut residing in its suburbs, quadrupled between 1953 and 1975, comprised around 20% of the country’s total population (Fawaz and Peillen 2003). The Israeli invasion of 1982, and the ensuing departure of a defeated PLO from Lebanon, was followed by an escalation of the civil war and deterioration in financial and economic conditions in the country (Makdisi 2004). Yet the economic deterioration in this period did not affect all sectors in the same way. The negative impact of the war on the service and trade sectors precipitated a rise in the manufacturing and construction sectors’ share of the Lebanese economy (Makdisi 2004: 47). Despite overall hardship during the civil war from 1975 till 1990, those in manufacturing, like Ghandour and other board members, were relatively less badly affected than elite members who conducted business in other sectors.

The post-war period had produced weak financial performance and limited growth. According to renowned Lebanese economist Gaspard, this contraction was largely due to

the laissez fair policy championed by Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, and to systematic government failure ‘on all the major fronts of fiscal, monetary and structural reform policies’ (Gaspard 2004: 215). In particular, the Lebanese economic policy repeatedly failed to make use of ‘uniquely favourable circumstances’ for the growth of the industrial sector as early as the 1950s, where the laissez-faire regime ‘effectively became the alternative to, if not the opposite of, a potentially successful industrialisation strategy’ (Gaspard 2004: 140).

The economic circumstances I describe had seriously weakened the ability of board members to continue contributing to the club financially since many of them were involved in the ailing manufacturing industries. Their much reduced financial capacity was compounded, as board members active at the time indicated, by the burden of paying repeated financial penalties which were imposed on Nejmeh by the LFA - as explained in Chapter Three. Nejmeh and its board members were not only penalised, but were also often deprived of the significant revenue from ticket sales to the club’s wide fan base that they usually depended on.

Increased financial pressure came at a time when the costs of the club were also being driven up by the global trend towards professionalisation of organised sports. Against this background Nejmeh continued as one of the few clubs in the premier league not to have stable politico-sectarian patronage. According to Ghandour - and other board members active in the same period - the responsibility of the club had become too heavy for them to bear:

‘The last three to five years I was in the club I was financially exhausted. The club’s yearly budget had reached 800,000 – 900,000 USD. Its income, including advertisements was around 500,000 USD. We had to find a way to get 400-500 thousand every year, either out of our own pockets or by some sort of begging. We became professional beggars. This is why I could not continue with the club.’

The situation Ghandour describes coincided with the appearance in Beirut of the new and very well funded Olympic Club which was funded by Taha Koleilat, a Beiruti businessman who acquired his wealth through a much discussed, and notorious bank embezzlement

case<sup>79</sup>. Koleilat had strong ties with Syrian military and intelligence officers, who at the time enjoyed significant authority in the Lebanese political scene. Some news reports rumoured that Koleilat was being supported by the Syrians as an alternative to Rafic Hariri for the leadership of the Sunni communities. The way in which Koleilat went about raising the profile of his newly acquired club is worth a closer look, despite the difficulty of validating the truth of either news reports or rumours in circulation at the time. According to accounts by football media personnel, Koleilat acquired the licence of an existing non-functioning club and by making substantial financial investment managed to take it up to the Lebanese football club's premier league in only one year. With Koleilat's continued support the club won Lebanon's championship a year later in 2003. The budget of Olympic Beirut was significantly higher than that of other clubs, and Koleilat used his financial resources to attract both players and fans, especially from Tariq Al-Jadidah, the neighbourhood he came from. As members of both Nejmeh and Ansar clubs told me, Koleilat attracted fans to his club by the many giveaways he offered them when they attended games, an indication of the capricious nature of football fandom in Lebanon. Olympic Beirut raised the bar for other clubs with salaries that at least doubled the highest payments offered elsewhere in Lebanon. Nejmeh board members, who did not anticipate that the phenomenon of Olympic Beirut would be so short lived, felt intensified pressure to secure their club financially so that it could compete with its rivals. Koleilat, whether inspired by Hariri or determined to compete with him, actually used Hariri's own tactics. However, Koleilat fell into oblivion when he lost his political standing after facing numerous charges of embezzlement and drug taking, and his demise actually strengthened Hariri's position.

### **Options for Nejmeh's Funding and Sustainability: Who but Hariri?**

In the face of financial crisis and the amount of capital being attracted by the Olympic club, Nejmeh board members were under pressure to not only find alternative funding sources, but also ensure long term secure funding for the club. The Arabic word which Ghandour and other board members repeatedly used to describe the responsibility that board members felt towards the club was *'amana* (trust), which in Arabic comes from the

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79 The account of Koleilat's and Olympic Beirut's rise is based on information shared by research participants, and not necessarily based on verifiable information. These accounts do however present how the club and its patron were perceived at the popular level. Many media reports support the accounts above, although information in these reports is also difficult to verify – see for example Asharq Al-Awsat (2003), Sabra (2005), and Khbeiz (2006).

root verb meaning 'to secure'<sup>80</sup>. The club was entrusted to them, and as board members they were duty-bound to safeguard it. If unable, they needed to find an appropriate guardian who would be able to fulfil this obligation. For them, Nejme's history and loyal fan base were far too precious to be left in an insecure financial and managerial situation. In the discussion about which guardian would be the most appropriate, several options were suggested as I explain below, but Hariri was eventually the one chosen since he was perceived as the most capable of handling the club's financial needs, and would offer the most secure prospect in the long term if he were to also commit his son to the club's presidency.

The first option suggested for club funding was to supplement the existing funds of the club with support from its large fan base. This would mean continuing to run the club as it had been run for the duration of Ghandour's presidency; that is with two to three major donors, and a few smaller donors who were mostly board members. The work of these donors would be paralleled with mobilising club fans and General Assembly members to contribute to the club financially. This scenario was developed by one of the board's members at the time, Zuheir Baroudi, who researched different models followed by European and Egyptian clubs. According to him, clubs in Egypt followed an organisational model similar to the one used in Lebanon, but their General Assembly membership was hundreds of thousands strong, and this membership covered a substantial proportion of their club's expenses despite the lower economic capacity of Egyptian fans. Yet according to both Ghandour and Baroudi, responses to calls from the board to the fans and General Assembly members for contributions were not encouraging. In parallel, it appears that the board at the time were reluctant to extend the membership of the General Assembly. An influx of additional members would have meant that control over the General Assembly and the results of board elections could no longer be guaranteed and nor could the ability to 'safeguard' the club.

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80 Most probably in Ghandour's usage of the word he is making reference to the obligation on him as a Muslim in respect to what is entrusted to him as stipulated in the Quran; 'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.' Sahih International 4:58 - <http://quran.com/4> and in another verse in describing the believers: 'And they who are to their trusts and their promises attentive'. Sahih International 23:8 <http://quran.com/23> - Accessed 6/3/2015.

The second option was to take money from larger donors like Hariri, but without completely handing over the leadership of the club. Other donors suggested were Koleilat himself, before he took over the Olympic Club, and Walid bin Talal, a Saudi billionaire businessman whose grandfather on his mother's side was Lebanon's first Prime Minister. Both these prospective donors were in political competition for the leadership of the Sunni communities in Lebanon. Bin Talal's cousin was a Nejmeh board member and is claimed to have promised a donation to the club. While I heard many stories of why a suggested donation by him was not accepted, a more probable scenario, relayed by a board member serving at the time, was that the promised donation was never actually made. Proceeding with such a scenario would have required the continued diplomacy of the board with multiple donors, but such negotiations would not have provided any guarantees of continuity of funding. While money could have been secured for one year, there was no way to make sure there would be enough funding for the coming years.

A similar option was to take Hariri's funding while retaining the club's management. As one board member described it, 'we could have taken the money, and sent him and other donors a thank you letter'. This was even suggested by Hariri himself according to board members involved in the first phases of the negotiation, who were urged to continue running the club. The main reason behind refusing such a scenario was once again a concern over the sustainability of funding. Some of the older members who had served on the board for a long time wanted to retire and they wished to hand over the club to an administration that would be morally responsible for it, again as an 'amana'. For this reason Ghandour specifically asked for Hariri's older son to become President as he saw this arrangement as a way to further strengthen the moral responsibility of the new patron towards the club.

The search then was for a patron who could ensure adequate and sustainable funding for Nejmeh, by being both wealthy enough to cater for it financially and being responsible for it as an 'amana'. Hariri, with the characteristics of his philanthropy discussed earlier in this chapter, was thus the obvious and only choice. As Ghandour explained, no other patron could have provided the level of funding that the club needed but Hariri. No other patron was capable of ensuring half a million dollars in payment yearly. True, Hariri from as early as the mid 1980s had provided occasional or on-request funding to the club, as one administrator who had been with the club for three decades attested:

‘The first cheque of 5000 USD donated by Hariri was given to me personally in the club’s stadium, through Oger Liban he planted the stadium’s turf in the eighties, and for the Pan Arab games of 1997, he paid 150,000 USD. He made sure all the ministries contributed to its success and Bahia Hariri [Hariri’s sister] provided full support’.

The giving of such donations was confirmed by contemporaneous news reports about Hariri’s financial contribution to Nejmeh and other sports institutions as well as by almost everyone I spoke with in the club, including those who opposed the current management. The figures I was told of were, however, quite varied. One member who was on the club’s board before the transition told me the club received a regular monthly 5,000-dollar payment. Other board members, including Omar Ghandour, told me that Hariri had made a payment before the transition of management of 200,000 USD which had cleared a substantial amount of the club’s debt.

Despite his regular financial contributions, Hariri was never the largest donor to the club, and the faith that he would be able to guarantee such funding indefinitely was deeply rooted in the image of him as a mega-philanthropist and in the performative expenditure of his wealth as discussed earlier in this chapter. As Baroudi, the Secretary General in office at the time, put it:

‘If we really wanted the club to move forward, we had to admit that this was the limit of our financial capacity, and we should find somebody better than us who had capacity at the Arab regional level... who has the generosity to spend and the capacity to do so ...somebody who if they were to put their hand in their pocket to pay, there would be money there... we are talking about millions of dollars here. Who can do that [in the same way that Olympic Beirut did]? To be honest, there was nobody in that period but Rafic Hariri’.

Another factor to be taken into consideration, as described by a board member serving at the time, was the presence of many of Hariri’s business partners on the board of Nejmeh. To describe them as partners perhaps misrepresents the relationship as one in which the power was more evenly balanced than was actually the case, despite the exact word ‘partner’ being the one used by my research participants. ‘Partnering’ with Hariri meant working on projects that he led or owned in addition to access to government contracts through governmental agencies which were under his control. Throughout the post-war reconstruction period, consociational power sharing between members of the Lebanese

political elite extended into the business sector and influenced the allocation of government contracts according to sect and area between those in power. For example, if a highway leading from Beirut to the south of Lebanon was to be laid, the contract could only be given to a contractor who Nabih Berri, leader of the Shiite political group 'Amal Movement', approved of. Or, if a project was to take place in Mount Lebanon, it had to be approved by the Druze leader, Jumblatt. Each region had its sect, leader, and custodian, who either got a share of the contracts in his area or used his power to grant certain contracts with the implicit aim of strengthening his own clientelist base. The same system governed almost all such major projects, and to guarantee that, the different ministries and governmental posts were distributed among the Lebanese leaders – albeit often after much 'political debate'. Hariri was guaranteed that certain posts would be taken on by staff members who were part of his team, not least the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR). The CDR, unlike other governmental entities 'was an autonomous institution endowed with extended jurisdiction and is directly accountable to the Council of Ministers through the Prime Minister, thus evading the administrative routine matters which had ceased to be followed in order to accelerate the reconstruction process and to allow adequate time for the reconstruction and building of public institutions'<sup>81</sup>. The CDR was entrusted with many major reconstruction projects, and the contracts it awarded often involved substantial budgets. Retaining such a 'partnership' with Hariri ensured continued access to further contracts. To return to the topic of the club, one informant told me that some board members preferred handing the club to Hariri as opposed to other prospective patrons precisely because of the existence such relationships.

### **Under Hariri's Patronage: Grand but Precarious**

The earliest projects and interventions undertaken by the club's new patronage clearly illustrate Hariri's large-scale performative approach. The first projects included restoration work, most significantly the renovation of the stadium and laying of new turf on the pitch, which together cost around 350,000 USD. This expensive first step was paralleled with what Muheib Itani, the Hariri establishment's 'client representative' in its relationship with Nejmeh, calls a revamping of the club, in particular on the financial and technical levels. In my interview with Itani on his role in the club, ensuring 'professional management' of Nejmeh Club was repeatedly voiced as one of his duties in the post transition period.

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81 <http://www.cdr.gov.lb/eng/profile.asp> - Accessed 4/12/2010.

Organisationally, Itani was responsible for the liaison between Hariri and the club's board, a role he had taken on at the inception of transition negotiations and had continued in until 2006. He made arrangements for the club's financial payments and was instrumental in making strategic decisions, including the appointment of board members. Apart from securing agreements to ensure steady and long-term income for the club, the revamping process also involved securing more lucrative advertising contracts often from Hariri-affiliated businesses, notably BankMed. This strategy provided a useful way of channelling more money into the club.

In organisational terms the overhaul included entrusting the newly recruited, and now salaried, Secretary General of the club with computerising the day-to-day operations, the only evidence of which that I saw was the purchase of new desktop computers. Another change involved intervention at the level of the General Assembly. During the early stages, the Hariri establishment did not 'buy' the General Assembly; it first raised its price. In practice this meant that the membership fees were raised from 100 USD per year to 1000, to make sure that any existing members who had not been chosen by the Hariri establishment were effectively priced out. Itani argued that this tactic was meant to ensure financial stability for the club by having more of the club's costs covered by the General Assembly membership; this was despite the fact that in practice the Hariri establishment were paying their membership fees on their behalf<sup>82</sup>.

Despite the changes and promises described above, when I observed the club during my fieldwork in 2008, the effects of the institutional restructuring outlined by Itani were not particularly evident: the club remained as lacking in sustainability as Hariri's funding had proved to. Internally, the club appeared to run in just the same way that it always had, and despite the presence of a computer in the office, staff had no idea how to send a simple email with an attachment. In addition, soon after the Hariri establishment guaranteed control over the General Assembly and opposing members were indirectly forced to resign, the need to pay large sums of money to ensure control was no longer necessary. Most of the 400 new members who had joined the General Assembly as part of the organisational revamping described by Itani left a year or two year later.

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82 The intervention at the level of the General Assembly is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, in which I show how legal bureaucratic and institutional discourse was used within the Hariri establishment's operation.



*Figure 20: Bahaa Rafic Hariri in a visit to Nejmeh stadium in 2003. During the visit which came only days after the acquisition of the club by the Hariri Establishment and Bahaa's appointment as Honorary President, instructions to renew the grass of the stadium were given<sup>83</sup>.*

Ironically, and despite the choice of Hariri as patron being motivated by the desire to secure the club financially, the funding situation of the club while I was doing research in 2008-2009 was far from secure. After the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, his son Saad Hariri was the chosen political heir<sup>84</sup> and not his older brother Bahaa. Ghandour's request back in 2003 for Bahaa Hariri to preside over the club, even if only as honorary president, in hope that this would create moral ties and responsibility towards the club appeared inconsequential; Nejmeh, along with other institutions that Bahaa presided over, like *Almustaqbal* newspaper, was handed over to Saad Hariri as part of Rafic Hariri's political inheritance. In fact, if I were to highlight only a handful of observations about the club at the time of my field work, a sense of precariousness and a perpetual quest for money by staff and players would definitely head the list.

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83 Copyright is for *Almustaqbal* newspaper. Obtained from the electronic version of issue dated 22/3/2003.

84 Publicly it was announced that the Hariri family chose Saad as the political heir, and Itani explained to me in a September 2010 interview that Bahaa had no desire to play a political role. Yet El-Husseini claims that the decision for Saad to take the political lead was 'heavily influenced by the Saudi Royalty' who 'already knew Saad from his work in Riyadh and preferred his deferential style over Bahaa's unpredictable temper' (2012: 179).

On my last day of fieldwork, late on a Saturday morning, I visited the club's offices to say good-bye. There was a game that afternoon, and Mahmoud, Nejme's PR officer needed to leave to attend to the logistics, but he stayed. He and other staff members were waiting for their salaries which had been delayed for months. Everyone had been told that they would be paid that day. 'I am not moving out of here before I get my salary' one employee told me. The office assistant arrived an hour or so later with money to pay the staff salaries, and an urgent request to send one of BankMed's staff an email detailing the amount due for each staff members' salary. Although the money that the assistant was handling came from the bank, it was not being drawn from the club's bank account or a cashed cheque. It was a payment that the club received through the bank itself which appeared to be acting as the patron's cashier. The amount of money received appeared to be a random figure that the patron could afford to pay at the time. There was no fixed or regularly paid monthly amount, and this particular payment was handed over to the office assistant before the club administrators had a chance to see the details of what expenses the payment was intended to cover. Waiting for salaries and wondering when they would be paid formed one of the most recurrent topics in discussions I had with most of the staff. For many of them the worst part of the waiting was a deep uncertainty about whether any money would ever actually arrive.

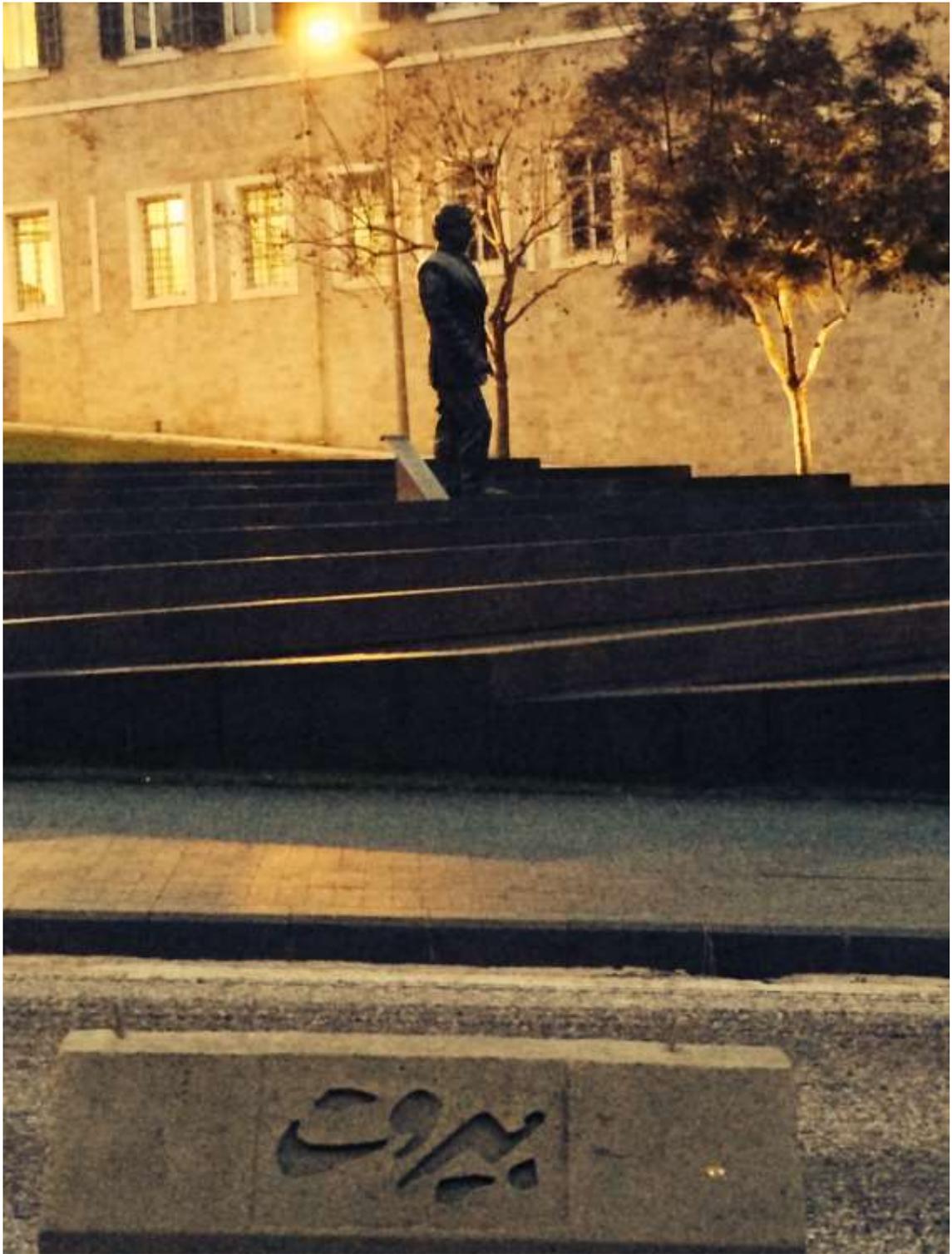
The daily expenses of the club were yet another cause for complaint. Staff in administrative positions needed cash to perform their work, be it taking a taxi to pick up a player from the airport, paying for another player's medical expenses, or buying water and refreshments in the stadium. The staff who were going through the difficulty of not being paid their salaries were naturally reluctant to make these payments out of their own pockets knowing very well that it could be months before they were reimbursed. The anger caused by the scarcity of resources was often directed towards the management rather than the patron. Some board members were often criticised for their unwillingness to 'put their hand in their pocket', an expression used to describe a person who was generous and ready to pay.

The desire of Ghandour and his fellow board members to ensure financial security and sustainability for the club by handing over its patronage to the Hariri Establishment appeared unfulfilled. For many reasons that I will further elaborate on in the following chapters, the club actually had a flimsy structure and stood on administrative and financial grounds that were more precarious than ever after the interventions of the Hariri establishment.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced Hariri's approach to philanthropy and to building a local constituency as one that combines large scale expenditure and the instrumental use of wealth with symbolic and spectacular elements which together posit him as a sectarian leader and as a self-made, professional and successful entrepreneur. I have described how his philanthropic trajectory and public image influenced the club's decision to ask him to take over Nejmeh's patronage. I have also shown the fragile and capricious nature of his public engagement, and the porousness of his expenditure - aspects which have contributed to corruption's wider acceptance and reproduction (Haller and Shore 2005).

Nejmeh club's transition into the patronage of Hariri signalled several significant changes in the club. The Hariri patronage started with large-scale expenditure and a discourse of improved management and sustainable financial structures. In practice though, the promises embedded in this discourse never truly materialised, funding was not sustained, and the structures of power and governance within the club were significantly changed as Hariri, in entrepreneurial rather than beneficiary guise, suppressed any opposition within the club. These changes signalled a significant alteration in what being a *za'im* in Lebanon means – especially in the ways in which he relates to other members of the elite. In the next chapter I explore this change further by examining Hariri's relationship, as a club patron, with members of Beirut's urban elites or bourgeoisies. I examine the impact and effects of both his newly redefined role and his economic policy on governance within the club itself and, more widely, on the roles played by other urban elite members.



*Figure 21: Statue of late Prime Minister Hariri in front of the council of ministers. The logo of Solidere – which simply reads 'Beirut' - is engraved on the cement block shown at the bottom of the picture.<sup>85</sup>*

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85 Photo taken by Heba Hage and is used with permission.

# 5

## Beirut's Bourgeoisie and Club Patronage: Changing the Players or the Game?

*'Celui qui donne, ordonne' (He who gives, governs)  
French proverb<sup>86</sup>*

### The Portraits of Smiling Club Presidents

*Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009. Nejmeh stadium is in a festive mood. The team has won the club's seventh Lebanese Football Association championship and the club has opened its doors this Sunday afternoon so that supporters can celebrate its achievement.*

*A huge photograph of the team hangs at the far end of the stadium's hall which serves on non-match days as a cafe for the club's fans. Today large trays of sweets and chocolate are laid out on side tables ready for the guests. Club President, Daouk, is seated in front of an enormous wall-sized recent photograph of the members of his winning team. Along with other board members and the club's staff he stands and greets every new guest. The ambience is domestic and home-like. The sweets, the seating, the hospitality with which every guest is received all create the same kind of atmosphere that you would experience at the welcome of a returning traveller, or in the homecoming congratulations laid on for a newly married couple.*

*True, this was perhaps more of a social event than a sport-related one. The hugely enlarged photograph of the players formed the backdrop for all the other images taken on the day, but the players themselves were*

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86 The proverb was repeated to me in French by Lebanese research participants. On inquiring about it from French friends and researchers, I was told that the proverb is rarely used by French people and that it is usually only heard outside of France.

*not in attendance. Although many of the guests were presidents and directors of other teams, most of the other visitors were social and political figures from Beirut. It was not the Minister of Sports that came for example, but Tamam Salam, Beirut parliamentarian and Minister of Culture and son of one the club's previous patrons, Sunni ʿa'im, Saeb Salam. The guests also included Hourri, a member of the parliament representing Beirut, along with a member of Beirut's municipal board, the head of the sport section at the Future Movement, and a number of elected mayors from different districts of Beirut.*

*The next day the main picture of the event published in Lebanese papers showed three of the club Presidents who had been in attendance. In the picture Daouk, the current President, sits between two of his predecessors, Omar Ghandour and Mohammad Fanj. Between them, these men have led the club through the past four decades. All three are smiling and the positive vibe between them seems palpable. The three share many similarities; all are successful Muslim Sunni businessmen of good social standing. Both Ghandour and Daouk are from notable Beirut families, and are related through marriage and business relationships. They both have a long history of contribution to and leadership of Islamic charitable organisations. As leaders of the club, they clearly resemble in background and class terms the politicians and officials who came to congratulate the club far more than they resemble members of the club's wide and varied fan base.*

*Yet the amiability that seems to pervade their relationship does not coincide with the views of club fans who spoke of important differences between Ghandour, who left the club in 2003, and Daouk, the current President. According to club members the three Presidents symbolise between them two distinctly different eras; the Ghandour era, between 1969 and 2003, and the Hariri era which began in 2003 and during which both Fanj and Daouk served as Presidents. Hariri's patronage initiated significantly different dynamics both within the club's leadership, and in the management's relationships with the club's patron, its membership and its fan base. Seen from the fans' perspective, the club was at one time pronounced 'dead' and a picture of its logo with a black mourning strip photo-shopped onto it was used in one of the club's Facebook groups to convey this message. Despite the many similarities, between Daouk - an entrepreneur and international business lawyer - and Ghandour - a leader in paper manufacturing and other industries - there was more than a decade of age difference between them. Beyond age, they had varied outlooks towards their role as presidents of the club and the way they positioned themselves in relation to the club patron and the fans; a variation which reflected the broader changes taking place in Lebanon's economic and political context in the post-war period.*



*Figure 22: Nejmeh Presidents from 1969 – 2011. Nejmeh club's stadium in celebration of the club's 7th Lebanese Football Associations' championship, 2009. From left to right: Mohamamad Fanj (2003-2005), Mohammad Amin Daouk (2005 – present), Omar Ghandour (1969 – 2003).<sup>87</sup>*

## Introduction

In my analysis of changing roles and power relations within Nejmeh, and in following the discourse of club members and fans who spoke about a ‘Ghandour era’ and a ‘Hariri era’, I fell into the trap of making direct comparisons between the Ghandour’s leadership of the club and that of Hariri. However, Ghandour and Hariri occupied distinct positions and undertook very different roles within the club itself and in the broader social and political scene. Rafic Hariri, and later Saad his son, both served as Prime Minister and as leaders of the Sunni communities. Hariri senior’s position within the hierarchy of club leadership was similar to that of Saeb Salam in the late 1960s – the time when Ghandour joined the club; Hariri, like Salam, was the club’s *ra’i*, the Arabic word for patron. Ghandour’s position should have been comparable to that of Daouk, Nejmeh’s President at the time of my research. However, the fans’ labelling of the two phases was justified by the relative equity in the power that Ghandour and Hariri had or still have in the club. It possibly summarised a key change that took place within the club, and within the Sunni communities of Beirut in the post-war period more broadly, namely the shift from a locus of power shared amongst Beirut’s bourgeoisie towards one held by a single leader from the entrepreneurial elite.

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<sup>87</sup> Copyright is for Almustaqbal newspaper. Obtained from the electronic version of issue dated 4/5/2009 – page 22 <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=np&Articleid=345439> accessed 19/9/2015.

In the previous chapter I described the new model of political elite that Hariri personified; that is, the emerging entrepreneurial elite who, in their political and public careers, instrumentally and performatively used wealth on an exceptional scale. The predominant role of this entrepreneurial elite, which paralleled the shifts in the elite's formation across the region (Leenders 2004, Husseini 2004), is closely tied to global and local economic and political transformations, not least of which is the growth of neoliberalism. The subject of this chapter is the ways in which the change in the elite at the upper tier of the Lebanese political hierarchy correlates with changes within Beirut's bourgeoisie. According to Roniger and Güneş-Ayata (1994: 14-15), patronage is strengthened by neoliberal policies as 'promotion of liberalisation, reduction of state intervention in favour of market mechanisms, privatisation of state-owned and state-supported services, and curtailment of union power, among other processes, further fragment society and heighten the need for support networks'. Nejmeh club provides a particular example of how interactions were effected between neoliberal economic policy, the newly re-modelled elite (as epitomised by Hariri), and Beirut's bourgeoisie. Drawing on developments in Nejmeh Sport Club I show how the relationship between the political elite and the bourgeoisie changed in the post-war period.

As described in the previous chapter, the industrial sector had undergone brief periods of growth in the pre-war period. Ghandour's family belonged to - if not constituted the majority of - the industrial bourgeoisie which comprised less than 1% of the Lebanese population of Beirut and its suburbs in 1970, compared to the 4% who belonged to the commercial and financial bourgeoisie (Johnson 1986: 34). According to Johnson (1986), the industrialist bourgeoisie were, to a great extent, dependent on foreign and local financial capital and thus had a weaker position within the clientelist set of relationships. The relationship between industrialists and the traditional za'im, (namely Saeb Salam in the 1970s) thus implied a subordinate political position. However, the relationship between industrialists and Salam was 'marked by friendship and more equal exchanges between patron and client than those which existed, for example between a za'im and a member of the sub-proletariat' (Johnson 1986: 36). Those relatively 'more equal' relationships in the 1970s, I believe, allowed Nejmeh under Ghandour a certain measure of independence from the za'im's authority.

The economic policy of the post-war period was less favourable to the industrial sector, serving to marginalise the position of its bourgeoisie members and to force their retreat from Nejmeh's leadership - as described in the previous chapter. The 'Hariri Era' within

Nejmeh was characterised by a greater role for the commercial and financial bourgeoisie as compared to those in the industrial sector. The former though, seem to have had a more subordinate relationship to the za'im in the post-war period than their industrial counterparts had to Salam in the 1970s, a factor which contributed to the shift in power within the club into the hands of Hariri, the highest entrepreneurial and political authority in the Sunni community of Beirut.

In the following sections I offer ethnographic data to elaborate on the above-mentioned changes within Nejmeh. I begin by arguing that the rhetoric of patronage was used to describe and possibly strengthen the pre-existing power relationship within the club. I propose that this power balance was predetermined by economic relationships rather than by the patron-client hierarchy. Political and economic changes, and the capture of state resources by political leaders, underpinned the transformations I observed in patron – client relations. One of the major effects of such changes was the marginalisation not only of clients within the club's sub-system, but also of those who chose not to engage with the patronage system and retained their non-client status. I single out Beirut's urban elite as clients or brokers, and show their role in furthering the power of the political leadership. My focus on these issues provides evidence of the form that political relationships have taken but I also take into account the idea that they are not the direct cause of these relationships' formation (Gilsenan 1977).

In the second section I sketch the profiles of two club presidents; Omar Ghandour, President from 1969-2003, and Mohammad Amin Daouk, President from 2005 and currently. I explore their motivations for joining the club and their positioning within it in relation to the club's patron, their fellow members, and the fans. I examine both continuities and changes in the roles and discourses of the two men in an attempt to understand how the urban elite of Beirut position themselves. The section also explores how the urban elite engaged with changes in the leadership of the Sunni communities and with more far reaching political and economic changes in Lebanon. I show how shifts in the broader context are manifested and recreated in the club, signalling a change in the ethos selected to represent the elite's motivation to engage in club affairs - the focus having changed from a charitable approach to a professional and institutional one.

The third section elaborates on the above-mentioned developments and the ways in which these exemplify changes not only in the roles and ethos of the club President but also in those of other members of the board and amongst the bourgeoisie more generally. In

addition to presenting what appears to be a dichotomy of old and new leaderships, I highlight the continuities which exist between different board members who, despite being affiliated to various political camps today, nevertheless belong to the same social class and maintain business, social and personal relationships which are not shared with lower class fans and members. Alongside the preservation of existing class structures, Nejme's board has also witnessed a diminution of the charitable motivation of its members as well as a de-prioritisation of the fostering of horizontal relationships between members of the elite. Nejme's board has moved away from being a relatively independent group of entrepreneurs and industrialists governed by a charitable ethos to become a board exclusively made up of entrepreneurs. Board members today subscribe to an ethos of entrepreneurship and a unanimous desire to implement the patron's agenda. Evidence of a repositioning of the club's centre of power shows in changes to the board and president's instalment processes, exclusivity of the patron's funding, and above all in the public vocal allegiance of loyalty to the patron's politics by board members and fans. I argue that these developments were only made possible because of the complicity of some of Beirut's urban elite, and not despite their interventions.

## **Outside the Pitch: Exclusion from Clientelistic Networks**

Clientelism and the sectarian-based patronage system have been repeatedly cited as dominant features of Lebanese communitarian politics (Khalaf 1977, Gellner 1977, Johnson 1986, Hamzeh 2001). Hamzeh, a Lebanese political scientist, claims that in the post-war period clientelism in Lebanon reinvented itself and proved its tenacity or in other words took 'one more turn along an evolutionary track' (2001: 17). Clientelism's persistence in Lebanon provides yet another example of a now commonly held understanding of clientelism's ubiquity and resilience. Roniger provides an appropriate description of clientelism in post-war Lebanon, as 'an enduring feature of politics [...] that the rising tide of neoliberalism has only increased its presence in many contemporary societies' (2004: 6). Acknowledging the limitations of the literature on, and the language of clientelism as an analytical entry point, it is useful to briefly discuss what Lebanon's changing political scene can offer to understandings of the evolution of patron-client relations. I examine this topic against the backdrop of a change of style of political leadership in Lebanon which reflects neoliberalism's global growth.

The post-war period saw a transfer of political leadership from the traditional za'im to warlords and entrepreneurs. Hariri was a prime example of the latter (Leenders 2004, Husseini 2004), and his monopolisation of representation of the Sunni sect in a process of 'sectarian crystallization' (Beydoun 2012) forces a closer analysis of the processes of inclusion and exclusion within the sectarian based clientelistic networks that characterise Lebanese politics.

The 'sectarian crystallization' within the Sunni sect, described by Beydoun (2012) was primarily due to Hariri's style of large-scale expenditure combined with his symbolic and performative self-presentation as a sectarian leader. As described in the previous chapter, Hariri's style brought him exclusive leadership of the Sunni sect and marginalised all other potential leaders; both ends were achieved through either the buy out of competition or the monopolisation of Saudi financial support. What I present in this chapter, and the following two chapters, is the process by which members of the Sunni sect were either compelled to show loyalty to Hariri or were de facto outside of the clientelism and patronage networks which characterise public and political life in Lebanon.

The classical understanding of patron-client relations is well summarised by Gilson as 'relations between two persons or groups one of whom is in some way in a superior or more favourable position than the other. From the first flow favours, rewards and protection; from the latter perhaps specific goods and services but also more diffuse returns of loyalty, support, or allegiance' (1977: 167). Gilson though, is one of a number of critics who see clientelism as a relation of exploitation and dominance (Li Causi 1975, Littlewood 1981). He has argued that patron-client terminology 'is part of a functionalist-consensus view of society that obstructs a deeper analysis of social structures in quite fundamental ways'(1977: 168). The obstructed analysis Gilson mentions could usefully be brought to bear on class-related structural relations.

I suggest that evidence from Nejmeh club's leadership supports Gilson's assertion that 'patron client-relations are symptoms of power relations not a cause' (1977: 180). To illustrate the above I first examine the transactional basis of patron-client relationships. In order to create a demand for patronal favours, rewards, and protection, a prospective patron would need not only to institute his control over available resources in order to provide such favours, but also to ensure that potential clients had no access to such resources through any channels other than his. Control of this kind is unlikely to be acquired with the unanimous consent of members of the larger community, although any

patron or political leader would have a number of followers and supporters. Hariri's control of Nejmeh was not achieved at the moment when he became its patron, but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it depended on a far longer prior process involving the political and economic marginalisation of other potential leaders and a deliberate narrowing of options to secure club funding - both strategies which ensured that Hariri's patronage would seem like the only option capable of ensuring the club's continuity. At the time, drawing Hariri in as a patron provided a rationale for his control and a way of ensuring his commitment to the club, much as Silverman discusses the use of a rhetoric and ideology of patronage as 'a means of drawing high status outsiders into local commitments' (1977: 17). Seen in these terms, clientelistic relations, rather than being understood as stemming from a client's need for protection, are instead an adaptation strategy deployed by some members of society to ensure receipt of the largest share of resources possible through alignment with the za'im.

Similarly, a broad perspective needs to be taken in defining the community within which clientelistic relations exist. While the relationships between Hariri, acting board members, and his supporters among the fans could be described as clientelistic, at least in form, expanding the analysis to include club members who were not among Hariri's followers highlights the marginalisation experienced by those who resisted the role ascribed to them within the patronage hierarchy. Individuals like Ghandour and Baroudi, who were board members before Hariri took over the Club's patronage, and also members of Beirut's Sunni communities over which Hariri was za'im can definitely not be regarded as his clients. Within every community where certain patrons dominate, many individuals choose not to engage in the transaction patterns of loyalty and protection and therefore become marginal in that community. While consent might be one feature of the relationship between the patron and his clients, the trait of domination best describes a patron's relationship with his 'non-clients'. The structures of exploitation and domination that Li Causi (1975) discusses need to be seen not merely as the exploitation of lower class clients, but rather as the exclusion of those who refuse to become clients or those whose loyalty is not seen as profitable or of any value to the patrons.

As this and later chapters demonstrate, members of the Sunni sect – as well as some members of other sects - continued to be members of the web of clientelistic relationships surrounding Hariri on condition firstly that they consented to the leadership of Hariri and, secondly, that they were of instrumental value to him in electoral competition and non-electoral popular mobilisation (Cammett and Issar 2010). While some of those excluded

from Hariri's network found alternative clientelistic networks to attach themselves to – for example some Shi'ite fans whose votes and loyalty were of no instrumental value to Hariri but nevertheless useful to other political groups - many of those in the club who refused to be Hariri's clients found themselves outside of the 'game'. This group included the Sunni industrialists of Beirut's bourgeoisie, Sunni members of Arab Nationalist groups who did not support Hariri politically, and a large proportion of the 50% of the Lebanese electorate who did not vote in the most recent parliamentary elections.

Nejmeh was an exceptional club which for years managed to stay outside the clientelistic networks of the sectarian *zu'ama* of Lebanon to such an extent that at one point the club was labelled the '19<sup>th</sup> sect', an ironical appellation signifying its specifically non-sectarian character. However, the club could survive neither the post-war economic policy of Hariri, nor the 'sectarian crystallization' of the Sunnis among other sects.

## **Snapshot of Two Presidents and Two Eras**

In this section I present a summary of the career trajectories of two of Nejmeh's Presidents. I use their profiles as examples to illustrate the roles which they, and members of their boards, played vis-a-vis the club, its fans, and the club's patron. Between the presidencies of Ghandour and Daouk, I observe differences in the profiles of board members, as well as in the styles of their instalment and their sources of legitimacy. I also compare various board members' motivations for engagement with sport and their perceptions of it. Table 8 below summarises key differences between Ghandour's and Daouk's presidencies on which I expand further in following sections describing each presidents' separate trajectory.

In brief, the difference in the two men's roles and trajectories is indicative of a shift in the locus of power in the management of Nejmeh upwards. I show how power has gravitated away from what can be seen as a second tier of the socio-economic elite, namely Beirut's bourgeoisie, from which both club Presidents, Daouk and Ghandour, originated. The hierarchical structure of the club's leadership has not changed significantly, with the Sunni *za'im* and club patron occupying the top of the pyramid and the club's management being mostly being in the hands of a group of members of the Beirut urban elite. Yet the roles each president played underwent change: when responsibility for club funding fell entirely on the club's patron in the Hariri era, the patron acquired full entitlement to choose the club's board, relegating the role of the club President to one of management on the patron's behalf.

**Table 8 - Comparison of the profile and role of club presidents Ghandour and Daouk**

	<b>Ghandour as President<sup>88</sup> (1969 - 2003)</b>	<b>Daouk as president (2005 - present) <sup>89</sup></b>
<b>President's Profile</b>	The charitable industrialist.	The professional entrepreneur.
<b>Profile of Board members</b>	Industrialists, engineers, members of Islamic charity associations, from prominent Beirut families.	Lawyers, contractors, members of Islamic charity associations, from prominent Beirut families.
<b>Styles of instalment of President and board members</b>	Horizontal: board members are recruited through networks of kinship and friendship as well as from upper class fans (using 'mawna' and through assessment of 'social capital') – Presidency as social duty.	Vertical: appointed by club patron or his client representative for professional qualifications or for patron's political considerations. - Presidency as political reward.
<b>President's source of legitimacy</b>	- Securing needed funds. - Sporting achievement of the club.	- Representing the club's patron. - Sporting achievement of the club.
<b>Self described motivation for joining the board of the club</b>	- 'charitable contribution'. - 'leaving a positive print'. - 'protect youth from vice through attracting them to sports'	- 'It would be difficult to deny [Rafic Hariri] a request'. - 'I came to provide managerial and institutional support'.
<b>Source of funding</b>	Various patrons and contributions of board members: 'For 35 years, I was not counted as anybody's follower, I used to get money from everybody and pay on top of that from my own pocket, me and the members of the board - and we remained on good terms with everybody.'	One single patron: 'We were entrusted to manage the club, not to fund it'.
<b>Perception of sports</b>	A community affair, part of the 'communitarian society'. It's role, just like Islamic charities and the Islamic waqf is a social charitable one.	'Nejmeh was full of history, and representative of the nobility and rootage ('araqah) of Lebanon and Beirut in particular'.
<b>Expectation from client</b>	Get 'reformed' & avoid 'immorality'.	Respect (if not show loyalty) to the club's patron – 'You can't be in a club and badmouth he who is funding it'.

88 Quotations in this column are by Nejmeh President Ghandour, and board members Zuheir Baroudi and Saadeddine Itani who served on the board in the nineties. Ghandour and Baroudi both left once the club moved into the patronage of Hariri. Later sections include all the above quotations including the name of the person who said them and the context.

89 All quotations in this column are by Nejmeh President Daouk, who served in this role since 2005 and while the club was under Hariri patronage.

	<b>Ghandour as President<sup>88</sup> (1969 - 2003)</b>	<b>Daouk as president (2005 - present) <sup>89</sup></b>
<b>Role of club's Patron (ra'i)</b>	Play an honorary role that gives the club status and facilitates fundraising by its board members. Support the club in times of trouble through connections and access to the state, particularly governmental and legal issues.	Provide the club's financial needs. Appoint board members and other needed personnel for smooth running of the club.

### **The Charitable Industrialist: The Ghandour Era<sup>90</sup>**

I still remember it really well, and no matter how much I have paid into the club, I knew it was worth it when this woman came to visit me in my office. The secretary knocked on my door and told me there was a lady who wanted to see me. I welcomed her in, and from the doorway - she did not even go in, she said "Mr. Omar, I am here to thank you because my husband no longer gambles in horse racing". This statement alone was worth all my efforts and the money I have paid'.

This is how Omar Ghandour, President from 1969 – 2003, described what he regarded as Nejme's most important achievement. The quote also reveals his motivation for investing time, effort and money in the club. His comments were made in an interview I conducted with him in 2009, six years after he had left the club. In the reception area of a large warehouse space that housed both offices and storage space for products manufactured by Ghandour's companies, I saw an array of Nejme memorabilia and photographs showing Ghandour either standing amongst the Nejme members and players or held aloft on fans' shoulders. The club, and his role in it, was still a crucial part of Ghandour's self-presentation despite the long time that had passed since he left and the many changes that had taken place.

The setting for the interview was Ghandour's office which was a huge, luxurious space, despite it being in an industrial underground depot. Ghandour sat behind his desk at the far end of the imposing, almost ten-meter long room in which several well-upholstered, capacious sofas did not detract from the impression of spaciousness. At the far end was the door by which the lady referred to in the interview had stood many years ago. When

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90 This introduction to Ghandour is based on an interview I conducted with him on 25/9/2009 in his office in Beirut. Additional material derives from a leaflet distributed in support of his electoral campaign for a parliamentary seat in 2009. (See figure 26)

she deferentially asked the secretary for what Ghandour recalls as ‘just a word at the door with Mr. Ghandour’, she was obviously acknowledging that she would not be able to ask more of the wealthy and influential businessman. Ghandour pointed out to me that she had called him ‘Mr. Omar’, noting that at the time he was not yet a ‘Hajj’, a title only bestowed on a person who had performed the religious pilgrimage to Mecca.

Hajj Omar Abdul Kader Ghandour was born in 1930, to a well-known Beirut family of industrialists who had established some of Lebanon’s earliest factories and who, in the pre-civil war period, were ‘perhaps the most influential industrial group in Beirut’ (Johnson 1986: 35). Ghandour studied at the Islamic Makassed, an Islamic Lebanese school, and the Jesuits Freres a missionary school, and completed university studies at the American University of Beirut. As noted in earlier chapters, all three institutions were instrumental in advancing organised sports in Lebanon and were private institutions where members of Beirut’s middle and upper class not only received their education, but also socialised and built networks of friends and acquaintances. Upon his graduation from university, Ghandour took over the management of his father’s factory, later establishing a factory for paper products in Lebanon, an industry that he expanded to the Senegal in 1971.

He also followed his father’s example in participating in charitable works. His father was on the managing council of the Islamic Endowment, and active in social care organisations and the establishment of mosques. Ghandour himself was Secretary General for the same mosque establishment committee, and served on the boards of at least five different Islamic charities.

In sports, he began in horseback riding and was later elected President of a Lebanese equestrian club, an office he held until 1975. In that same year, he was elected head of the Lebanese Gymnastic Association which he continued to lead until 2003. He had other leadership roles in a number of sports institutions, including football, golf, and the National Olympic Committee, but his greatest engagement with sport was reserved for Nejmeh Sport Club.

Hajj Omar joined Nejmeh in 1968, at the request of his paternal cousin Samir Ghandour<sup>91</sup>. Samir had been asked to lead Nejmeh club by the patron presiding at the time, Mr. Saeb Salam, who was a Sunni za‘im and ex-Prime Minister:

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91 Samir was Omar Ghandour's son of his father's brother.

‘[Samir Ghandour] called me one day and told me about Nejmeh, that it was a significant Lebanese club ... and said that Saeb Salam had asked him to become its president and it was important for him that I join. I said I couldn’t, that I didn’t have the time and did not know much about football; true I played football in school but I didn’t know how to run a football club. He insisted, saying that I had experience in sports and associations, that it was important for him that I support him, that I would come as Vice President and help him out and that the whole thing would not take much time, only a meeting once per month. Of course, out of my regard and brotherliness to my cousin I accepted.’

While his cousin might have been motivated to join the club because of his political relationship with club patron Salam, Ghandour accepted the invitation to join Nejmeh because of kin obligation. He had been selected over other cousins because of his interest and extensive experience in sports. Only two days after Omar Ghandour accepted the post, his cousin picked him up so that they could go together to what was supposed to be the election meeting for Nejmeh’s new board which was taking place at the house of one of the club’s founders. As he described it, there were 10-15 members in attendance as well as members of an already agreed on new board. A member who was one of ‘Saeb Salam’s men’ as Ghandour recalls, ‘stood up and introduced the new members of the board’ who received the applause and cheers of those in attendance. After being congratulated, this board went out onto the balcony to allocate the posts of the new board; this was the moment when Ghandour was assigned the position of a Vice President.

In recalling the events of that period, Ghandour said that the whole process ‘did not appeal’ to him, meaning that he disapproved of how elections were run since they were not genuine, their outcomes having been prearranged to suit the patron’s desires. When he was told that ‘this is how the club is run, Saeb Salam is responsible for it and he appoints its board’, Omar Ghandour considered resigning but was assured by his cousin that they had a *carte blanche* from the club’s patron to run the club as they wished. The cousins then embarked on a process of internal organisation of the club. They started by reorganising the General Assembly, which, according to Ghandour should ‘hold the board accountable’. They called on its existing members to pay their membership fees, but none did. Many of those included on the list of members were either dead, away, or never paid membership fees. The cousins then set about recruiting members for the General Assembly:

‘Each one of us went to his friends and started begging them to join, merely because we wanted the funding from membership fees. Of course, I recruited my people, Samir recruited his people, each member recruited those who he had *mawna* [influence or authority] on.’

This method of recruitment – and fund-raising – for the club continued for 35 years until Ghandour resigned his post in 2003. He and other board members used their web of personal connections, tact, and credibility to fortify the club and to guarantee support for it. Through recruiting to the club they both utilised and consolidated their networks of social relations and thereby increased their social capital. The concept of ‘mawna’, which I elaborate on in the following section, was crucial to the work of the Ghandour cousins at this time.

During Omar Ghandour’s first year on the club’s board, the process of restructuring caused internal conflicts between his cousin Samir and Salam’s representative on the board. Hajj Omar, though supportive of his cousin’s vision for the club, tried to play the role of the peacemaker. Backed by a group of members loyal to him, he also managed to subvert club bureaucracy and rules to force a new election which resulted in both his promotion to the club’s presidency and the silencing of any opposing voices.

At the time, Ghandour was not politically affiliated to the camp of the Sunni leader and club patron, Saeb Salam. In fact, in recalling that period, Ghandour recalled how Salam assumed that he would move the club away from a ‘political camp that [Salam] has clout on’. Clearly though, and as evidence of the limited power that the patron exercised over the club, Salam did not succeed in preventing Ghandour from taking the club over<sup>92</sup>, and the antagonism between them only ended when work progressed and Salam realised that Ghandour was trying to distance the club from direct political adherence to a single political leader.

Many fans confirmed that Ghandour’s success in distancing the club from being subject to any one politician’s agenda prevented Nejme from being swept up in the turbulent politics of the following three decades. His tactics of distancing the club were especially important during the 15-year civil war when the club’s huge fan base could have been fertile ground for recruitment of young men into the warring militias. However, Ghandour’s strategy did

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92 In 1969 Ghandour’s presidency of the club was opposed by other board members with stronger links to Salam, but this did not prevent him from winning.

not necessarily mean that Nejmeh was completely disengaged from the politics of the time, whether at regional or national level or within the Sunni communities of Beirut. Neither did the strategy mean that Ghandour had no political agenda of his own. As Chapter Three explains, Nejmeh's growth and popularity were largely due to its positioning as the club of the Muslim communities, who popularly supported Arab Nationalism and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and stood in opposition to the control of the right wing political powers of the time. Although Ghandour did not engage in politics while he was club President, in 2009 he stood as the lead opposition candidate in Beirut against Saad Hariri. In his electoral campaign Ghandour continued to stress these same values including 'unity of all Muslims' and 'Beirut, the capital of resistance' - a slogan affirming his support of Hezbollah and of militant resistance against Israel.<sup>93</sup> In practice within the club, Ghandour's efforts engendered an inclusive policy that brought together Sunnis and Shiites not only in Beirut, but far beyond the city.

With no real control from any communitarian or political agencies, Ghandour ran the club for three decades relying on three of his main strengths; his personal wealth, from which he contributed to the club's annual budget, his web of relations which enabled him to enlist financial support and membership for the club, and his interpersonal social skills and diplomacy which he used to maintain the satisfaction of the clubs patrons and its varied fans. Of particular note is Ghandour's investment in the club's fan base. In addition to the many spectacular events that Nejmeh organised in the 1970s, including inviting Pele to play for Nejmeh and playing friendly games against well known international teams, Ghandour maintained a personal relationship of courtesy with fans. As Abu Ahmad<sup>94</sup>, a Nejmeh fan from the Southern Suburbs described him, 'Hajj Omar was very respectable, very courteous, and he had no prejudice; he loved those who loved him and loved the game'. Abu Ahmad described how Ghandour regularly visited fans and club's offices in the

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93 Around a quarter of Ghandour's electoral leaflet is dedicated to a speech that he gave in 2006 to 'honor martyrs of Beirut'. In it he celebrates popular actions and demonstrations in support of Arab Nationalist causes, not least the Palestinian cause and resistance against Israel. These included, for example, the funeral procession of Khalil al-Jamal who died fighting Israel in April 1968, which exemplified that support with over 150,000 people joining it and the ensuing enlistment of many Lebanese in PLO's armed ranks (Arfi 2005, El-Khazen 2000). Al-Jamal, who died in Jordan, is claimed as the 'first Lebanese martyr' in the resistance against Israel, though this of course is contested, and many other groups have claimed 'first martyrs'. Whether he was the 'first martyr' or not is only significant in that it is an attempt to make a claim of status for him, and to prove the early participation of the Beirutis in the resistance to Israel.

94 Quotations from Abu Ahmad are from a recorded interview I conducted with him on 10/6/2009 in a small park next to his shop in the Southern Suburbs. The interview was in Arabic and the translation is mine.

Southern Suburbs: ‘if there was a celebration, the launching of a [regional] fans’ union, a new centre, [Ghandour] would take the initiative and join. If somebody died, we would call the Hajj and let him know and he would come to pay condolences’

Despite the amicable relationship Ghandour maintained with the fans and the club being an inclusive space for various religions and political affiliations, Nejmeb was never truly outside the class and client codes that kept it under the control of the – albeit charitable and reverent – elite. Even without endorsement from a political patron, board members were elected uncontested in the vast majority of elections and the General Assembly membership remained selective and was representative of the different power holders who existed on the board. Despite their efforts to establish unions and networks the fans, who belonged to lower social classes, remained on the margins of the club’s decision making process and had no legal voice in its management.



*Figure 23: Picture of Ghandour carried on the shoulders of Nejmeb fans. Picture was hanging on the wall of Ghandour’s office when I visited in 2009.*



Figure 24: Selection of pictures on show in Omar Ghandour's office in 2009. All pictures are of him with Nejmeh players and fans.



Figure 25: Awards and certificate on display in Ghandour's office. All but two are in appreciation of Nejmeh and his role as its President.



## الحاج عمر عبد القادر غندور

### مرشح الدائرة الثالثة لبيروت

#### رجل يرى نفسه بين الناس وخاصة وحدة كلمة المسلمين



## البيان الانتخابي

من أن تكونت منكم في العالم العربي... البيان الانتخابي... بيروت، أم الفقير، ومدينة العلم...

### السيرة الذاتية

ولد في بيروت، 1931... من أهم إنجازاته... من أهم إنجازاته... من أهم إنجازاته...

### مشاركاته الرياضية

شارك في بطولة العالم... من أهم إنجازاته... من أهم إنجازاته...

### احتلت الألعاب الرياضية حيزاً كبيراً من سنين عمره

### من خطابات الحاج عمر غندور

في ذكرى المولد النبوي الشريف 2009/7/11... في احتفال تكريم شخصته بيروت، 2006/7/19 في قصر الأونيسكو... من أهم إنجازاته... من أهم إنجازاته...

Figure 26: Omar Ghandour's electoral flyer for the 2009 parliamentary elections.

## **The Professional Entrepreneur: Daouk as President**

Mohammad Amin Al-Daouk is an attorney and an international arbitrator. He has presided over Nejmeh since 2005. When Nejmeh club moved into the patronage of the Hariri establishment in 2003, Daouk became the second person to serve as a president under the new patronage having been preceded by Fanj (2003 – 2005).

My interview with Mr. Daouk was the final one I conducted during fieldwork, and although I had his approval to conduct this research and had previously seen him at games and the club's stadium, the interview was my only substantive conversation with him. The interview took place in Daouk's work space, on a Saturday morning, in his spacious office in Beirut's Sanayeh district.

On taking on the presidency of the club, Daouk recalls:

I was called one day by Prime Minister Hariri, he wanted to see me. I thought maybe it has to do with politics since [parliamentary] elections were coming up [...] or maybe business, as I was handling one of his court cases as a lawyer, but I was surprised when he said he wanted me as Nejmeh club's President. I was already a General Assembly member, which goes back to my personal and professional friendship with Hajj Omar Ghandour, who had enrolled me in the General Assembly without me really having much to do with football. I am just like any other citizen in my relationship with football; I like it just as I like basketball, which I have played at school, but I have never played football. I was a bit surprised by that offer to tell you the truth; I had not taken interest in football previously. This is when he told me that this was not a mere football club, that Nejmeh was full of history, and representative of the nobility, lineage and rootedness of Lebanon and Beirut in particular, and about his desire to find a person and a name worthy of managing it.<sup>95</sup>

After some resistance, Daouk accepted the responsibility Rafic Hariri entrusted him with saying 'It would be difficult to deny him a request'. Daouk justified his decision not only by the Prime Minister's political position, but also by what he describes as their 'personal friendship'. As I was told by an insider to both the club and the Hariri establishment, the

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95 Interview took place on 25/9/2009 in the office of Mr. Daouk. It was recorded and conducted in Arabic; translation from Arabic is mine.

club's presidency was given to Daouk 'as a commitment from Prime Minister Hariri to find Daouk an alternative role' after he had had to side-line him - because of local and regional political considerations - in the upcoming parliamentary elections that were due to take place in the summer of 2005.

By the time Daouk actually assumed his responsibilities as club director, the political context in Lebanon had changed significantly. Ex-Prime Minister Rafic Hariri had been assassinated a mere weeks after the above conversation with Daouk took place, the Syrian army had withdrawn from Lebanon, and the country was going through the most acute political crisis since the end of the civil war in 1990.

In terms of personal biography, Daouk is a lawyer with experience in international arbitration, especially international commerce cases. Besides being on the board of professional organisations like the 'Arab Association for International Arbitration' and 'The Lebanese Association for Arbitration', he has served as legal advisor on the boards of a number of insurance companies and banks. Although new to the world of sports, he was for 17 years head of the Beirut based charity the 'Islamic Centre' and at the time of the interview was head of the non-governmental organisation the 'Beirut Gathering' - all responsibilities that he saw as equipping him with adequate management experience to run the club.

Although involved in charitable work, Daouk did not stress this aspect of his work with Nejmeh in the way that his predecessor, Ghandour, did. What he highlighted, even more than the club's achievement, was the impact of Hariri's support, and he evaluated his work based on the criteria of fulfilling the duties he was entrusted with by the club's patron. According to Daouk, and to several other Hariri-affiliated club members, what being part of the Hariri establishment brought to Nejmeh was 'professionalism', and 'managerial restructuring'. He confirmed that board members were chosen not only on the basis of their interest in football, but also, more importantly, on their professional 'qualifications'.

Daouk's role in the club was limited to managing it on behalf of the Hariri establishment and he had no responsibility for securing funds. In discussing the financial crisis the club was experiencing due to delays in receiving promised payments at the time of my research, he mentioned contributing financially to the club from time to time, but described how his main responsibility towards it focused more on management issues:

'We contributed what we could as individuals and fulfilled our responsibility, each according to his capacity. I wish of course I had more resources to

contribute, but this is a club and we have families, children and their future to think about. It is a club, and I was not the one who established it, I was only entrusted to manage it, along with my colleagues on the board. We were entrusted to manage the club, not to fund it.’

Daouk stressed that the board had complete managerial independence and that the Hariri Establishment did not interfere in Nejmeh’s day-to-day running. He said ‘there is no structured relation, but there is moral supervision, and they know what is happening’.

Yet, Daouk’s relationships with the club’s patron were significantly different from those that Ghandour had with patrons during his presidency. Daouk explained that the Hariri establishment’s funding of the club imposed certain obligations, although these were not formally requested by it or outlined in a written contract: ‘we are taking money from them and they have the right to ask us what it is we are doing with the money’. These obligations went beyond financial management. Just after the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon ended, two Nejmeh Asian Cup games were played in Beirut and during both matches there were clashes between opposing groups of Nejmeh’s fans. The club’s fans had factionalised along sectarian and political lines, a development which paralleled the political schism dividing the country. In coordination with his board members Daouk published a press release clearly positioning the club within the ‘family of the Future Movement’ (As-Safir 21/9/2006), an act which automatically distanced many fans who were politically opposed to the Future Movement. This press release was often cited by fans as the catalyst for non Hariri-affiliated club supporters distancing themselves from the club.<sup>96</sup> Commenting on the press release and the clashes in the stadium, Daouk, although apologetic and regretful about what he called the ‘misunderstanding’ that occurred in reaction to his public statement, nevertheless affirmed his right and duty to defend the club’s patron: ‘so what, do we deny what he did? He is funding the club, and they [the fans] badmouth him and humiliate him, badmouth his sect and humiliate it, and we are not allowed to say a word about it?’

By highlighting Hariri’s contribution and in issuing the press release, Daouk defined his role to as one devoted to ensuring that the control of the Hariri establishment over Nejmeh was maintained. His action showed how he derived his legitimacy from precisely this aspect

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96 I discuss the clashes in the stadium and the press release in detail in Chapter Seven.

of his presidential role. Being the representative of the club's patron worked to simultaneously legitimise and delegitimise Daouk's role; he possessed a good measure of the authority of the patron yet, paradoxically, he had little power or autonomy of his own. He, and other new board members, were often described as 'mere employees', even by fans and members who saw themselves as 'belonging to the family of the Future Movement'. Perceived like this, Daouk and the board appeared powerless unless the work they did was obviously authorised by the club's patron. The designation of 'employee' was intended as an overt criticism by some, but seen as an excuse by others for Daouk's limited contribution.



*Figure 27: Nejmeh board members and staff visiting club patron Saad Hariri. Hariri is in the centre with the recently won trophy for Nejmeh's LEA championship, and to his right is the Club president at the time, Mohammad Amin Daouk.<sup>97</sup>*

## **Which of Beirut's Bourgeoisie should Lead the 'Ancient Club'?**

In building on my brief profiles of the two club Presidents, I expand my ethnographic description to explore the roles of other key decision makers in the club during the two presidential eras under discussion. I highlight ways in which the profile, role, and

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<sup>97</sup> Picture courtesy of club's Public relations officer.

presentation of the club's President and board members have been transformed in the post-war period. Focusing on changes in the Lebanese bourgeoisie, I highlight how these changes reflect the redefinition of the highest tier of the political elite in Lebanon - or as Perthes describes them the 'politically relevant elite'(2004) - and particularly as Hariri establishes himself as a 'super-za'im' (Baumann 2012a). I also illustrate how such transformations are closely linked to local and global economic changes.

### **Downgrading of Charitable Motivations**

In retrospect, Ghandour stressed above all else the charitable aspects of his involvement in the club. As described earlier, the charitable motivation ( '*amal al-khair*') was what he repeatedly mentioned as his main motivation:

'Success was never winning a championship or a cup nor managing eleven players; this does not require much management or skill. The issue was the fans. The amount of fans you get into the stadium is the same amount you deprive militias of, the more people come to the club... the more you protect from drug use, from gambling... You protect them. You protect them from all vice. This was what I was concerned with in the club, to attract young people to the club so we can protect them morally. That is why I do not measure my success by the number of trophies we received, nor championships, nor that Pele played with us. These are all tools. These are all excellent, I am not saying they are not, but they are just tools to get people to the stadiums.'

Unlike Daouk, whose presidency spanned the Hariri era, Ghandour and other board members who worked with him stressed their motivation for joining the club and investing time and money in it as a charitable one: they hoped their initiatives would protect young people from involvement in political violence, drugs, alcohol and gambling. The rationale expressed for such charitable endeavour is both religious and social; an 'emotional investment' in time and money that I argue, like Bourdieu, is 'not necessarily conceived as a calculated pursuit of gain' (Bourdieu 1986: unpaginated)

Baroudi, who was Nejme's Secretary General for nine years, provided an example of this kind of emotional investment when he explained how his contributions to the club were a form of *Zakat*, a practice of mandatory charitable giving, and one of the five pillars of Islam.

‘One guy once told me, that we, as Muslims, pay the *Zakat*. If a Muslim comes to you now and is entitled to receiving the *Zakat*, and you know he is a drug addict and we need to get him rehabilitated, and the contribution we ask of you is a thousand US dollars, would you pay a thousand to save his life? Of course I would, not only pay a thousand ... but if you could pay that thousand dollars and protect ten people from drugs, you would have done something much better.’

Baroudi joined the club in the 1990s on his return to Lebanon at the end of the civil war and after graduating with an MBA from the London School of Economics. My interview with him took place in summer 2009, more than six years after his work as Secretary General ended. His large office, located in the warehouse of his sanitary ware manufacturing business, was abundantly adorned with Nejmeh memorabilia. In the centre of a whole-wall display there was a huge photo of the fans filling the stadium. To the sides were four smaller framed photos showing players, the club’s captain carrying the champion’s cup from many years ago, and others of Baroudi with fans and board members. Next to his desk, alongside pictures of his children, was another photo showing all the members of the last board in office before the change of management from Ghandour to the Hariri family.

Despite being over three decades younger than Ghandour, Baroudi also described his motivation for joining the club as ‘the public good’. Although he acknowledged the personal ‘gains’ he had derived from working for the club he also emphasised how, on returning to Lebanon after the war, he had wanted to ‘contribute’, to ‘leave a positive print’ on society - and Nejmeh was his outlet for that ambition.

Another board member, Saadeddine Itani, echoed a similar sentiment:

‘A lot of young people used to be attracted to things that would not serve them well, drinking or delinquency or anything of that sort, but we could attract them here, not just to football, but to sports more generally, through that we could refine and educate them and point them to that which serves society’.

He described this process and sports more broadly, as part of the ‘communitarian society’ (*mujtam‘ ’abli*). Its role, just like Islamic charities and the Islamic waqf, is a social charitable one. He affirmed that, unlike other ‘Arab states where governments appoint the boards of sports clubs, in Lebanon sports was a community affair’, one that sought to help the

community, not only through sporting activities and reaching out to the players themselves, but also through ‘the broader sports education work, in schools and college and through medical and social support to the players and their families’.

Itani’s involvement with the club began in the 1980’s when he was still young and unable to offer financial contributions. At this stage he was responsible for the youth teams who were not otherwise receiving much attention or support. A few years later he was asked to join Nejmeh’s board when his uncle left and he became the youngest board member. Like Baroudi, he acknowledged the personal gain he derived from his role; ‘It was my only breathing space, [...] I wanted to contribute, it gave me pleasure, others find pleasure in watching a movie, or going to a nightclub, but this was the only hobby I could find at times of war’. For Itani, Nejmeh was not only apolitical, but also a way out of politics. His investment in Nejmeh took place when the country was in the middle of the civil war. As he saw it, engaging in politics at that time almost inevitably meant being involved with one of the warring militias – a position he wanted to avoid.

However, several people I interviewed explained the motives of Ghandour and other board members in less altruistic terms. Some fans claimed that Ghandour took over the club hoping that it would eventually help him, at best, to build a political career or, at least, for the sake of gaining what they called ‘prestige’<sup>98</sup>. The idea that members were trying to acquire ‘prestige’, or what Bourdieu (1986) would term ‘social capital’, is worthy of further exploration. The trajectory of Ghandour himself and of many board members he presided over in the pre-Hariri period show that although most of these people had invested time and money which might have assisted in their accumulation of social capital, ultimately they did not achieve political or financial gain. That said, Beirut’s bourgeoisie saw Nejmeh club as a space in which the ‘reproduction of social capital’ (Bourdieu 1986) was facilitated. Being on the board of a sports club allowed individuals to work and connect amicably alongside other businessmen of similar class and standing. It provided them with the means to strengthen their network of relationships in a space that lay between the realms of the professional and the personal. A willingness to devote time, as a busy successful businessman, to a social charitable cause was perceived – particularly by other members of the bourgeoisie - as a source of status. The ability to perform such charitable work

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98 ‘Prestige’ was the exact word used by fans, most of whom were using the French word that has the same meaning as the English one.

efficiently and drive the club to success were perceived as further proof of capacity and managerial ability.

The above described charitable practices and motives that drove the three men who served on Nejmeh's board in the 1990s, namely Ghandour, Baroudi and Itani, were significantly different from those of board members who joined after the club came under Hariri patronage, and the philanthropic endeavours of Hariri himself. For example, in my interview with Daouk no mention was made of charitable motives. Instead, Daouk described his primary motive for taking on the club's presidency as a favour extended towards Rafic Hariri himself. Similarly, Secretary General Farshoukh, (also active during my fieldwork period) who acted as a paid staff member of the Hariri association, was appointed to support the 'institutionalisation' of the club rather than to make charitable contributions.<sup>99</sup>

Hariri's philanthropy is also of a different nature and scale as described in the previous chapter, and its instrumental use for direct political gain has been well documented (Cammett 2014).

Amongst the bourgeois members of the club's board a downgrading of the charitable motivation for joining was a development closely linked to the economic and political changes which occurred during the post-war period as described in the account of the Hariri approach in the previous chapter. Although Sunni zu'ama, for whom the Makassed Association was an important stepping-stone, had previously relied to a considerable extent on the benevolent contributions of Beirut's bourgeoisie to the association, Hariri did not. He financed his philanthropic activities by means of his private wealth augmented by Saudi funding, a rich combination of resources which made the financial charitable role of the bourgeoisie look insignificant in comparison. Hariri's funding methods were applied parallel to, and in contrast with, the sharp decline in wealth amongst politically independent groups of the bourgeoisie whose incomes derived from the manufacturing industries.

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99 Overlap did exist between the management styles deployed in the 1990s and the 2000s. Itani for example served on the board under Ghandour and continued as Secretary General during part of my research period under the patronage of Hariri. The change is in the main motivation for the board members in key positions and the defining ethos of Nejmeh membership.

## Horizontal and Vertical Styles of Instalment

Another major difference between the ‘Ghandour era’ and the ‘Hariri era’ – again closely tied to the change in the economic and political role of Hariri as a Sunni *za‘im* - was the way in which presidents and board members were chosen and admitted to the club. While Daouk and other members of the board were appointed by Hariri and his representatives in a top down vertical style of instalment, Ghandour and fellow board members were chosen by other members of the board who relied on personal relations, in what can be described as a horizontal style of instalment. The latter, which I use the Arabic term *mawna* to describe, merits some further explanation to show how the horizontal networks, like charitable motivations, were also downgraded in the new ‘era’ of Nejme’s governance.

Ghandour was recruited into the club’s management by his cousin who, although slightly older, came from a similar socio-economic background. Given that the patron offered no serious objection, that background, coupled with multi faceted ties of kinship, religious belonging, and what Wolf describes as ‘social-credit rating’ was Ghandour’s ticket into the club (1966: 8). The source of Ghandour’s status, which justified his recruitment into the club, is best described in the words of another club member:

‘He was a young aspiring handsome man, did horseback riding, a true gentleman born with a golden spoon in his mouth. His father was Abdul Kader Ghandour, known for his charitable work. You would have appreciated his support no matter what endeavour you had in mind’.

Of course a significant factor that favoured Ghandour’s selection was his ability to contribute financially to the club, but this was not the sole reason for his selection. The same criteria that governed the choice of Ghandour had been used to recruit members to the board for decades. Baroudi, for example, was recruited in the 1990s by a friend on the basis of his social standing, financial capacity and charitable intentions. Those who were chosen were all endowed with *wazn* - weight in English if I am to use a strict translation of the words used by my club members - or in other words ‘status’. The idea of ‘weight’ was used to describe a specific personal capacity. A person with ‘electoral weight’ for example, is one who has influence on a large number of voters. Someone who ‘has weight in the palace’ is one who has the capacity to influence decisions within the Hariri establishment. A whole family might also have ‘weight’ if it included many powerful or successful figures. Choices concerning who could join, and in what capacity, were informed by knowledge and connections within the networks of the local elite. Each candidate’s ‘weight’ would be

measured on different levels, including financial capacity and family status, so as to determine the most appropriate position for them within the club. Knowledge of this kind, concerning eligibility and suitability was in itself a source of power, and one that Ghandour surely possessed. In his 'era' decisions on new appointees' admittance to the board were made after a process of consultation amongst existing board members, a consultation that often resulted in a list of candidates who would win the election uncontested.

The concept of weight corresponds with what Bourdieu calls 'social capital': he argues that 'the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected' (Bourdieu 1986: unpaginated).

The ability of a certain member to 'mobilise' other members of the bourgeoisie, or to exert influence on them and persuade them to join Nejme was described by members as *mawna*. In popular usage a person who has *mawna* over another is one who can influence that person, but not by exerting authority; he or she is obeyed on the basis of respect or close relations and is given privileges or favoured treatment. In practice, *mawna* is a result of the above networks of relationships and is deeply embedded in the community's power structures, but it also has affective elements. The term was the one Ghandour chose to describe how the board members were recruited; each existing member contacted those over whom he could exert *mawna*.

Linguistically<sup>100</sup>, the word originates from the Arabic verb that translates as 'to supply', and s/he who has *mawna* over another is one who is responsible to provide for him or her. Nobody I spoke to automatically made a link between the current use of the word and the implications of its linguistic origin, though I think the term adequately explains the role and character of such relationships in the patronage system. Despite *mawna* being an exercise of power, it is not one that is exerted by a more powerful person over those possessing less power, but is instead used across horizontal relationships, as in brothers having *mawna* over each other. It is even possible in some instances, that a fan – although of lower class or status - could have *mawna* over a board member with regard to a certain

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100 The word *mawna* originates from the verb *Ma'na* – meaning on the online version of the Arabic dictionary *Līṣān al-‘arab* <http://baheth.info> Accessed on 13/5/2010.

issue precisely because of personal relationships, or a reputation for sound judgement, or some other form of 'bottom-up' power s/he might possess.

As a mode of interpersonal influence *mawna*, with its affective element and its assumption of a relative equality in power, differs from the more widely discussed concept of *wasta* (Antoun 2000; Cunningham and Sarayrah 1993; Gubser 1973). *Wasta* or 'going in between', as described by Smith et al., refers to 'the process whereby one can achieve goals through links with key persons in positions of high status' (2011: 3). In describing the relationship between the *Zu'ama* (leaders) of the east Lebanese town of Zahle and their clients, Gubser describes how a person's resort to *wasta* from a *za'im* creates ties between the two and ensures the client's political support. By contrast, *mawna* does create some sort of obligation, but this is usually between individuals of relatively similar social standing, strengthening the ties between them. In such a situation a person's acceptance of an invitation to join the club would strengthen his position within that elite's network but would not necessarily imply his subordination to it.

Despite the similarities between Ghandour and Daouk, it was not just anybody's *mawna* that secured Daouk as Nejme's President. He was asked to take on the role by the club's patron, in part as a compensatory reward for being side-lined in parliamentary elections. The reward was intended to grant Daouk prestige, but he was reluctant to accept it until persuaded by Prime Minister Hariri who reportedly told him that the club would surely become 'one of the most important clubs in the middle east'. Daouk told me that he finally accepted because of his inability to 'deny him a request' and the 'friendship' that bonded him with Hariri. His use of the words 'friendship' and '*mawna*' was emphatic, but it masked the fact that power relations between the two men were quite different to those which existed between board members in Ghandour's time. What was important for Daouk was not so much the social capital derived from relationships with fellow bourgeoisie board members, but primarily the social capital generated by his specific relationship to Hariri and his personal ability to provide a service to the Prime Minister.

The affective language tying the *za'im* to his constituency was often adopted by Hariri himself. Throughout the 1990s, when Rafic Hariri was in power and his popularity rising, Future Television ran an advertisement that became a catch phrase of loyalty to Hariri. The advertisement featured a band dressed in traditional urban Beirut costume. Their song addressed the 'one loved by the soul' asking him to 'look towards the future' and 'not dwell into the past' because 'the future' (again, Hariri's magic word) is his. After further

expressions of love<sup>101</sup>, the song's subject is promised that 'for your eyes' the *mawna* is guaranteed. The words 'for your eyes' and 'mawna' became catch phrases of loyalty for Hariri.

### **Shifts in the Locus of Power and Complicity Amongst Beirut's Bourgeoisie**

Hariri's exclusive funding of the club after 2003 and his lack of reliance on Beirut's Sunni bourgeoisie to fund his charitable endeavours (Baumann 2012b) both worked to significantly alter the locus of power, moving it away from board members and towards the patron. The board members of the 'Hariri era' clearly affirmed their loyalty to Hariri and posited themselves as members of the 'Future Movement', unlike Ghandour who for decades had tried to protect the independence of the club.

During Ghandour's presidency (1969 - 2003), he relied on several smaller donors within the Lebanese business community, many of whom eventually joined the board which then comprised a mixture of donors from the business community and sports enthusiasts. He also managed to maintain the continued support of various Muslim political Zu'ama, whilst avoiding presenting the club as being directly aligned with any of them. The relationships he built for the club cut across social classes, different sects, religions, and political affiliations, though he was fully aware of the differences that such disparate affiliations entailed. In my interview with him, he took great pride in never having been any one politician's or donor's subject or client:

'For 35 years, I was not counted as anybody's follower, I used to get money from everybody and pay on top of that from my own pocket, me and the members of the board - so I don't belittle anybody's contribution, they all paid in to the club - and we remained on good terms with everybody.'

Evaluating the situation of the club six years after he had left it, Ghandour, with his characteristic diplomacy highlighted what he thought were the two main mistakes committed by the recent management. Firstly, 'the new boards relied exclusively on the Hariri family for funding', and secondly 'they gave more status and say to the Hariri family than the family itself requested. Why? Allow the club some distance. Why would someone

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101 Though Hariri was not mentioned by name in the first versions of the song, but it was repeatedly used in his election campaigns, often overlaid with his images. For one of the many versions of the song see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoHjYj\\_qFZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoHjYj_qFZA) - Accessed 26/01/2015.

say we are followers of the Future Movement? OK, and we all follow one movement or the other, there is no need to get the club involved in that.’ Ghandour claimed that declaring allegiance was not necessary, that board members ‘gave Hariri more than he requested’ and that according to his limited experience of working with Rafic Hariri, ‘Hariri never asked neither directly, indirectly or even insinuated that the club had to be part of his following’.

In the statements above Ghandour appears to prioritise loyalty to the club above all else. By contrast, Daouk’s motivation for presiding over the club was, as he described it, to maintain his own relationship with Hariri and thus maintain the club’s allegiance to the Hariri establishment - aims which took priority over ensuring the club’s independence. In fact, contrary to Ghandour’s assertions, both Daouk and Muheib Itani affirmed what they perceived as Hariri’s ‘right’ as sponsor to have the club within the ‘family’ of the political organisation he led, and saw it as their duty to assert that right on his behalf. Muheib Itani explained this situation as only ‘natural’ given that the club received its funding from one source only.

‘What is the problem? Don’t other clubs take pride in their belonging? And what is the problem if one club issued a press release in which it takes pride in belonging to the Future Movement? I can’t see where the contradiction is, all clubs in Lebanon adhere to individuals or political, social and sectarian groups. If a club is proud of its political belonging to the Future Movement, where is the problem? Future Movement is funding it. [...] You can’t be in a club and badmouth he who is funding it.’

For Itani, the maxim ‘Celui qui donne, ordonne’ (He who gives, governs), was relevant: if you have ‘one donor you will have this result.’ Both Daouk and Itani presented themselves as being in the service of the patron and they de-emphasised their relationship with the club’s popular constituency – particularly if that constituency failed to pledge allegiance to the patron and thus had no instrumental value for him in the long run.

### **Preserving Class Structures and Control of the Elite**

To better understand the nature of the change described above, it is useful to also highlight certain elements of the club’s management which were retained unchanged. Walking through the offices of both Ghandour and Daouk, it was easy to notice that the prestigious physical spaces they occupied indicated just one of several similarities between the two men’s backgrounds. They were both successful in their careers, came from notable Beirut

families and had a track record of engagement in the public sphere, especially in Islamic and Beirut charities and social organisations. In fact Daouk had been a member of Nejme's General Assembly back when Ghandour was President, despite him not being involved in the club's affairs at the time. Daouk summed up the relationship between the two men:

'I am his lawyer, I have a professional relationship with him. I've known him for many years as a lawyer, and the relationship was sustained. There is personal friendship too. He was also was my colleague at the 'Islamic Centre' and elected board member of it before I even joined. Of course, there is a relationship, this is Beirut, Daouk and Ghandour families are even related by marriage and blood.'

The idea that an affective 'personal friendship' between the two men truly existed is questionable. Nevertheless, Daouk's description of Ghandour is typical of how almost all the men I spoke to discussed the relationships they had with men of similar background, even those who were in practice competitors. Daouk and Ghandour belong to Beirut's business elite and are of the same socio-economic social class, so Daouk's use of the term 'friendship' fits with the convention of reserving the term to describe personal relationships with people of similar class. Occasionally the term describes relationships with people from a higher social class. No one described their relationships with fans as 'friendship' for the very reason that fans mostly belonged to a lower social class. Also of note is the fact that neither man, nor any other board member, disputed the implicit understanding that membership of the club's board was exclusively reserved for Beirut's bourgeoisie, and never opened up to competition, or possible membership, by the fans. The nostalgic image portrayed by fans of Ghandour and his era is one that complements Ghandour's own charitable self-representation, and not one that praises his willingness to share power over the club or democratise its management.

In addition to preserving class structures, both eras have in common a belief in the value and adequacy of entrepreneurial and business skills to take on a leadership role in the club. Parallel to Ghandour's presidency being underpinned by his and other members charitable motives, those same members also emphasised their background as businessmen, and stressed that despite not knowing much about sports management when they joined they were sure to succeed in their roles knowing that they were successful in their private

enterprise The trust in the ability of the entrepreneur to manage such a social enterprise has existed at least from the time that Ghandour joined the club in the late sixties.

Defining boundaries of belonging to the club is a dynamic process which has to take account of the influences exerted by different presidents and their boards over time. For years during the 'Ghandour era' Beirut's bourgeoisie maintained control over the club.

Their control was rooted in notions of respect and charity and Nejmeh was open to a large and diverse body of fans. By contrast the 'Hariri era' introduced a different dynamic: a new line of exclusion was drawn based on sect and political loyalty.

## **Conclusion**

The changes within Nejmeh club affected patrons, members, and fans. This chapter has built on the previous one to demonstrate how the change in the club's patronage and funding source altered power relationships within the upper tier of the club's management. Under super-za'im and mega-philanthropist Hariri, Nejmeh's management team focused on prioritising entrepreneurial and professional skills and loyalty to the club patron above all other considerations – a development which was a 'natural' consequence of accepting Hariri's exclusive funding. Members of previous boards had relied on what became impossible to guarantee sources of funding, namely the donations of diverse, small-scale donors who belonged to Beirut's bourgeoisie. Such donors were motivated by charitable sentiment and the prospect of increasing their own social capital and standing. Class-based access to the upper tier of management remains an exclusive privilege of the bourgeoisie - as it has been since at least the 1960s. Members of lower classes remain excluded from the club's board, and to a larger extent, its General Assembly.

The above mentioned changes are not exclusive to Nejmeh, and signal among other issues the decline in power of the industrial bourgeoisie in favour of the commercial entrepreneurs – both in Lebanon and at the regional level (Perthes 2004). The relationships that entrepreneurs forged with Hariri were instrumental to their business activities and their access to lucrative government contracts. In the next chapter I focus on a lower tier in the club's hierarchy and examine the ways in which Nejmeh's membership and the leadership of fans' groups – members of the petty bourgeoisie - were affected when the authority of Hariri was being consolidated through bureaucratic and electoral processes within the club itself and in the country's politics more broadly.

# 6

## The Electoral Theatre

### The Day of Fortune

*May 7th, 2009. Nejmeh Sport Club's stadium is bustling with thousands of visitors. They wave club flags and the stadium reverberates with their cheers. The visitors are not here for the love of sports, nor is the space being used for its normal purpose. Today the Nejmeh stadium hosts the club's patron, Saad Hariri, who is also the leader of the Future Movement. He is here to announce the list of candidates for the March 14 Alliance for Beirut's second and third electoral districts<sup>102</sup>.*

*The green turf which on ordinary days only the players are allowed to tread is packed with hundreds of plastic chairs for the audience. The chairs surround a raised wooden platform especially constructed for media personnel and cameramen. The stadium's concrete terraces have also been transformed, as the normally burgundy stripes that match the team's colours have been painted blue for this special event.*

*On one side of the stadium, there is another wooden stage which is separated from the rest of the audience and patrolled by security personal. This large platform is a white-floored theatre-like space. On it speakers are seated in front of huge images of the assassinated leader Rafic Hariri, and the blue rays of the Future Movement's sun shaped logo. Facing the platform seats are provided for select invitees, namely the social, economic and political elite, including a few of Nejmeh club's board members.*

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102 The stadium was an ideal site for such an electoral event with its ample space and central location. It was rented from the club's board by Salim Diab who was leading the Future Movement's electoral campaign and was ex-general co-ordinator of the movement, and incidentally Honorary President of Ansar Club, Nejmeh's long time rival. But it is not only location and size that are of relevance to the choice of the stadium. Nejmeh club had won Lebanon's football championship on 26/4/2009, less than 10 days before the rally, and Riyadi club, also under Hariri's patronage and whose stadium is a few meters away, won the country's basketball championship in the same week. Additionally, and as was emphasised by Saad Hariri in his speech, it was the site where two years previously parliamentarian and Future Movement member Walid Eido, was assassinated by a bomb planted for him as he passed by the southern wall of the stadium. Two of Nejmeh's players were killed with him. See figure 29.

*Thousands of Hariri supporters fill the rest of the stadium in what feels more like a carnival than a political event. Loud speakers play songs dedicated to Rafic Hariri and his son, Saad. These songs have become the familiar sound track of the whole elections period. One song promises that the paths that Hariri senior took will continue, asserting that his spirit is never absent<sup>103</sup>. The other entitled 'The Day of Fortune' (yawm al-sa'd)<sup>104</sup>, especially written for Saad Hariri, plays on the young leader's name, Saad, meaning happiness or fortune. It describes him as free, proud, and more precious than one's own offspring. Unlike the traditionally serious political and nationalist songs, these lively songs are similar in tune to the popular Arab dance rhythms, and along with the colourful flags and the sunny day they reinforce the celebratory ambience.*

*The people present are of all ages and both genders. Teenage boys are taking the chance to flirt with girls who do not have many opportunities of meeting up with the opposite sex in public. Little kids enjoy the space, the flags, and the music. Chitchat amongst old friends and coincidental meetings give the feeling that one is in a neighbourhood café. I use my video camera and almost everyone is tolerant of my filming. Mothers pose with their little daughters for photos, and young men in flirtatious mood, ask that I appear with them in the footage. Boys with drums play, dance, and stand on the chairs and repeatedly disobey the requests for calm.*

*At first glance, I get the impression that there are more women and teenage boys present, and relatively fewer men. Soon though, I realise that the men are here in different capacities, as camera men in the centre of the field, as uniformed guards all around the turf, organising the crowds, and in suits seated on the front seats. Kamel, a supporter of the Future Movement, from the neighbourhood of Tariq Al-Jadidah, describes to me the different uniforms and what they mean. Some are for the Future Movement members and others for employees of Secure-Plus, a private security company affiliated with Hariri. The former are elegant in grey suits and neck ties while the latter have a military appearance wearing caps, beige shirts carefully tucked in, navy multi-pocketed trousers and combat boots<sup>105</sup>.*

*The celebration lasts for a whole hour as we wait for the candidates, and although I expect that quiet will reign once the speeches start, this does not happen. Huge screens on both sides of the stadium have been installed to project the speeches of Saad Hariri and allied candidates. This is how those on the turf are*

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103 For one of the many versions of the song available online see <http://youtu.be/zN8W5ua7Zf8> (Accessed 24/2/2015). While the words of this song, like the rest of the Hariri promoting media deserves analysis beyond the scope of this thesis, of relevance to this chapter are phrases describing Hariri as the foundation of 'the civilised Beirut'(al-ḥaḍarāyah) and 'Lebanon's renaissance' (nahda).

104 See <http://youtu.be/6Puc8l74Vos> - Accessed 24/2/2015.

105 Despite expressing regret that he was unable to join the Future Movement officially due to restrictions imposed on him by his employer, Kamel also wore the navy trousers and beige shirt – though by not tucking his shirt in he differentiated himself from the officially affiliated members.

*able to see the candidates on the far side of the stadium. In the hour long wait for the candidates to arrive, these screens have been projecting edited images of the young leader and his late father, as well as footage of the famed demonstrators in downtown Beirut on 14 March 2005 who protested at the assassination of Rafic Hariri. Live footage of the stadium itself is being relayed, taken of course with a wide angle lens which accentuates the size of the crowd.*

*Loud cheering accompanies the entry of Saad Hariri, despite those of us on the turf only being able to see him on the screens. Hearing the speeches that follow, the crowd selectively choose to only hear the words that are worthy of their applause; 'Beirut', 'dignity', and 'pride' are inevitably repeated often to deliberately stimulate clapping. Between the drumbeats and the clapping not much else can be heard. The fact that people can not hear the speech or the names of particular candidates is beside the point. They are in the rally and are sure to vote for the whole list 'as it is' or as said in Arabic 'zay ma hiyye'; these were the instructions of Saad Hariri - identical to the instructions of his father before him.*

*The magnitude of the electoral event can be felt rippling out into the surrounding area. Close by, the seaside Café Rawda has also hung out its own welcoming banner for the event, speaking on behalf of Beirut 'which welcomes the son of he who reconstructed it'. The Ferris wheel of the adjacent amusement park – which is closed for today – is decorated with a large full length portrait of Hariri senior. The walls of a nearby store provide the backcloth for a portrait of assassinated parliamentarian, Eido, and his son. Alongside, a ten meter long banner is displayed; it bears Future Movement slogans proclaiming the movement's mission statement: 'the state, security, prosperity, the constitution, and justice'.*



*Figure 28: Aerial photograph of the Nejme Sports Club stadium in Manara.<sup>106</sup>*

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106 Source: Website of Nejme Sports Club [http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page\\_id=221](http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page_id=221) accessed 19/9/2015.

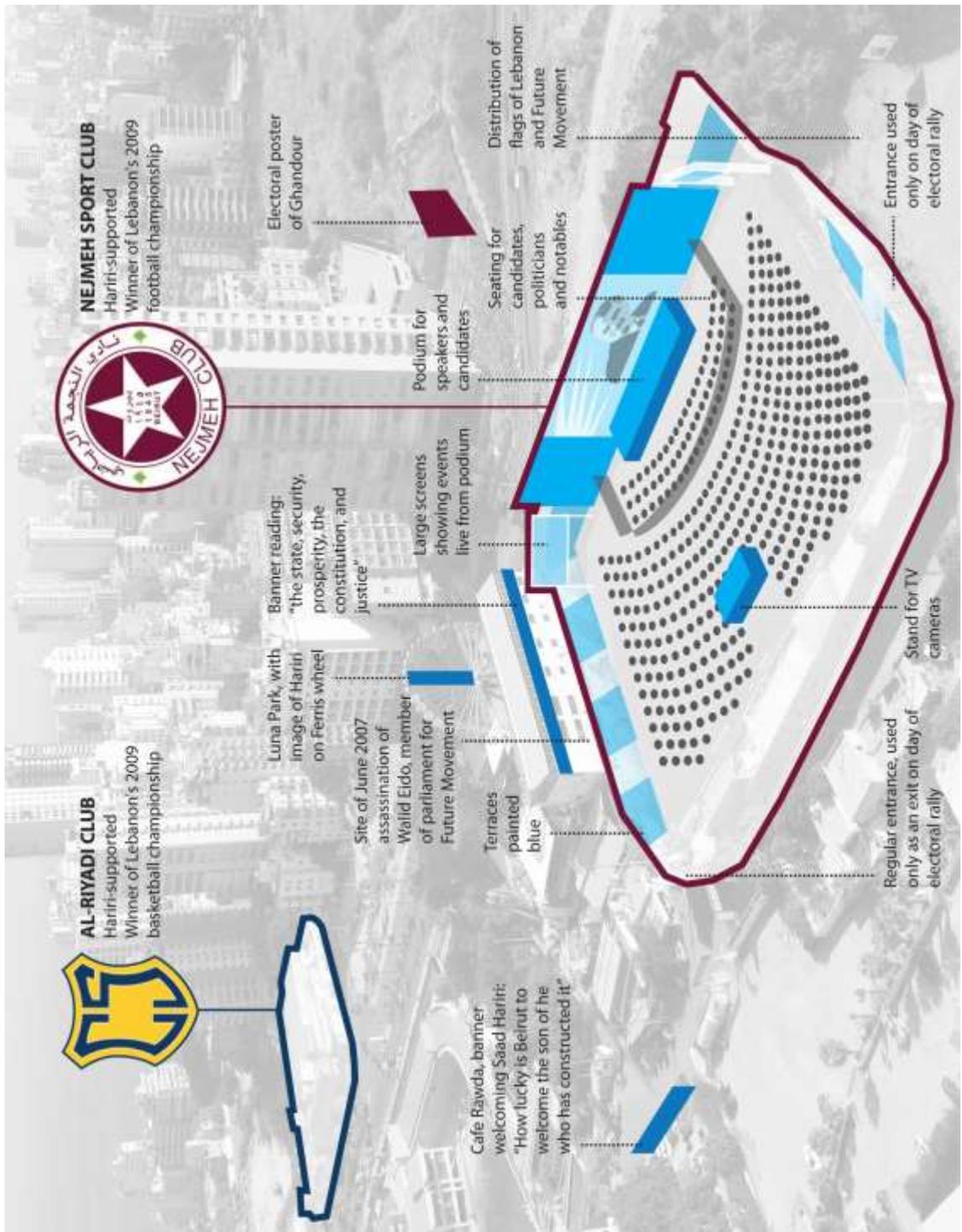


Figure 29: Nejmeh stadium transformed on the day of the 2009 parliamentary electoral rally of the Future Movement.

## Introduction

Saad Hariri, along with the complete list of candidates that he announced on the day I describe, won the seats of Beirut's second and third district. This came as no surprise, and was expected even by opposing political actors whose participation in the elections was more of a set performance than a genuine competition. Despite many taking pride for years in the country being the so-called 'only Arab democracy', the consolidation of the elite and the exclusion of challengers<sup>107</sup> meant that the distribution of parliamentary seats was to a large extent decided upon by the way the electoral law was configured before the elections. In common with Lebanese parliamentary elections, the elections of Nejme's board members also often had predetermined results. As I explain in the next section, elections were held regularly and in accordance with the club's bylaws, but the key members who had power over other General Assembly members usually agreed beforehand on the list of names to be nominated for the board. The majority of the club's boards were in fact elected uncontested, yet the actual elections process continued to take place and bureaucratic electoral procedures were strictly followed.

In this chapter I explore both the practice and the understanding of Lebanese elections, at the national level and at club level. Looking particularly at the relationships between Saad Hariri - seen as a quintessential example of a state elite member - and his supporters, I discuss the practice and function of elections within a socio-political power-sharing system largely organised around clientelistic networks. I argue that the electoral process itself, and the performative opportunities it provides, serve several complementary functions. I show how, far from being an antidote to clientelism, elections contribute in various ways to strengthening of the 'clientelist habitus' (Rutten 2007; Auyero 2012) even before the results are declared. In addition, the electoral process is an opportunity for the performance of the patron's power over his followers as well as over other contestants. The ability to mobilise followers is needed with respect to both co-members of the political elite and to external powers. The assessment of both groups is decisive in negotiations to allocate parliamentary seats.

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107 The consolidation of the elite, as El-Husseini (2004: 243) describes is a result of a longer term process which involves three movements labeled as elite settlement, elite convergence, and co-optation, eventually resulting in 'the consolidation of those elites in place in the system and the exclusion of challengers'.

Also central to that performance is the utilisation of a global image – promoted and shaped by the media - of the bureaucratic implementation of elections. In the past year this image almost always included the smiling faces of voters from across the globe parading electoral ink on their fingers, often shown to be synonymous with democratic representation. This image is closely tied to the neoliberal ideology of the ‘good life’ which the Hariris, father and son, promoted and enacted in Lebanon.

In current debate about whether the ‘state’ in Lebanon does or does not exist, especially in a context involving widespread corruption, sectarianism and clientelism, Leenders affirms the importance of studying the state and its bureaucratic institutions and the way they are utilised by the politicians in determining access to resources and privileges to existing elite members. According to him, ‘the state’s omnipresence constituted a major ingredient of the elite’s strategies aimed at self-enrichment and political outmanoeuvring of their rivals’ (2012: 231). In the same vein, I argue that elections, and their attendant bureaucratic procedures, not only work to limit political competition and facilitate seat allotment between existing elite members, but they also legitimise such means of power distribution both at the popular and the bureaucratic level. In so doing they also provide a vehicle for the strengthening of sectarian and clientelistic loyalties. The following section documents the ways in which elections are practised in Lebanon, and notes how these issues are discussed in the relevant literature. I situate that discussion within a broader anthropology literature of the state, particularly that which has considered the desire for, and the fantasy of, the state (Taussig 1992; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Jansen 2014).

The third section returns to a consideration of Nejmeh club. It describes the two elections that took place in the ‘Hariri Era’ and the instrumental use of official bureaucratic discourse and the procedures used to ensure the Hariri establishment’s complete control over the club. I also take account of some of the existing routes available to members to lobby for the changes they wanted made in the club. The fourth section looks at the 2009 parliamentary elections in Beirut in which both Saad Hariri and Ghandour were competing candidates. By reviewing the electoral process, the roles of various workers in the electoral machine, Hariri’s electoral rally and the election day itself, I explore both the way elections were practiced and perceived by Hariri’s followers and the way in which the campaign’s framing of elections fed into the strengthening of Hariri’s political position and patronage.

## The State at my Finger Tips

According to the Stockholm based global intergovernmental organisation 'International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance' (International IDEA):

'Elections are the cornerstone of representative democracy. Through elections, governments obtain their democratic mandate and are held accountable for their performance in office. Flawed elections deprive people of their voice in governance and undermine sustainable democratic development.'<sup>108</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have seen many celebrated so-called 'first free elections' taking place in historically repressive or autocratic regimes, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and more recently in Egypt and Tunisia after the revolutions. While perspectives which are critical of the 'freedom' of elections or their efficacy in bringing about democracy abound on both the academic and popular level, elections continue to be implemented as elaborate globally mediated events – meaning that as political events they were largely shaped and extensively promoted by the media - on which many aspirations and expenses are bestowed. As in other countries around the world, many Lebanese people on 9th June, 2009 flaunted fingers stained with blue ink after casting their vote. Their actions were of particular note given that the Parliamentary elections of 2009 took place in a period when the main political parties of Lebanon appeared to have settled – albeit temporarily – the political conflicts which had divided the country since the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. This round of elections was presented as central in assessing where the loyalty of the Lebanese lay after the street clashes of May 2008, and indeed tipped the balance in favour of the March 14 political camp in its nationwide results (Khoury 2014).

In practice though, the margin for actual competition in the 2009 parliamentary elections was just that, marginal. The electoral law agreed upon in the 2008 Doha meeting was certain to reproduce the existing distribution of power between the political leaders as the division of Lebanon into electoral districts each with a varying number of seats and a sectarian composition was agreed upon by the same political leaders who were running for

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108 See IDEA's website: <http://www.idea.int/elections/> - Accessed 20/2/2015.

elections<sup>109</sup>. As the electoral districts were distributed under the Doha agreement, the five seats of Beirut's third district, a Sunni majority area, were guaranteed for the March 14 political camp which Hariri represented. The four seats of Beirut's second district were distributed equally between March 14 and their political opponents, March 8.

This was not a new trend in Lebanese politics; according to a 2005 report of the EU Election Observation Mission to Lebanon (EU EOM), traditionally:

[Elections] are not directly meant to produce a governing majority in Parliament, or to determine which party or political group will participate in government or join the opposition. Their primary function is to ensure the participation of the elites and the representation of the country's regions, confessions and political families, through a specific system of seat allotment, which actually limits political competition and confines it within each confession.' (EU EOM 2005: 14)

According to El-Husseini, 'the Lebanese civil war led to a renewal and realignment of the Lebanese political elite', and the 'Pax Syriana' that followed supported elite consolidation (2012: 214). Central to the study of Lebanese politics, according to El-Husseini, is understanding elite recruitment and formation, both of which are largely dependent on clientelism and financial resources and rarely on the results of the ballot box. To win the seats of Beirut's second and third districts, it was not necessary for Hariri to mobilise his supporters to vote for him in this round of elections. This round of elections, as described by many local newspapers, acted more as a referendum that had only minor impact on the already agreed upon distribution of parliamentary seats in Beirut. Still, Hariri did invest in an expensive campaign, employing a large electoral machinery and organising several rallies. Recognising elections within the Lebanese political system as a tool for seat allotment for political elite members within a consociational political system invites questioning of the value and function of electoral campaigns for both the elite, and for the voters who took part in them.

Contrary to policy literature that presents elections as an antidote to clientelism, I argue that for the Hariri establishment and its supporters, elections were instrumental in

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109 The electoral law agreed in Doha was based on the 1960 law which defines the electoral constituency at the level of the caza or district. The Doha agreement involved mainly electoral redistricting in some areas which served to further strengthen the power of existing political elite, particularly that Hariri, Jumbalatt, Hezbollah and the Amal movement as power brokers of their sects. For details see [https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/newspecials/qas\\_for\\_the\\_electoral\\_system\\_in\\_lebanon](https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/newspecials/qas_for_the_electoral_system_in_lebanon) -Accessed 29/6/2015.

strengthening the clientelistic hierarchy and habitus surrounding Saad Hariri. Some recent ethnographic work has explored the relationship between clientelistic and kinship networks and the electoral process, often arguing that the former have contributed to ensuring popular representation and the enactment of democracy. In her work on elections in Kyrgyzstan for example, Ismailbekova, discusses 'how an indigenized understanding of democracy was fostered through the activation of patronage networks and how, through the performance of election, the democratic state came to be enacted' (2013: 78). She traces how within one community, local villagers who wanted to vote against the ruling party knowing full well that their votes would be manipulated, ensured their representation by using patronage networks and circumventing and violating the official state procedures. In this case, patronage and the locals' exercising of this agency to perform democracy go hand in hand against the bureaucratic procedure of the state. Along similar lines, and in one of the rare anthropological explorations of elections in Lebanon, Obeid (2011), discusses the 2004 municipal elections of the long-marginalised border village of Aarsal where she sees in its results a possibility to implement the changes that voters aspired to, even if primarily these had to involve a process of experimentation or 'trial and error' on the part of the locals. She concludes that elections at the time constituted a blend of upholding lineage as a local form of political representation which worked alongside the prospect of accountable governance (Obeid 2011: 264).

Five years later and over a hundred kilometres away from Obeid's research site I explored parliamentary elections in Beirut, Lebanon's capital and its political centre. Unlike the municipal elections described by Obeid, the space for voters to affect the results of elections at the national parliamentary level was much more limited. In addition, the years since the 2005 assassination of Rafic Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon have witnessed political mobilisation and antagonisms that have led not only to the crystallisation of sectarian identities (Beydoun 2012) but to the formation of distinct political identities too. The elite, through the sharp antagonism between the March 8 and March 14 political camps, appeared capable of dictating the political priorities and discourse which were evident in the electoral law adopted in the Doha talks of 2008. While this period produced the devoted supporters who were present at Hariri's electoral rally, (described earlier), it nevertheless left many Beirutis apathetic towards this round of

elections. It was therefore no surprise that the voter turnout to the elections of Beirut's second and third districts did not exceed 27% and 40% respectively<sup>110</sup>.

The concern of the following sections is with people who attended the rally and those who actively took part providing support not just for Hariri and his candidates in this election round, but who also aided the members of the Hariri Establishment more broadly. I argue that the elections provided an opportunity for the consolidation of clientelistic ties. Starting with the dominant definition of clientelism as a transactional relationship, where clients provide political loyalty in exchange for the patron's favours (Gilsenan 1977), elections can be seen as an opportunity for the granting of one-off favours to clients by political patrons. The Hariri establishment's disbursement of money to its supporters, effected through employing a large electoral machine and providing transportation come election day, is not mere 'vote buying' given the pre-existing relations and loyalties that bind Hariri to his supporters, but is better understood as a way out from the longer term commitments for provision of support and employment traditionally provided by Beirut's Zu'ama. Equally, seen from the perspective of supporters, elections provided them with the opportunity to demonstrate loyalty and claim the Za'im as their patron whose privileges and handouts are exclusively theirs as his followers, and to which no other groups have any right. Silverman has described the bottom-up inceptions of patronage and the use of the 'ideology of patronage' as a 'means of drawing high status outsiders into local commitments' (1977: 17). For Hariri as a candidate, elections were an opportunity for the performative and ostentatious expenditure of huge amounts of money at an exceptional scale following his style in both politics and philanthropy as described earlier in this thesis. Indeed, supporters I spoke to actually took pride in their patron's 'generosity' in comparison to the expenditure of other candidates.

The performative aspect of elections, including the electoral campaign and rally, the voting process and the celebrations upon the victory of Hariri and allied candidates played a greater role in the consolidation of clientelism and far exceeded the simple exchange of favours and loyalty. The festivities surrounding elections and the competition that they involved provided an ideal opportunity to create a sense of community among the supporters of the za'im. They also had an affective element which contributed to

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110 See Lebanese Elections website published by Ministry of Interior and Municipalities for detailed results of the 2009 parliamentary election <http://www.elections.gov.lb/parliamentary/Elections-Results/2009-Real-time-Results.aspx> – Accessed 24/2/2015.

strengthening the symbolic and performative aspect of the 'clientelist habitus' (Rutten 2007). Beyond the carnivalesque aspect of the rally and elections, this habitus was constructed upon the rhetoric of upholding the state and its institutions that the Hariri establishment enshrined in the campaign and in its opposition to Hezbollah, and was most bluntly stated in the slogan printed in the ten meter long banner hanging opposite the stadium on the day of the rally - 'the state, security, prosperity, the constitution, and justice'. In response to what he calls a 'libertarian paradigm' in anthropology which 'posits the state predominantly as an imposed externality' (Jansen 2014: 239) Jansen observed in post-war Sarajevo, a 'desire for the state' that is rooted in strong yearnings for 'normal lives'. While this resonates with post-war Lebanon at the time of Hariri's ascendance to power, in the 2009 elections there appeared to be a renewed desire for the state, not by necessity one that is motivated by the state's functional role in the people's day-to-day life, but by a global, media-promoted image of democracy that fed into the 'fantasy of the state' (Navarro-Yashin 2002) that would locate them as citizens of a 'global' and 'democratic' world. By dipping their fingers in the electoral ink on that June day in 2009, voters in Beirut became part of the global 'civilised' world as one Hariri supporter described it. Their image overlapped with those of the other voters around the world who have proudly exhibited blue fingers as proof of having overcome their autocratic regimes and entered the democratic realm.

Such an image is not separate from the promises of 'prosperity' and 'security' which Hariri made in his electoral slogan, nor from the image of wealth and individual success that he presented of himself. This image is embedded within an ideology of 'the good life' which Wedeen (2013), following Berlant (2011), describes as entailing 'not only the usual aspirations to economic well-being but also fantasies of multicultural accommodation, domestic security, and a sovereign national identity' (Wedeen 2013: 853). In her work on Syria, Wedeen argues that the 'good life' is part of the neoliberal ideological project - one with specific capacities to maintain neoliberal governance through enlisting citizens into novel forms of regulation, intervention, and protest (Wedeen 2013: 853). In that light, Wedeen's argument parallels what Hilgers has called the 'neoliberal disposition', an aspect constituted by the triangle of policies, institutions and dispositions. (2013: 78).

The rhetoric of the state, security, and sovereignty which Hariri and the March 14 camp championed stands at the centre of the way political competition was framed against Hezbollah and the March 8 camp. Kosmatopoulos summarises a typology of practices

applied by peace experts to analyse ‘state failure’, through which ‘Hezbollah is perceived to pose an existential menace to the Lebanese state due to the party’s unwillingness to conform to the state monopoly over organised means of violence. Instead, it follows its own “parochial” interests and thus threatens the coherence and cohesion of the state’ (Kosmatopoulos 2011: 129). In that sense, Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, is a threat to the ‘good life’ which ‘combines economic liberalization with fears of sectarian disorder and nonsovereignty’ (Wedeen 2013: 842).

In winning these elections, Hariri supporters proved that they were different from ‘Hezbollah’ and deserving of the ‘good life’. They promoted their political ideology through the peaceful, state sanctioned tools of democracy. The fact that the results of the elections were already largely predetermined by the electoral law and distribution of districts agreed on with that same political competitor, namely Hezbollah, and that some of Hariri’s supporters in the rally were employed by a Hariri-funded quasi militia seemed not to undermine the image that Hariri supporters wanted to project for themselves and for their political leader. Neither did the knowledge that ‘getting things done’ in Lebanon did not really happen via the actions of the state or the bureaucratic institutions, but instead, through the influences of interpersonal and clientelistic ties.

## **Consolidation of Power: Taking Control of the Club through ‘Legal Means’**

This section narrates four junctures in Nejmeh’s recent history where the bureaucratic ‘democratic’ regulations and structures within the club were used and / or bypassed. Starting with the way that the board was selected during Ghandour’s time, I move on to describe the transition period when Nejmeh passed into the hands of the Hariri Establishment. I highlight the incongruity between the rhetoric of institution building and democracy and the actual use of democratic regulations to achieve control over the club. In contrast to this control tactic, I give examples of the ways in which kinship and personal ties were deployed by existing members to affect the selection of the board while the club was under the Hariri establishment’s control. While various options for decision making existed, ultimately the final decision on appointments to the board rested with the elite or the club’s patron. The clientelistic networks seemed to be more effective in actualising such a decision than direct votes were – although it is possible that such clientelistic networks were translatable into political support at the national level.

Despite the electoral process in the club being little more than a mere performance, Nejmeh members took pride in the democratic structures within Lebanese sports clubs compared to those present in other Arab countries. Just like the electoral rally mentioned above, the democratic structures and regulations of Nejmeh were a facade that at once concealed and embellished the real mechanisms of decision making and bringing forward ‘representatives’. Nevertheless, they were maintained as a means of feeding into and promoting the clientelist habitus which bound Hariri to his supporters.



Figure 30: Elections of Nejmeh Board members. Clockwise from top left; 1. Daouk casts his vote in the 2005 elections. 2. Elected board of 2008 right after elections 3. Elected board of 2008 in the Nejmeh Office after distributing board responsibilities, pictures of Prime Minister Saad Hariri appears behind them. 4. Elected board of 2011.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Images 1, 2, and 3 are from Almustaqbal newspaper, issues dated 1. 24/10/2005 2. 17/11/2008 3. 20/12/2008 – copyright is for the newspaper. Image 4 is from Nejmeh’s website [http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page\\_id=2356](http://www.nejmeh-club.com/?page_id=2356) Accessed 19/9/2015).

## **Board Membership during the Ghandour Era**

As in the Lebanese parliament, elections for the board of Nejmeh club - security situation permitting - took place fairly regularly and in accordance with the club's written bylaws.

The newspapers often reported on the election results, announcing the names of the winning 'candidates' and publishing formal photographs of new board members. Still, the electoral process within Nejmeh (and most other sports clubs in Lebanon) was an act: members of the General Assembly merely went through the motions of attending the elections meeting to ensure a quorum. The bylaws stipulated that a new board was to be elected every three years, yet according to interviews with three of the club's Secretary Generals and recorded club history, boards have generally been elected uncontested.

During the 'Ghandour Era', the actual selection of board members took place long before the date of elections, and generally after consultation with external funders and the current board members who were paying their own membership fees as well as that of several others over whom they had authority. It was a situation in which the membership – and money – of several key members talked. The negotiation on possible board members usually produced a carefully selected list of candidates; a mix of people who would guarantee continuity of funding for the club and the capability of ensuring actual club management.

Sports clubs in Lebanon, as mentioned in earlier chapters, are registered with the Ministry of Youth and Sports as 'sports associations' governed by a General Committee (haṛ'a 'āma) whose members elect an Executive Committee (haṛ'a 'idāriya) responsible for the club's management. Lebanese laws provide general regulations regarding membership and elections, that are further elaborated in the bylaws of each club<sup>112</sup>. Many members I spoke to prided themselves on what they described as the 'democratic' structures of sports associations in Lebanon, compared to some other Arab countries where members of sports associations are government appointed. At the same time, none of the members

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112 Two decrees governed the operation of sports clubs at the time that this research covers. The first is decree 6997 dated 10/01/2002 which concerns the establishment and governance of youth and sports associations. Concerning elections, it stipulated that in order to vote, among other conditions, a candidate must have been a General Assembly member for at least a year, and to have paid his/her membership fees in full. This last condition was deleted from the later amended decree 213 dated 27/3/2007. Both decrees also gave the Ministry of Youth and Sports a monitoring role on the sports associations, which are obliged to send the ministry yearly plans and budgets, a list of members, as well as lists of candidates and members before every election.

seemed to be under the illusion that it was the actual act of casting their vote that produced the board. For example, according to Zahi, a General Assembly member in the 1990s:

‘In Lebanon, this is known. He who pays gets the General Assembly, so he guarantees votes for him come elections time. He can get his driver, his wife..[...] Nobody joins the General Assembly unless he has somebody on the board, and each party is responsible for paying membership fees for those he got into the club. Nobody joins the General Assembly if he has to pay his own membership fees.’

Zahi’s own membership fees back when he was a member were paid by a board member at the time with whom he was politically affiliated. He was not critical of the system as long as there were multiple donors and players, but he did criticise the exclusivity of control over the General Assembly after the Hariri establishment took over:

‘Hajj Omar [Ghandour] used to cover some members in the General Assembly, but others could still get in. There is a rhythm in Lebanon that we can’t break away from [..], and I am not against the idea, if Hariri is to pay then.. bon appétit, but what if Hariri is broke, or no longer wanted to support? What would happen to the club? At least at Omar Ghandour’s time there were multiple donors.’

Additional practical, personal, and social considerations were taken into account besides financial capacity to contribute to the club. On the practical level, there needed to be a couple of members who had the time to engage in day-to-day operation of the club, particularly taking minutes, following up on administrative matters and documentation sent to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, accounting and relationships with the fans. On the social level, as the board fronted the club’s public image, a certain sectarian balance was also maintained. Regardless of their political patronage and the sectarian composition of their fan base, most major clubs’ boards included token members belonging to a variety of sects. In Nejme, Baroudi claimed that diversity existed in the membership of board members and that it was of paramount importance to him rather than being just tokenism for appearances sake:

‘It was me who formed that last board. I spent nine years in the club, and was instrumental in choosing the members of the board of the last three years. Not only did I want a mixed board, I wanted each member on it not to be sectarian.. I wanted to make sure that at heart.. inside his home he was not sectarian.’

Indeed, a picture of members of the final board to manage the club before it moved to Hariri’s patronage was still displayed in Baroudi’s office six years after he left Nejme and

he took pride in having promoted the diversity of its members and in taking the lead in forming it as Secretary General at the time.

### **The Transition ‘Elections’ and the Limits of the ‘Democratic’ Process**

The selection of members of the first board in the ‘Hariri Era’ involved a consultation process that was at once similar to yet different from the previous processes of fashioning a new board in Ghandour’s time. According to board members active in 2002, President Ghandour’s and Secretary General Baroudi’s negotiations with the Hariri Establishment had resolved in the formation of a board that incorporated old members who wished to stay on Nejmeh’s board. These men were accepted by the establishment along with new board members selected by the new patronage. The purpose of keeping old members was to ensure continuity in club management as new members would not necessarily have sports management experience.

Leading the process of fashioning this new board was Muheib Itani. In his capacity as Prime Minister’s Rafic Hariri’s ‘client representative’ – as he described his role – Itani was responsible for the negotiations to ensure the ‘smooth transition from Omar Ghandour’s presidency to Hariri’s direct control’; ‘I had no official role’ he says, ‘I was assigned by his Excellency to support Sheikh Bahaa<sup>113</sup> in the club and its management’. An engineer by training and graduate of London’s Kings College, Itani had taken on many management positions in both the private and public sector in Lebanon. He was head of Lebanon’s electricity company in the 1990s when the sector was recovering from the many years of civil war, and was Director General of the Lebanese port. He also worked for several companies owned by Hariri since the 1980s, including Saudi Oger, Oger Liban, and Almustaqbal Newspaper.

‘I did the negotiations, I negotiated directly with Omar Ghandour and what we agreed on was that we would clear the club’s debt and that Omar Ghandour pulls his people out of the General Assembly so the main sponsor has the freedom to govern. The new management structure was done by me, I suggested Fanj<sup>114</sup> because he was in love with Nejmeh club, had the good reputation, and the capacity. True he is a personal friend, but

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113 Bahaa Hariri is Rafic Hariri's eldest son, and the family member directly assigned the leadership of the club and appointed as its 'Honorary President'.

114 Nejmeh club’s President from 2003-2005.

he was chosen because he knows about football and loves it and has been a Nejmeh fan for a long time<sup>115</sup>?

In regards to Fanj's political affiliation Itani stressed that 'Fanj was chosen primarily for his qualifications, and had ensured the first championship for the club... but that he belongs to Hariri's political group, this is nothing to be ashamed of, at the end of day it is Hariri that is funding... and it is his right'.

Seen from the perspective of Baroudi, who was involved in the negotiations from Nejmeh's side, the Hariri Establishment wanted the club to be handed to them 'clean' and to have 'a board to their taste'; they needed to make sure that Ghandour resigned and that the 'board members they select all win in the upcoming elections'. Baroudi himself was supposed to be one of the members who was to stay with the new board, but he explained how, as the negotiations proceeded, he became disillusioned with the Hariri establishment, or what he called 'Rafic Hariri's entourage' including members of parliament and personal aids who were leading the negotiation on his behalf. He recalled how 'every time I went to a meeting with [negotiators on behalf of Hariri] I would feel the extent to which I would hate myself if I chose to continue with the club under their management', and he claimed that many members were excluded based on political and sectarian bases, as a process that for him fundamentally changed the spirit of Nejmeh.

Unable to exert any significant influence in the negotiations, particularly as many of the existing board members just wanted to get out of the club by then, Baroudi attempted to use the legal platforms available to him, namely the board elections planned for March 2003, to affect the course that the change in the club's management was taking. The final list of nominees to the board was agreed with Baroudi's name on it, and only one opposing candidate nominated himself with almost zero chance of winning given the existing agreement of most members who had power over the General Assembly. The only opposing candidate was Riad al-Assaad, a Shiite who already served on Nejmeh's board. On the day of elections, Baroudi withdrew his candidacy, thereby enabling Riad al-Assaad to win a seat on the board without a ballot.

Riad Al-Assaad was politically well connected and had better access to financial resources than Baroudi who hoped that if the former was to be elected on Nejmeh's board he would

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115 Fanj being a fan of Nejmeh was disputed by many fans I interviewed, who claimed to have never seen him in the stadium attending a game and never having even heard of him.

be a more powerful member, possibly able to maintain the ‘spirit of Nejmeh’. As Baroudi described it, Al-Assaad could have been the David fighting the Goliath of the Hariri establishment, if he had been given the support of other dissatisfied members. In practice though, and despite Al-Assaad actually becoming a member of Nejmeh’s board, he was not invited to a single meeting. After his election he held a number of press conferences criticising the new management and patronage, but he soon fell silent. According to Baroudi, what actually happened was that:

‘Sheikh Bahaa called Riad Al-Assaad, and invited him to lunch.. over lunch he said to him “come on Riad, we are friends and this is not worth it” and then gave him the boot, three years later he gave him the boot .. and he never once attended a board meeting of the club. He could do nothing because he also has interests.. it was not really like [Bahaa Hariri] pressured him, he just told him it was not worth it’.

Baroudi blames his own ‘naïveté’ at the time for the course that the events took, but the above account proves the limitations of relying on bureaucratic and democratic procedures.

### **Taking Control of the General Assembly**

Once the Hariri establishment became the sole patron of the club, or in Baroudi’s words had the ‘clean’ board it desired, a process of consolidation of power at the level of the General Assembly was started. At the time I interviewed him, Itani appeared convinced that the manoeuvre by Baroudi was evidence of Ghandour’s lack of commitment to fulfil his side of the deal, and a desire to partially control the club. Control of the General Assembly was thus essential to ensure the new patron’s ‘freedom to govern’ as Itani described it. Practically, this ability to govern was implemented by raising the membership fees from 100 USD per year to 1,000 USD thus making it prohibitive to most older members. In parallel, 400 members all of whom were affiliated with the Hariri establishment - and on whose behalf the establishment paid the yearly membership fees - were accepted into the club. This way, Itani ensured that at the time of any subsequent elections the Hariri establishment would be able to guarantee the results of the elections in its own favour and would not risk losing control over the club. Itani’s description of this process in my interview with him in September 2010 in a small cafe in the Beirut Central District provides an example of the contradiction inherent in his use of the rhetoric of ‘legal means’:

Itani: ‘The gentleman’s agreement that he would remove his [Ghandour] members did not happen, and Omar Ghandour sustained his capacity through the General

Assembly membership to control the club, so we got 400 new members into the General Assembly, to ensure that he does not have the chance to control the club, and then we dismissed [members supporting the old management] through legal means. You are supposed to send a warning for members to pay their membership fees, and none of them paid their fees, and there is a set procedure for that, I think after two years of not paying you can dismiss members'

Muzna: 'So you removed the old members?'

Itani: 'We removed those who were not paying their membership fees, and the older members were not paying their fees. The new members paid their membership fees and stayed.'

Muzna: 'But you had raised the yearly membership fees, no?'

Itani: 'Yes, that is right, because we want at the end the club to be able to stand on its own feet, and not remain a financial burden. Our aim was, once the club starts winning, and management becomes professional.. we also later removed some of our own members, so we got back to a reasonable number of General Assembly members at around 150, but the members who joined at the beginning were mainly to prevent the old membership from regaining control, and once that goal was achieved we removed those new members. They submitted their resignations and left.'

In Itani's description, the new management adhered to bureaucratic procedure in strict and performative ways. As several of the old General Assembly members explained to me, including Zahi who I quote earlier in this section, old members either received written warning to pay outstanding fees, or were told that membership fees were raised when they attempted to pay them. Zahi for example, like many others was incapable of paying 1,000 USD and were thus ousted from the club automatically. The new members who were formally approved, as many informants and newspaper articles mention, were the staff of organisations within the Hariri establishment. By virtue of this 'membership' in the club they were asked to attend election meetings – again to ensure quorum to legalise a pre-selected board which won without a ballot . Claims of raising the membership fees to support the club to 'stand on its feet', were once again performative in character given that membership fees were paid by the establishment as a means of channelling their money into, and by extension their power over, the club.

## Alternative Means to the Legal

Within this bureaucratic rhetoric which made claims to democratic and legal procedures, members still appeared to rely on personal and clientelistic networks to affect the management of the club; a tactic which seemed to be the most accessible and effective means of exercising influence.

I had the opportunity to witness the usage of these networks while I was doing fieldwork in the period around the time of elections of another board for the club at the end of 2008. Several fans and members spoke to me of their dissatisfaction with Farshoukh, the Secretary General at the time. They also told me of their attempts to ensure Farshoukh would not get re-elected for another term. Farshoukh performed his role on the board as a salaried staff member of the Hariri establishment and not as an elected volunteer as had been the custom. According to Itani he was supposed to support the organisational and managerial uplifting of the club. Instead of approaching members of the General Assembly, who in principle should have been electing the board, fans tried to reach out directly to the club's patron via various people associated with the Hariri establishment.

According to Karim, a fan with good contacts within the club, several individuals tried to nominate themselves to the board, but the existing board ignored their applications. So instead, he and other fans approached those who 'have their people in the palace'<sup>116</sup> and handed a file to one of Hariri's aids. Their file gave information on corruption taking place in the club and suggested alternative candidates for the board. Karim claimed that until then 'Saad Hariri had no idea what was really happening in the club'. Saad was responsive, saying that he would revisit the list of nominees to the board. Yet despite Saad Hariri's promise, no alternative list was proposed so the same group of fans and members then resorted to using their connections to solicit the support of Bahia Hariri - Saad's paternal aunt and fellow politician. When I asked what kind of contacts they, as fans and club members, had to both Saad and Bahia Hariri, Karim assured me that 'no one is cut off a tree' and that there were many Nejmeh members who had their 'family weight' and 'weight in the palace' to guarantee that the voices of fans would be heard.

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116 Using the word 'Palace' Karim is talking about the Hariri residence in Beirut commonly called 'Qoraytem Palace', because of its size and perceived grandeur and Qoraytem being the neighbourhood where it is located.

According to Karim, Bahia Hariri then discussed the Nejmeh club crisis directly with her nephew. I quote Karim's account of what he claims were her words to Saad: 'My dear nephew', she said, 'may god bless you, Nejmeh club is a significant one and we have to safeguard it. We should get rid of this bunch of z'uran. A delegation from the club will soon come see you, make sure to see them and take what they say into consideration'.

Karim found no problem in relaying what 'Sitt Bahia' said to her nephew word by word and even acting out the meeting as if he had been present and could exactly quote what she said. He also repeated remarks of Saad Hariri's, and by presenting what Saad and Bahia said as direct quotations, he conveyed a sense of closeness and intimacy with the two politicians. Yet at the same time he repeatedly created a distance between 'us' - me and him - on the one side and 'them' - the two Hariri leaders - stressing that we 'have no idea what they are really like', that they are 'really busy', that 'they have their own considerations'.

He continued to assure me that he and other 'good' people in the club had their own way of influencing the authority of Hariri. By mentioning the Arabic proverb, 'no one is cut off a tree' he not only conveyed the value of an individual's connections, but how these connections are embedded in his or her kinship network. In popular usage, someone 'cut off a tree' is possibly an orphan, or a traveller distant from his family; an unfortunate soul, often the subject of pity. This is not true of the Nijmawis, who come from well-established Beirut families with electoral and financial significance and good social connections. With Bahia's intervention, the delegation of members succeeded in getting an appointment with Saad and secured the changes they required in the board. Farshoukh was not re-elected, and instead, long-standing club member, Saadeddine Itani, became Secretary General.

The same story encapsulates another important element that is worth pointing out, one that assumes that Bahia would have influence – or *mawneh*<sup>117</sup> - over her nephew, despite him being the political leader of the establishment. Bahia is not only a relative, but she is also an elder; despite her being a woman, age gives her an authority within the family over her younger nephew. Ghandour's description of his discussion with Rafic Hariri for the handing over of the club conveys a similar respect for age; 'he sent for his son Bahaa, and told him 'your uncle Omar wants to leave the club and wants you to become the club's President', and Bahaa answered by saying 'whatever you want', and 'this is how we agreed that Bahaa becomes President.' By his use of the word 'uncle', Rafic Hariri created a sense

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117 For an elaboration of the concept of *mawneh* see Chapter Five.

of closeness with Ghandour and gave him authority over his son. The son duly accepted, with no indication of interest in the club, but out of respect of his father's will - no matter what it was.

## **Beirut's Parliamentary Elections**

The ethnographic account below describes the ways in which those present in the stadium on the above described May day related firstly to elections, secondly to the candidacy of their political leader and thirdly to the state they wished him to be their representative within. I speak specifically of those who publicly and actively showed loyalty and support to Saad Hariri, by working in his electoral machine, attending the rally, and celebrating his win. While those people did not form the majority, (within Beirut's third district for example 60% of the electorate did not vote), they were key in bolstering Hariri's power and lending credibility and legitimacy to the electoral system and the rule of the elite.

The rally and the electoral process more broadly can be read as supporting the political patronage of Hariri. For one thing it provided the opportunity for one-off disbursement of money to supporters but no commitment to making continued payments. Together they provided opportunities for the performance of Hariri's signature style of power over his supporters. The events were truly exuberant and large scale, involving lavish expenditure of money, exorbitantly flamboyant electoral rallies and celebrations, and costly media campaigns. The festivities surrounding elections and the competition that they involved were opportunities for creating a sense of community among supporters; a means of introducing an affective element alongside the instrumental character of clientelism. Coupled with the bureaucratic procedures and technicalities of holding elections which together work to legitimise the power of the elected official, this affective element further contributed to the strengthening of a fantasy of the state as modelled by Hariri, and championed by an award winning Minister of Interior. It was a fantasy that to a large extent paralleled images of the elections taking place globally and was portrayed in the media as the symbol of democracy and people's participation.

### **The Electoral Machine**

In the run up to the elections, the different parties set up centres in the neighbourhoods where they had candidates, the aim being to rally supporters and facilitate the

administrative registration processes of voters. There was a centre on almost every corner in Beirut. Club fan, Mahmoud, was working in one of the Future Movement's electoral centres in the Ras el-Nabe' neighbourhood<sup>118</sup>. With the help of two or three other staff, Mahmoud was responsible for contacting all the voters in the district, asking them who they would be voting for. If they were voting for Hariri, Mahmoud would offer them a free lift from their house to the polling station. His task ended once the voting preference and transport needs were determined. Lists were handed over to logistics officers who ensured that transportation was appropriately allocated on the day. This assignment was one of several that each centre was entrusted with before the date of the elections. Other tasks included helping out in the registration of the eligible voters, advising those registered about the location of their polling stations, and developing contact lists with addresses and phone numbers of all voters within each district. There were many other tasks to be carried out on the day of elections; picking up voters, handing over names of the Hariri-supported list of candidates at the entrance of polling stations, monitoring the electoral process throughout the day, and counting votes in parallel to the official counting process. There were also several other jobs, including printing t-shirts and caps with the logos of the Future Movement on them and the provision of food and refreshments for the people working on the hot summer election day.

I went to visit Mahmoud in the centre three days before the elections. As he was not there when I arrived I was warmly welcomed by one of his colleagues, possibly because I was a female visitor in a mostly male space. The fact that I was not there for work or for electoral purposes did not lessen the hospitality I was shown. I was invited to sit on the balcony and offered both coffee and the company of the person in charge of the centre. The ambience was very sociable and lively, and the perceived duty to serve me coffee, was used as a pretext for making coffee for all present and taking long cigarette breaks on the balcony. The workload did not appear to be particularly heavy, and the only external inquiry made during my presence was by two young women asking about work opportunities during the campaign, and the location of the polling station they should attend on election day. One

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118 The area of Ras el-Nabe' was a mixed one, and had witnessed several clashes between the young men based there. Several civilians were killed in the area in May 2008, and a special effort was made, as Mahmoud explains, to ensure that it had a neutral, non-partisan appearance. Lebanese flags were hung outside and no pictures of any of the candidates were displayed. The external neutral image gave way indoors at the election centre where clear pro-Hariri political slogans adorned the walls and elections were openly discussed. Everyone present was certain that Hariri's candidates were sure to win the elections.

of the workers there asked me what district I voted in and if I knew the exact polling station I should go to. He looked it up for me from a specially printed list with a picture of Hariri on the cover. His service, and that of the centre more generally, of informing voters about their polling stations was virtually superfluous, as all the information was provided on the Ministry of Interior's website as well as by elected mayors in the neighbourhoods.

For the 2009 elections, the Hariri establishment assembled an electoral machine employing thousands of people. Mahmoud had been working for the elections for the past two months and told me that he would be paid around 700 USD. He said that in the area he was responsible for alone there were over 300 such employees, and double that number working on election day only, when each worker expected to be paid 100 USD for a single day's work.

This tactic, according to Mahmoud, was not vote buying. While he confirmed that Hariri was indeed directly paying his supporters, he saw the arrangement as provision of employment opportunities, even though the work was short term and the workers were under-occupied. He claimed that in the centre he worked in, no such request for work was refused. On the day before elections, he would assign the various tasks to the people at his centre. Those, as he said 'with less experience' would not be assigned any particular task, but would still be employed and paid: 'no one is rejected, everybody takes part. At the end of the day they will get paid. These are their dues and they have the right to be paid.' In Mahmoud's view, as a *Za'im*, Hariri should have been providing such favours to his clientele, as at election times there is always an increased need for human resources to support the campaign. As he described it, this did not contradict the electoral process; the same people would have voted for Hariri whether they were paid or not.

The dyadic relationship described by Johnson (1986) between the *Za'im* and his clientele which existed among the Sunni communities of Beirut has long changed. If votes were the main object of exchange that clients could offer their patron, these votes were of lower value in the 2009 elections as the elite had successfully consolidated their power already, and had managed to maintain their place in the parliament through the agreement on the electoral law. However, the existing elite still needed the support of their constituencies and it was more important for this to be shown in a performative way rather than in a transactional form: crucially, the elections provided an opportunity for the maintenance of the existing constituency by providing favours to them in the form of short-term employment. The relationships between the patron and his clients therefore came with no

strings attached and resembled, if one were to make a comparison, a one night stand and not a life-long marriage.

### **The Candidate's Generosity**

Later Mahmoud arrived at the centre. As I was having another cup of coffee with him many boxes containing brand new computers and printers were delivered. Without objection from the staff, I took part in setting up the equipment that would be used on election day, to count the votes and give early predictions of the results. Around a dozen printers and a smaller number of laptops were placed in one room on a single large conference table in its centre. We were told that the people who would work on it would come later and we were then asked to leave the room before it was locked. Someone asked a question that had been on all our minds; what would happen to the equipment after elections, and would any of it be donated to a particular organisation or individual? The expensive looking equipment could be seen as yet another potential profit to be made from helping out in the elections, just like the bonus of getting a free t-shirt and basketball cap.

Voters and supporters made use of such opportunities to extract services from a patron that they had already selected as Za'im. As they requested employment, they tried to gain rewards for their loyalty which was not immediately dependant on the payment they would receive. Criticism of the sudden surge in financial support by Hariri at election time was voiced by Mahmoud and other supporters who remembered that in the years preceding the elections longer term financial commitments to institutions under Hariri's patronage were scarce and were often not honoured. However, supporters recognised that elections were times of exceptional expenditure and they tried to maximise every chance of benefiting from the availability of extra cash. The amount actually spent, and how much of this expenditure actually trickled down to the ordinary supporters, is hard to gauge. The exaggerated expenditure of the Hariri establishment was not frowned upon by Hariri supporters nor was it seen as discrediting the electoral results. On the contrary, highly visible and generous campaign spending benefited the patron in his public performance of power.

Supporters I spoke to actually took pride in their patron's 'generosity' in comparison to the expenditure of other candidates. I witnessed this competitive element on election day in a location where representatives of both Hariri and the opposition party, Amal Movement, were working in close physical proximity. All electoral campaign employees received free meals, and when these were provided from an expensive restaurant the gesture was

understood to prove the generosity of the politician employing the workers. One Amal Movement representative made sure the emptied boxes in which his meal had been delivered were displayed alongside his colleagues' to show off that he had received an expensive meal. He bragged loudly about gourmet dishes which had most probably not been in the box in the first place. As I joked with him about it, he told me that the Hariri representatives received meals from 'Socrate' a well known restaurant in Beirut, and he wanted to make sure to let them know that opposition party employees also received a decent meal and not 'cheap falafel sandwiches'.

Making use of an electoral machine with such a massive staff and budget was not a feature exclusive to Saad Hariri's popular political behaviour, but was first introduced by his father, Rafic Hariri in the 1995 elections (Sader 1998). The strategy is one of several manifestations of the approach introduced by Hariri senior, characterised by the importance of money in politics (El-Husseini 2012) which in due course came to influence political culture in Lebanon. Money was lavished, even squandered, on supporters to flaunt power, but only where and when it had the performative power to persuade constituents, and other political actors alike.

To complete the picture of this process from the position of the elite, one needs to go back and question the actual sources of a patron's power; the resources that grant him financial means. One is his capture of state resources, and this – although distributed among ruling elite – requires that other elite in this power sharing system appreciate the size of his constituency. Another is the support received from external powers, namely Saudi Arabia in Hariri's case, and for that too popular support needs to be visible. On election day, the number of 'electoral observers' who are wearing a cap and t-shirt displaying the Future Movement's logo is just as important as the number of voters who - despite knowing that this is a performative rather than a functional act - cast a vote in support of Hariri and his candidates.



Figure 31: Electoral Rally of the Future Movement in Nejmeh Stadium on 7th May 2009. The Ferris wheel of the adjacent Luna Park appears in the background, as do some of the slogans of the electoral campaign: 'the state, security, prosperity, the constitution'.



Figure 32: Female supporter of the Future Movement taking a picture at the electoral rally of the Future Movement at Nejmeh Stadium, 7th May 2009. On the left is one of the large screens broadcasting the speeches of the candidates from the other end of the stadium. Above it are pictures of assassinated parliamentarian Bassel Fleihan, Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, and Minister Walid Eido.



*Figure 33: Youth supporter of the Future Movement wraps his flag at the end of the electoral rally. The flag is a mosaic of four flags, clockwise from top left, flag of the Future Movement with image of Rafic Hariri and his Son Saad Hariri, Lebanese flag, flag of Future Youth – the youth division of the Future Movement, and logo of the Tariq Al-Jadidah panthers. The flag of the Riyadi club hangs on the youth's waist. Nejmeh Stadium, 7th May 2009.*



*Figure 34: Young supporters glad to pose for the camera. Electoral rally of the Future Movement in Nejmeh Stadium; 7th May 2009.*

## **The Carnival**

In research on sports and politics in Lebanon I observed, like many before me, (see Giulianotti and Armstrong 1997) the many ways in which stadiums are used as stages, by players on the turf seeking to win a game or a championship, as well as by fans, managers, politicians, and the media.

As described at the beginning of this chapter, in Nejmeh stadium in May 2009, many stages and performances were in evidence. The politicians were on their separate stage, observable directly by the lenses of cameras and select elite members only. The people themselves, those for whom the festival was supposedly organised, were on the turf, being observed by the elite and the media's cameras, but only capable of seeing their politicians on the big screens that were set up for the occasion. The media had centre stage, transmitting and translating the images of the politicians and their politics alike. On the big screen the politicians appeared within reach and responsive to their supporters' cheers. Even before they arrived and after they had left, politicians were made 'present' via artistically produced video clips and photo montages. Cameras panned across the crowd feeding images up to the giant screens: wide-angle lenses had the effect of exaggerating the size of the crowd. The stadium had an added advantage; it belonged to Nejmeh which only 10 days previously had won the country's football championship. The neighbouring Al-Riyadi club had won the basketball championship a few days later. Both clubs were under Hariri's patronage and their recent triumphs added to his prestige and popularity.

The 'numerous crowd' as Al-Mustaqbal newspaper described the supporters present in Nejmeh on that day, largely served their electoral purpose by attending the electoral rally. Their presence was understood to publicly confirm popular support for the Za'im and the accuracy of the allotment of Beirut's parliamentary seats as agreed upon by the ruling elite. As the candidates entered the stadium, the master of ceremonies urged the supporters to cheer for the candidates and 'to make their voice heard'. In an atmosphere similar to that of the weekly demonstrations of 2005 which followed the assassination of Rafic Hariri, the people were assembled en-masse in the electoral rally to be deliberately 'displayed'. By adopting wide-angle filming techniques and methods of portrayal identical to those used during the events of 2005, the media played their part in co-opting the crowds into becoming part of Hariri's live, and highly expensive, performance of exorbitant power. To the supporters, the electoral rally provided an opportunity for coming together, for belonging and celebration. The speech of the politician emphasised that sentiment and

built on the affective side of the patron-client relationship, including sectarian sentiments. Examining Hariri's rally day speech highlights some of these elements. Hariri began by addressing the crowd as the 'loyal people of Beirut', as his own and his father's people, kin and family. He explained the choice of the date of the rally which coincided with 'the first annual anniversary of that wretched day when insanity thought it could invade the steadfast and Arab Beirut' – a direct reference to the Hezbollah military takeover of the city of Beirut in May 2008 and the ensuing clashes. Hariri also emphasised the choice of location: 'near the damned location where one of the heroes of Beirut, of March 14 and the Cedars Revolution, martyred deputy Walid Eido and his son martyr Khaled fell'. To one side of the stadium, a large picture of Eido was displayed high up alongside a picture of Rafic Hariri and his political ally and parliamentarian, Bassel Fleihan, who was killed in the same explosion.

The reference to the martyrs and May 2008 also appeared in one of the mottos the electoral campaign adopted and launched on that day: 'We will not forget, just like the sky is blue'. This motto was repeated by the master of ceremonies and printed onto a large backcloth hung behind the stage where the candidates spoke. The reference echoed well in the ears of the supporters, and the lady sitting next to me translated that as her own wish: 'God willing we will win, we should win' and when I asked what would happen if not, she explained that 'they [Hezbollah] will humiliate us [the Sunnis of Beirut]'. Naji echoed a similar sentiment: 'the criminal acts they committed against the people of Beirut on May 7, we will pay back on June 7, god willing'. He said he was 'happy, very happy' and confident of winning because 'god is with us'. I took him by surprise when I asked him what if Hariri did not win the elections – a close to impossible scenario given the agreement between the elite – he answered that it would be OK and that 'we would continue, in a civilised manner'. Naji spelled out a sentiment echoed by supporters of Hariri in the stadium, the participation in the elections and choosing democratic peaceful means offered proof that they were different from their political opponents who supported Hezbollah and who continued to resort to arms. The fact that Naji himself carried arms in the 1980s for the Arab nationalist militant group *al-Murabitun* and that at the time of the electoral rally, and for at least a year before that, he was on the payroll of Secure Plus, (the private security company that acted as a quasi militia for the Future Movement) appeared to be beside the point. He bought into and accepted the role of representing the image that Hariri wanted to portray of the 'us', the crowd in the stadium that day.

Beyond the reference to 2008 and the political identity of the group, the ambience in the stadium - as in the electoral centre that I visited earlier - was joyous and festive. It was one you wanted to be in, to belong to. The free flags being distributed, the music and the fireworks – which made the departure of politicians unnoticeable – all added to the convivial spirit.

### **Blue Fingers**

The festive mood continued on the day of the elections and the streets of Tariq Al-Jadidah, the neighbourhood at the heart of Beirut's third district, were decorated with pictures of Hariri. The area was bustling with youth leaving electoral centres showing off fingers stained by electoral ink as proof that they voted – or in practice that they affirmed their loyalty to Hariri. Later, as results were declared announcing the expected victory of the list of candidates led by Saad Hariri, supporters on several streets performed the traditional dabke dance to the beats of large speakers or live drums, and celebratory fireworks continued late into the night.

The appearance of fingers stained in indelible blue ink were a new feature of the 2009 round of elections. It came at the same time as a larger a set of procedural reforms that were pushed through by the Minister of Interior supervising the elections. Media outlets described in detail the electoral procedures and regulations, and the function of the electoral or indelible ink in preventing electoral fraud. The minister – a young lawyer with a record of activism for electoral and political reform among Lebanon's civil society – celebrated the creation of the Supervisory Commission on the Electoral Campaign, holding elections in all of Lebanon's districts on one day and the publication of the voter register. In recognition of the role played by the ministry in this round of elections, Baroud received the 2010 IFES Manatt Democracy Award<sup>119</sup>, and won the United Nations Public Service Award, the 'most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service', in the category of 'fostering participation in public policy-making decisions through innovative mechanisms' where, 'as s a result of new management approaches adopted in administrating elections, the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities

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119 See <http://www.elections.gov.lb/Municipal/news/Ziyad-Baroud-Receicves-the-2010-IFES-Manatt-Democr.aspx?lang=en-us> Accessed 23/7/2015.

(MOIM) achieved a number of successes which have raised the benchmark for any future elections.’<sup>120</sup>

Yet many of these procedures were re-appropriated by Hariri’s supporters and his electoral machine. The voter register for each district, used by his representatives in the electoral centres, was reprinted off the Ministry of Interiors’ records, complete with a glossy cover illustrated with Hariri’s pictures. The blue finger became a symbol of support for Hariri in Beirut: everyone knew very well that if you did not vote for Hariri there was no need for you to be concerned by the elections in the third and second districts<sup>121</sup>. Incidentally, Beirut’ third district was where I voted, and as I passed the streets of Tariq Al-Jadidah that day and spoke to Naji and his friends, I was asked repeatedly to show my blue stained finger, to prove that I had voted. True, I did have the chance to cast my vote, technically ‘in a democratic way’ as Hariri mentioned in his speech in on 7<sup>th</sup> May, but I had no real say in selecting representatives to the parliament. The rhetoric of democracy was well served but, as confirmed by the ensuing report of the Lebanese Association for Democracy of Elections (LADE) on the 2009 elections ‘at the end the electoral process does not determine, independently, the formation of power structures, but existing power balances at various levels which do, and change or modify the will of the voters’ (LADE 2010: 11). Still, the bureaucratic procedures and technicalities of holding elections were not performed in vain. They were used to legitimise the power of Hariri, who was ‘technically’ voted for democratically. As voters and political representatives went through neatly arranged voter lists, followed strict rules on casting their votes and paraded fingers dipped in the imported and all important blue electoral ink, they reconciled their clientelistic loyalties with a hollow, yet well rehearsed democratic rhetoric which echoed regional and global mediated representations of democracy.

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120 For details see the list of UNPSA list of winners available on <http://unpan.org/DPADM/UNPSDayAwards/UNPublicServiceDay/2010PublicServiceDay/tabid/1306/language/en-US/Default.aspx> - Accessed 25/2/2014.

121 According to the report of the Lebanese Association for Democracy of Elections, winning candidates in the third district received over 70% of the votes, as in several other districts in which some candidates received 94% of the votes, reflecting the extremely limited ‘real competition’ and margin of choice for the Lebanese voter (LADE 2010: 10)



Figure 35: Elections and the parading of electoral ink. From left to right, first row: 1. Indonesia 2009 2. Egypt 2012, Second row: 3. Lebanon 2009 4. Liberia 2011 5. Mali 2013, Third Row: 6. Iraq 2010 7. Lebanon 2010.<sup>122</sup>

122 All photos are under a creative commons license that allows reuse. Photo credits 1. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade -<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfataustralianaid/> 2. Jonathon Rashad -<https://www.flickr.com/photos/drumzo/> 3. Sana Tawileh - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sanatawileh/> 4. UN Photo, Photo ID 482798 - [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/) 5. IRI - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaidafrika/> 6. U.S. Navy Photo by Chief Petty Officer Michael D. Heckman, US Department of Defence - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/39955793@N07/> 7. HiBR - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/hibr/>

## Conclusion

Despite being celebrated as the cornerstone of representative democracy, I argued in this chapter that elections, as observed in Nejmech club and the 2009 parliamentary elections of Beirut, are actually tools of elite consolidation. I have shown how electoral processes were used to consolidate instrumental clientelistic ties and strengthen the clientelist habitus, providing one-off opportunities for the disbursement of money by the patrons and in parallel creating affective and performative bonds that tied Hariri more closely to his constituency. In particular, the slogan of ‘the state, security, prosperity, the constitution, and justice’, under which the Hariri Establishment campaigned for these elections, fed into a fantasy constructed around, firstly, the neoliberal ideology of the good life and, secondly, the bureaucratic performance of rules and regulations – at least rhetorically both aspirations stood in opposition to the image of Hezbollah as a non-state actor. Such a construction is an extension of the performative and extravagant style followed by Hariri in his public engagement, and is not free of the incongruity between the rhetoric of state building and institutionalisation as voiced in the club and beyond on the one hand, and in clientelistic and extra-state practices on the other.

In the next chapter I discuss this incongruity in more depth, particularly in relation to the use of violence and the politics of inclusion and exclusion. I explore this topic against the backdrop of escalating violence in Beirut by narrating a key period in Nejmech’s history which was described by many as a moment of rupture within the club.



## Anatomy of Division

*'A dog that barks with you is better than a dog that barks at you'*  
Lebanese proverb

*'Each Za'im will need some Zu'ran'*  
Nejmeh club fan

### Two Matches and a Press Release

*19th September, 2006<sup>123</sup>. Cite Sportive, Beirut. It was a sunny, hot and humid day despite the summer approaching its end. Nejmeh was playing against the Malaysian team, Selangor, in one of the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) cup matches. The stadium held between 3,000 and 5,000 spectators, a number smaller than the usual crowd which Nejmeh attracts. On one side of the stadium, a group of youths had taken off their shirts. They cheered and chanted, waving Nejmeh flags as well as those of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement. They cheered for Nejmeh, and in dissatisfaction with its management, some of them cheered for its captain Moussa Hjeij who, because of a disagreement with the management, joined them on the terraces instead of the field. Also in attendance by invitation from Nejmeh's management were kids from the orphanage of an Islamic charity. In the directors' box Nejmeh was better represented; the occupants included the club's President Daouk and Secretary General Farshoukh, as well as most of the board members and the head of the Fans' Office. Also sharing that privileged space were Rabif Alameh, LEA's secretary general, a representative of the Minister of Youth and Sports, the Malaysian consul in Lebanon, and Nejmeh's previous President, Omar Ghandour.*

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123 Matches described in this vignette took place well before field research for this dissertation started and the description provided is based primarily on newspaper coverage from three major Lebanese papers namely Al-Akhbar, Assafir, and Al-Mustaqbal, as well as some of the accounts of fans and members interviewed.

*This was the first sports event to take place in Lebanon after a seven-week war with Israel. A cease fire had put an end to the hostilities a little over a month earlier, but the destruction in the country and its infrastructure was massive, especially in the south of Lebanon and the residential areas of the Southern Suburbs. The debates on relief and reconstruction as well as hundreds of casualties and over a million refugees further embittered what by then had become a chronic political deadlock between Hezbollah and the Hariri led camp which blamed Hezbollah for a unilateral decision to instigate the war.*

*With the match ending nil-all, the team secured a qualification to the AFC cup's semi finals. In its coverage, newspapers reported on the team's unsatisfactory performance and levels of fitness. One of them, Al-Akhbar newspaper<sup>124</sup>, mentioned a clique of fans whose cheers had a 'sectarian, confessional, and regional tone and attacks on some political figures'<sup>125</sup>, and that the internal security forces intervened and arrested some of the youths. Remarkably, the Hariri owned Almustaqbal newspaper failed to mention any sort of disruption in the match, but rather commended the presence of internal security forces and their efficiency in dealing with the spectators.*

*In the tense political and security situation, some troubles in the stadium might have been expected. Indeed, on the day of the match, the editor of Al-Akhbar's sports pages – a long time Nejmeh fan and the first president of the fans union in the 1970s – wrote partly anticipating and partly warning of the 'cacophonous tunes' which could be played in the stadium on that day by the 'rioting clique' after 'a blazing summer'<sup>126</sup>: he hoped for appropriate security measures to avoid troubles in the stadium.*

*The next day, in response to the chants by that disorderly group of Nejmeh fans criticising Hariri and supporting his political rivals, Nasrallah and Berri, the club's management issued a press release. In it, the board distanced itself from the sectarian chants of the 'disorderly and suspicious crowd' and affirmed the club's 'Beiruti identity' and 'belonging to the family of the Future Movement under the za'ama (leadership) of Saad Rafic Hariri', and 'pride in the continuous direct patronage of the Hariri family'(figure 36). By making such statements they excluded a large percentage of the fans who did not see themselves as belonging to the same political 'family'.*

*26 September, 2006. Following a week of public condemnation and clamour about the skirmish in the match, Nejmeh's management decided to limit access to the next match. When Nejmeh met the Bahraini Mubarrak team in AFC Asian cup's semi finals on 26<sup>th</sup> September, tickets were not sold at the door and*

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124 Al-Akhbar at the time had only been in circulation for less than two months. The journalist in charge of its sports pages was a long time Nejmeh fan, but the coverage of the match seemed not to be politically motivated, particularly as they target fans who have cheered for Hezbollah, and the paper had aligned itself with the pro Hezbollah agenda.

125 Al-Akhbar 20/9/2006.

126 Al-Akhbar 19/9/2006.

*invitation cards were distributed to selected spectators only. The intention was to only invite fans that were personally known to management or members and trusted not to cause trouble. However, the political chants and insults were even worse despite preventative measures taken by the club's board. In what appeared to be an attempt to demonstrate loyalty to Hariri, a group of fans came to the match prepared to rectify the badmouthing of the club's patron in the previous match by cheering and chanting his praise. This instigated fights among fans, with the non-Hariri aligned fans understanding it as an attempt to further marginalise them because of their political sympathies. The first half was fraught with the exchange of insults and quarrels between the fans on the terraces despite attempts by board members and the LEA's Secretary General to calm them down. It is also clear that some spectators entered the match without having invitation cards, as according to management, only 1,500 tickets were printed while newspapers and those present report that several thousands more were in the stadium. The match ended with Nejme's defeat; 'an orphan, victim of its divided fans' as As-Safir newspaper reported the next day.*

## **Introduction**

The events of the two matches and the associated press release by the management were what many fans described as the 'straw that broke the camel's back'. It was the time at which a boundary of 'us' vs. 'them' within the club was created and a 'critical event'<sup>127</sup> (Das 1995) in the club's history. Although, as elaborated in earlier chapters, the redefinition of the club and its identity was a process that started even before the take-over of the club's patronage by the Hariri Establishment, these events were the first when belonging to Nejme club was publicly pronounced as exclusive to those who supported Hariri and the Future Movement.

In this chapter I present how these events and the reactions to them were justified, understood, and reacted to by the different constituencies of the club, namely the club's management and representatives of the Hariri establishment as well as fans from both sides of what by that time was a divided club. I argue that division within the club was a by-product of individuals' attempts to improve their position within the clientelistic network of relationships. These sectarian and political divisions are produced through a mutually enforcing relationship between verbal and physical aggressions against the perceived

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127 Das defines 'critical events' as events after which, 'new modes of action came into being which redefined traditional categories' (1995: 6), and new formations of community emerge. Whereas she uses the term to describe events and societies at a much larger scale, I use the term at the scale of the club to illustrate the extent to which the press release in particular redefined the identity of both Nejme as a community and the meaning of club fandom.

opponents of the za'im. The intention of such aggressions is to affirm a supporter's loyalty to his chosen leader and as I observed, they are often initiated or volunteered in a bottom-up process by supporters and fans, although also instrumentally used by those higher up in the clientelistic hierarchy.

The chapter examines in particular racketeering by strong-arm men or in other words the vocal (and at times violent) performance of loyalty on the part of followers and clients of Saad Hariri. Tracking the role of the strong-arm men outside sports and on the streets of Beirut, particularly those employed by a Hariri-commissioned private security firm, I discuss the public performance of loyalty by strong-arm men as a strategically instrumental tool for the patron and his supporters. For the patron, this tool allowed him to flaunt the strength of his popular following to other members of the political elite. While this paralleled the display of a large following at times of elections, it is of particular importance at times of heightened conflict, particularly as the conflict context opens up opportunities for instrumental gain to certain groups who are willing to resort to violent behaviour and who more often than not justify such actions through the use of territorial and sectarian discourse. Yet the use of violence contradicts both the discourse and representation of the Future Movement. Violence is incompatible with the declared ideals of members of the bourgeoisie who promote the Future Movement as a non-violent movement dedicated to striving for state sovereignty and restricting the use of force to the state alone. These people view Hezbollah's maintenance of an armed wing as illegitimate. Partly because of this ideal, and at times despite their usefulness to the Future Movement, the angry, disenfranchised, and vocal fans in the stadium were described by the club's management as 'disorderly', 'suspicious', and at times as zu'ran. For fans affiliated to the Future Movement, the period allowed for the performance of loyalty to the new patron and the acquisition of his favour while in parallel it marginalised those fans who were unwilling to engage in such displays of loyalty.

While Chapters Five and Six focused respectively on the role of the bourgeoisie and the electoral process in reformulating the identity of Nejmeh, this chapter looks at bottom-up dynamics and the roles of the regular fans, including both those that support the Hariri establishment politically and those who don't.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section engages with literature on the use of violence in Lebanon within the clientelistic system, and attempts to link it with broader anthropological literature which has discussed the relation between the elite and

the masses in the instrumental and symbolic use of violence. In the second section of this chapter I further analyse the events within the club described in this chapter's vignette, looking at the various narratives set forth by different actors within the club and ways in which these narratives have redefined the club's identity. In the third I move out of the club into the broader political context, and discuss the events of May 2008. I argue that the impact of these events is paralleled in various settings - social relationships in Beirut, the publicly proclaimed identity of the city, and within events taking place in Nejmeh club itself. I look more specifically at the use of strong-arm men, and examine prevalent rationales and motivations for their employment.

## **From Qabadays to Zu'ran**

Within the realm of sports, the denouncement of hooliganism and violence in the stadium coincided with broader global social and economic processes. Football and other spectator sports increasingly became the 'property of middle-class popular culture' (Giulianotti 1999: 35). Policies aimed at ridding football stadiums of hooliganism went hand in hand with the commodification of football when the game became more lucrative as it attracted media coverage and revenues from advertising contracts. Daouk's denunciation of the unruly fans in the Nejmeh stadium as a 'disorderly group' was thus rooted in a glocal<sup>128</sup> sports and political discourse that publicly condemned violence, although in Lebanon and other countries, violence was nevertheless often put to use.

Such a duality can be understood through the political science literature which discusses the 'dual government', or argues that a type of 'deep state' or a 'state within a state'<sup>129</sup> (or in this case a 'movement within a movement') operates covertly within the state apparatus and freely uses violence for political interest. Yet in the case of the Future Movement, and at different levels of its hierarchy, the overt show of publicly adhering to non-violent means, the utilisation of democratic tools and state institutions took place alongside concealed subsidisation of the covert formation of extra-state security apparatus. The duality between the public message of the Future Movement and its private practices is one concerning

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128 The term glocalization as Robertson proposes refers to the 'simultaneity --- the co-presence --- of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies' (1997: unpaginated). The term is particularly useful in understanding the interrelationships between the global and local in football (see Giulianotti and Robertson 2004)

129 For more on the terms see Glennon (2015) on the 'deep state' in the USA, and Norton (2013) on Egypt. Numerous academic and journalistic pieces have used these terms with a wide range of meanings attached to them.

representation and is not a result of conflicting forces operating within the movement. The contradictory tactics I describe parallel many other dualities that characterised the Hariri establishment's political discourse and practice, including that of democracy versus vote-buying, and championing the state and its institutions versus pushing for privatisation and allowing space for corruption in state operation. To that end, Hajj-Saleh's theorisation of the 'overt' and 'covert' state, as in the example of the Syrian regime, is pertinent. For Hajj-Saleh (2015), the Syrian regime publicly champions the non-sectarian state and vehemently criticises sectarianism as a cause of discord or *fitna*, (in the colloquial usage meaning internal discord or dispute), while at the same time it maintains political control through reliance on sectarian networks for protection and access to resources. According to Hajj-Saleh, 'sectarianisation' thus is a tool for political and social control: it creates a network comprising a privileged few who benefit from the regime's continued control while they provide protection for it<sup>130</sup>.

This explanation of the ways in which political control and the loyalty of strong-arm men is maintained has parallels in the operation of the Hariri establishment, but it does not fully explain the loyalty expressed by Hariri's supporters. On the face of it, the loyalty system works like this: the fan, or the strong-arm man working for Secure Plus, who is publicly and vocally supporting Hariri, is able to gain a route towards improved position within the clientelist system of the Hariri Establishment. The exclusion of the fans who did not or, due to their sectarian identity, could not belong to the 'family of the Future Movement' thus became a by-product of the crystallisation of networks of support for Hariri and his establishment.

Yet my observations from the field of willingness to engage in violence on the popular level bridge culturalist and rationalist explanations. Members of the elite – in this case of the Hariri establishment - might well have been inducing the masses to take on fighting or violent roles for political gain, and the zu'ran or thugs were happy to oblige, given the incentive of personal gain. In parallel though, people spoke about the need for the protection of the Sunni community, seeing it as under sectarian threat. Their wish for such protection evolved against a well known history of the heroic actions of the Qabadays.

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130 Hajj Saleh's discussion is published in three consecutive articles available on <http://aljumhuriya.net/33057>, <http://aljumhuriya.net/33115> and <http://aljumhuriya.net/33153> - all accessed 15/3/2015.

Johnson (1986: 82-96) in his account of clientelism in Beirut in the 1970s, described a primarily transactional relationship between the za'im or the political leader and a number of local bosses or strong-arm men who he calls Qabadays<sup>131</sup>. According to Johnson the za'im provided the Qabaday, who often would have a criminal record, with protection from the law in return for political loyalty. Qabaday's loyalty 'was expressed by recruiting and controlling the clientele, working for the za'im in elections, organising mass demonstrations of support and, occasionally fighting for the za'im in battles with his opponents' (1986: 83). Qabadays were 'leaders pushed forward by the masses' (Johnson 1986: 83) and because of that were a potential threat for the za'im who was to some extent forced to cooperate with them on the ground. Yet for many 'he was a moral leader, he was a man of the people, a helper of the weak and poor, a protector of the quarter and its inhabitants, and a communal champion' (Johnson 1986: 82). Gilsean (1996) in research conducted in North Lebanon in the 1970s also described the role of the Qabadays in the rural areas of Akkar, again as individuals who emerge from the people (ordinary farmers in his case), who are feared and reputed for their strength, independence – though without challenging the authority of the patron - and ability to use violence. Unlike their counterparts in urban Beirut, Qabadays in the north did not have the capacity to mobilise a larger base of clientele but were active wherever the za'im's coercive force was needed.

Both authors mentioned above traced changes in the roles of Qabadays during their research. As the socio-economic scene in the north of Lebanon changed, Gilsean speaks of the 'impotence' of Qabadays (1996:278-279). In one incident he posits the Qabaday as opposed to the figure of a female head of a local school who 'represented progress, culture and education' and who 'could be made a figure of transcendent values, respected and acknowledged as superior to the ways of the village' (1996: 278). In relation to this novel female figure of authority and 'rather than appearing as the admired figure of the courageous, tough, "true man", the Qabaday figured as a blunderer who committed crude and clumsy coercion devoid of social awareness' (1996: 279).

Johnson, on the other hand, spoke of changes rooted in Beirut's urbanisation process, with the reduced importance of the extended family and the breakup of the quarter as a social

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131 Johnson provides two linguistic origins of the word Qabaday, one from the Arabic verb *qabada* meaning to grasp or hold and the other from the same word in Turkish meaning bully or swashbuckler (1986: 82). In the popular usage of the word that I observed in Beirut while doing research, the word had the positive connotations of strength and courage and ability to defend oneself and ones' community.

unit out of which the Qabaday derived his legitimacy. In that case, Johnson argued that the 'za'im capitalised on his clients' mythological conceptions of social organisation, and in some cases actually created an artificial quarter or family identification' (1986: 95). More important is the politicisation of the Qabadays as the Lebanese Civil war raged in 1975. At this time the Qabadays became increasingly dependent on support from external forces, including funding from Egypt, Libya, and the Palestinian factions. Collectively these strands of support allowed the Qabadays to break out of the power of local zu'ama, thus diminishing the role of the latter<sup>132</sup>.

During my research in Beirut between 2008 and 2010 the predominantly Sunni neighbourhoods were being watched and 'protected' by strong-arm men. Superficially their role seemed to differ little from Johnson's observation of the Qabadays 'traditional duty of defending their quarters against outsiders' (1986: 182) in addition to racketeering on behalf of the political leader. However, I never once heard the word 'qabaday' with the positive connotations associated with it used to describe the Hariri-affiliated strong-arm men. Like similar youths from other communities, they were mostly described as zu'ran and were denounced, at least publicly, for what they did and how they did it regardless of who was employing them - even if they were hired by the political leaders themselves. A similar labelling of strong-arm men as zu'ran back in the 1980's also carried 'negative implications of bullying and aggressive behaviour' but this epithet was then reserved to the strong-arm men of opposing political groups (Johnson 1986: 83).

Within Secure Plus, the role of strong-arm men has been reinvented in the past decade within a changing urban context and Hariri's leadership style. Yet, knowledge of the Qabaday's past actions provided what Fearon and Laitin call a 'culturally approved script' of action, one which allows the middle-class and bourgeoisie to lend its support and bolsters connections with the strong-arm men (2000: 874). As in the example of Solidere's logo for the reconstruction of Beirut, an 'ancient city for the future', a fine line is trodden between the traditional role and public image of Qabadays, or strong-arm men, in protecting their neighbourhoods and the more recent corporate establishment of an armed militia under the guise of a security company. The neoliberal policies and dispositions put

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132 The civil-war period has impacted in many ways the use of violence at the community level in Beirut, including the perception, prevalence of, and function of strong arm racketeering as militarisation prevailed. These dynamics are beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses particularly on the role of the strong-arm men within the clientelistic power distribution within the Sunni communities in particular in periods of relative calm.

forward by Hairiri, have ‘become integrated and entangled in systems of older dispositions, and in other systems of dispositions already being constituted’ (Hilgers 2013: 84).

The context of the emergence of strong-arm men in Beirut after the assassination of Rafic Hariri is also significantly different to the period that Johnson describes. Firstly, continued urbanisation and a consequent influx of rural migrants to Beirut, particularly during the war, meant that there were not many neighbourhoods which enjoyed family based cohesion and shared Sunni sectarian identity – circumstances seen by some as justifying provision of protection. Possibly more important is the recruitment process used to secure the services of strong-arm men. While some of those I encountered were from the Tariq Al-Jadidah neighbourhood, keeping watch from the rooftops of their own apartment buildings, many were salaried staff members of a private security firm – Secure Plus - and instead of being ‘pushed forward by the masses’ (Johnson 1986: 83), these men came from the poor rural areas of Lebanon and not the quarter they were supposedly defending.

The reliance on a corporation to perform the duties of security – which coincides with the neoliberal policy of privatisation – paradoxically goes hand in hand with the Hariri establishment’s self-presentation and the neoliberal ideology of the good life referred to in the previous chapter (Berlant 2011). The neoliberal entails ‘fantasies of multicultural accommodation, domestic security, and a sovereign national identity’ (Wedeen 2013: 843). In other words, among the Hariri establishment at the time there was a contradictory duality of verbally rejecting violence yet, at the same time, arming young men<sup>133</sup>.

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133 This contradiction might also be the product of what I observe as a – rather schizophrenic - change in popular attitude towards the use of violence in the post-war period; one that combines conflict fatigue and the public denouncement of the use of violence on the one hand with the inability to completely repudiate violence because of the habitual familiarity with its tools. Such a claim though still requires both theoretical and empirical scrutiny.

‘Once again, well known disorderly groups attempt to drag NejmeH Sport Club into dangerous side battles that have nothing to do with the club, and to make use of NejmeH’s name in instigating political, communal and sectarian *fitna* which does not reflect sportsmanship. As such, the club would like to clarify the following:

1. NejmeH Football Sport Club takes pride in belonging to the family of the Future Movement under the *Za’ama* of Saad Rafic Hariri, and takes pride in the continuous direct patronage of the Hariri family, and its indirect patronage for over a decade, which has contributed to the club’s advancement on all levels.
2. NejmeH Football Sport Club vehemently rejects what happened during the club’s match with Malaysian team Selangor in the Cite Sportive stadium when disorderly suspicious and implanted groups launched political and sectarian chants and slogans. NejmeH club has nothing to do with such groups and is dishonoured by their claims of belonging to its fans, and the club will not be led to the trap of *fitna* which such clubs groups are attempting to do, knowing that it is easy to implant such suspicious and harmful elements in a sports event to misrepresent the country in front of the Asian confederation and visiting teams.
3. NejmeH Football Sport Club already took, and will further take a number of measures to restrain this disoriented and disruptive group and to rebuff and distance it from its match, even if that means holding matches without spectators, as the club is dishonoured by such groups’ claims of belonging to its body of fans who in the majority have committed during the match to the team’s civilised chants.
4. NejmeH Football Sport Club affirms once again its Beiruti identity, and from the capital Beirut voyages across the homeland and to different areas and groups.
5. In response to attempts to instigate *fitna* and the rumours that some are trying to spread, NFC affirms its belonging to the legitimate parent football association, which is the Lebanese Football Association and its support to decisions and actions aiming to improve Lebanese football.
6. NFC warns those “fishing in murky water” that it will not be silent if faced by any infringement against it from any group or person.’

Issued on Wednesday 20/9/2006, and signed by both NejmeH President Mohammad Amin Daouk and Secretary General Abdullatif Farchoukhe. As published by Lebanese daily *Almustaqbal* on 21/9/2006 – my translation

Figure 36: Press Release by NejmeH Sport Club Management

## رداً على الهتافات المذهبية والشتائم السياسية في المدينة الرياضية النجمة يتبرأ من الغوغائيين المشبوهين والمندسين



النجمة وسيلاتفور وقراءة الفاتحة على شريخ الحريري

رداً على ما حصل من هتافات مذهبية وشتائم سياسية خلال مباراة النجمة مع سيلاتفور الماليزي أمس الأول في المدينة الرياضية، أدلى النائب أكرم شبيب بتصريح جاء فيه: «بالأسس واثناء نقل مباراة تلفزيونية بين فريق من لبنان وفريق آسيوي، لفت المشاهدين ولفتني واقع الهم لا بد من التنبيه له، وضرورة معالجته بحكمة ومسؤولية حتى لا تتحول الملاعب الرياضية الى منافسات في الهتافات والشتائم بدلاً من الروح الرياضية المطلوبة، ببساطة وخلال خمس وأربعين دقيقة، وهو الوقت الذي بدأ به البث المباشر عبر المؤسسة اللبنانية للإرسال، بدأت هتافات وشتائم موصوفة بحق قوى وطنية سيادية لبنانية، مقابل هتافات تمجد شخصيات أخرى وإيران وسوريا».

وأضاف: «على خطورة الكلام الذي قيل ظهر وبشكل واضح ان هناك «مايسترو» أدار بنجاح عملية الشتائم المنظمة، هذه الشتائم لا تؤدي الى صون «انتصار» وبناء وطن ويجب التنبيه الى ان وحدة لبنان وكرامات الناس ليست كرة يتقاذفها الحاقدون والسنة التابعين، فالوطن أعلى وأبقى وأسمى من سوريا وإيران اللتين حظيتا بهتافات تأييد المايسترو».

من جهته، وصف نادي النجمة الندين قاموا بهذه الهتافات بالغوغائيين المشبوهين والمندسين، رافضاً ما حصل منهم «ان نادي النجمة لا يشرفه ادعاءهم الاستمراء الي جمهوره ولن يسخر النادي الي فخ الفتنة التي يحاول هؤلاء حزة لها».

وأكد النجمة هويته البعرونية وانطلاقه من العاصمة نحو كل الوطن «وافتحاره بانتتمائه الي عائلة تبار المستقبل بزعامه الشيخ سعد رفيع الحريري، مثلما يفخر بالرعاية المباشرة والمستمرة لال الحريري منذ ٤ سنوات وغير المباشرة منذ أكثر من عقد».

كما أكد النجمة انتماءه الي المؤسسة الكروية الشرعية الام وهي اتحاد كرة القدم ودعمه لمقرراته وخطواته الهادفة الى رفع شأن الكرة الوطنية على المستويات كافة.

على سعيد آخر، زار وفد مشترك من ناديس النجمة الرياضي وسيلاتفور الماليزي شريخ الرئيس الشهيد رفيق الحريري، في ساحة الحرية وسط بيروت، حيث قرأوا الفاتحة عن روحه وبالمناسبة، التي رئيس نادي النجمة محمد أمين الداوق كلمة

## خسارة الأناضول أمام الجزيرة (٢-٠)

خسر الأناضول أمام الجزيرة الأردني (صفر - ٢)، في المباراة الودية الثانية التي يخوضها الفريق اللبناني ضمن معسكره التدريبي في الأردن استعداداً للقاء الأول مع القادسية الكويتي في الكويت في الدور الأول لمسابقة دوري أبطال العرب لكرة القدم.

وكانت مباراة الأناضول فرصة امام المدير الفني جمال طه لاختبار عدد من اللاعبين الاحتماليين الذين غابوا

أكد فيها وفاء النادي إدارة فنياً ولاعبين وجمهوراً الرئيس الشهيد وقبته، مؤكداً الدور العميق الذي لعبه المستويات كافة وخصي الرياضية.

وقبل زيارة الضريح، أول النجمة على شرف بعثة الضيف، في مطعم «بيبي فردان»، بحضور أمين السر اللطيف فرشوخ وأعضاء من الادارية والجهاز الفني والأخصائى وتميذلت بالمناسبة التذكارية بين مسؤولي الناس

عن المباراة الودية الأولى امام البعثة التي انتهت بالنصر السليم.

مثل فريق الأناضول (حسن مغنية)، معزز بالله محمد مطر، حسن الامين، الشوم (محمد رمال)، ساسي محمد شحرور (محمد بسمة) بلوط (ربيع الخصري)، درويش (داني نحلة)، محمد وعلي ليل.

اف

حسن

بلوط

دروي

علي

محمد

شوم

سليم

حسن

بلوط

## On the Straw that Broke the Club's Back

The chapter's opening description of the events that took place during the Nejmeh matches in September 2009 sketched a neatly rearranged chronology of the varied narratives I heard about that period. In fact though narratives I heard from club fans and management diverged in two important ways; firstly in the chronology of the matches and press release and thus the causal links between them, and secondly in the perceived intensity of violence and extent of the damage caused in the matches. I was only able to understand the sequence of events after reconstructing it from newspaper archives (see table 9).

**Table 9 - Key Events of the AFC cup related dispute within Nejmeh**

19 Sept 2006	Nejmeh versus Malaysian team Selangor Cite Sportive Stadium - AFC Asian cup quarter finals Score: 0 – 0 (Nejmeh qualifies for the semi finals)
21 Sept 2006	Board of Nejmeh issued a press release blaming 'disruptive' and 'barbaric groups' who did not belong to the club for troubles in the match. Press release asserts the club's 'pride in belonging to the Future Movement's family headed by Saad Hariri' and stresses the club's 'Beirut' identity – published in Lebanese papers on 21/9/2006.
26 Sept 2006	Nejmeh versus Bahraini Muharrak team Cite Sportive Stadium - AFC Asian cup semi finals Score: 1 – 2 (Nejmeh exits the tournament)

In brief, two main narratives exist. The first concerns the way the club management presented the political chants in the first match as being seriously provocative and necessitated that the management should respond by affirming loyalty to the club's patron. The second narrative is that of the fans who were not aligned with the Future Movement, and who stressed that the chaos in the first match was minimal and expected and claimed that it was the press release of Nejmeh's board which exacerbated the situation.

Most reporting on Nejmeh following the first match and the club board's press release in fact condemned both the management's exaggerated response and the press release. In *As-Safir*, an editorial entitled 'Nejmeh club, where to?' published under what is probably a pseudonym, spoke about the 'reckless acts of a group of young boys' who the writer argued were mere adolescents, and the management's 'unwise response'. Similar articles interviewed key sports personalities and gauged their reactions to the events in Nejmeh, with many voices including that of the previous Nejmeh President who was at the match, criticising the politicisation of Nejmeh's identity by the management - but not the fans in the stadium. In fact, what probably made the events of the first match appear so significant was the management's and parliamentarian Chehayeb's reaction to them.

According to reporting at the time – and matching the narrative of fans un-aligned with the Future Movement - it was the second match that Nejmeh played within the AFC Asian cup semi finals on 26th September, 2006 - particularly as it came after the press release was issued – which witnessed significant clashes despite the attendance at the game being restricted exclusively to those fans invited by the management. Nejmeh fans fought among themselves. Pro-Hariri fans cheered for the club's patrons in an effort to prove their political loyalty after the earlier game, while fans who did not support Hariri chanted for his political adversaries as a provocative, vengeful response to the club's press release that had so alienated them.

The context of when the match was played is important to clarify the underlying sentiments that might have triggered the problems in the first match. Going through the archives of the above period, I would have had to have been completely blind to ignore the political context in which the games were taking place, particularly as I read the newspaper headlines for that day. Pro March 8 fans reading the Al-Akhbar newspaper were informed about the accusations against Sanioura, the Hariri-allied Prime Minister, of 'obstructing the reconstruction' (Al-Akhbar 19/9/2006) of predominantly pro-Hezbollah areas destroyed by Israel in its war on Lebanon only weeks earlier. Pro March 14 fans reading Al-Mustaqbal newspaper were told about Hezbollah's plans to 'topple the government' (19/9/2006). Probably at the height of the political crisis, chants insulting to Hariri, the club's patron, should have come as no surprise. The pro Hezbollah fans resident in the Southern Suburbs, who for years had known the club as the marginalised team on the football scene with whom they could identify, would have found it hard to reconcile the idea that Nejmeh at the time was in the hands of their political opponent. Among the March 8 supporters, Hariri and his allies were seen to have failed to provide adequate support to fellow Lebanese during the war that damaged much of their neighbourhoods and caused considerable destruction and grief, and to have obstructed the reconstruction of these neighbourhoods. As I mention in the vignette opening this chapter, troubles in the game were almost inevitable given the background tension.

**Table 10 – Differing narratives of the AFC cup related dispute within NejmeH**

	<b>NejmeH Board<sup>134</sup></b>	<b>Fans not aligned with the Future Movement<sup>135</sup></b>	<b>As-Safir coverage</b>
Assessment of the events of the first match	<p>‘Indescribable things happened.. they cursed Hariri, they cursed the Sunnis.. they cursed everybody.’</p> <p>‘What happened was massive.. it was of an international calibre and papers wrote about it’</p>	<p>‘There were a few problems, from the fans that is. Maybe it was at that time that they got annoyed’</p> <p>‘They opened another door for the spectators who went to the larger seating area on the other side and I could no longer control them [...]the police officers provoked them, and they in turn provoked the police and that was it’</p> <p>‘A group not more than 500 people. [...]. Had there been 10,000 or 20,000 shouting and badmouthing the Hariri family. I would have wondered why is it they were doing it and why would they do that when Hariri was supporting the club.. 500 men are just a minority.’</p>	‘reckless acts of a group of young boys’
Justification for / reaction to press release issued by board	<p>‘Because of all the cursing and humiliation, we then demanded that we issue a press release that matches in extent what had happened.’</p> <p>‘What would you do? Get slapped and not respond? I was compelled to do something’</p>	<p>‘NejmeH club began in Beirut, its roots are here but it has branched out, but [Daouk] cut out all these branches, and said NejmeH is a Beirut club and its belonging is to the Future Movement, and he who loves Future Movement is welcome to NejmeH and who doesn’t love and support it is not. This was the straw that broke the camel’s back.’</p>	the board’s ‘unwise response’
Assessment of the events of the second match	<p>‘Zu‘ran, we know them.. they found a hundred ways to sneak in, they forged tickets.. printed forged ones and the cite sportive is big with many places to climb into the stadium through.. this is what we realized later..[...] Many parties were supposed to prevent them from entering.. because we had agreed with them that only those with tickets were allowed in.. but they didn’t.</p>	<p>‘[two current club members] brought a few guys from Tariq Al-Jadidah, they dressed them in NejmeH clothes despite them not being NejmeH fans, they gave them Hariri’s pictures and got them into the stadium. A group that is not in attendance to watch the match, but to cheer and chant ‘God, Hariri and Tariq Al-Jadidah’</p> <p>‘ they got tickets somehow, from somebody intending to cause fitna [...], but then the decision came from higher places, people from the police and the government insisted that they go in and they did.’</p>	<b>Assafir:</b> NejmeH ‘an orphan, victim of its divided fans’

134 All quotations in this column are from club president at the time Daouk.

135 All quotations in this column are from Sami and Abu Ahmad, fans who have since distanced themselves from the club.

## **Performing Loyalty: the Obligation on Club Members and Fans**

In my interview with club President Daouk in 2010, he described the troubles in the first game of 2006 as intense, justifying the issue of a public statement:

[the press release] was after a match where indescribable things happened.. they cursed Hariri, they cursed the Sunnis.. they cursed everybody, I don't want to be unjust to anybody .. [troubles in the match] caused such a clamour then.. we tried to contain it, we did try to contain it..'

Daouk explained that in the face of such events, he had an obligation to respond. According to him this obligation was imposed by fans who accused him of not fulfilling his role as club President, and by fellow board members some of whom were also members of the Future Movement: Daouk saw the obligation to respond as his duty towards the club patron: 'What would you do? Get slapped and not respond? I was compelled to do something'. Daouk, like many other club officials (as discussed in Chapter Five), found it unacceptable that Saad Hariri funded the club while its fans insulted the patron in the stadium. He was clear that it was his duty and role to affirm loyalty to the club patron:

'Are we supposed to deny that.. that he [Hariri] is funding the club and has helped it advance beautifully and then they [the fans] badmouth him and humiliate him, badmouth his sect and humiliate it, and we are not allowed to say a word about it? [...] Because of all the cursing and humiliation, we were required to issue a press release that matches in extent what had happened.. what happened was massive.. it was of an international calibre and papers wrote about it. They then were accusing us of not performing our role.'

A public statement made by the parliamentarian Akram Chehayeb contributed to problematising the political chanting in the first match and then putting pressure on the management to respond by framing the chanting as an infringement on the club's patron by his political opponents. Chehayeb, who other than belonging at the time to the same political camp of Hariri, had no direct relation with either the club or the Future Movement issued a statement on the same day - published two days after the match in *Almustaqbal* newspaper - again condemning the troublemakers:

'In a live TV broadcast of a match between a Lebanese and an Asian team, television viewers and myself were alarmed by a bitter reality that requires our

attention and efforts to remedy it with wisdom and responsibility, so sports stadiums do not get transformed into competitions in profanity instead of the required sportsmanship. Simply and for 45 minutes, since the time that live broadcast started on LBC, slogans and swearwords targeting Lebanese national and sovereign powers, and in contrast to chants glorifying other politicians as well as Syria and Iran. [...] the danger of such chants is that they clearly indicate that there is a 'maestro'<sup>136</sup> managing such profanity, knowing that this does not protect 'victory'<sup>137</sup> or preserves the country and we should be careful that Lebanon's unity and people's dignity is not a ball that can be tossed around by those who are spiteful, and that Lebanon is more precious and honourable than Syria and Iran which were applauded by the 'maestro' (Almustaqbal 21/9/2006).

Such reactions portrayed the troubles in the match not as the spontaneous hooliganism of unruly fans, but as organised political action that was coordinated by high ranking politicians targeting Saad Hariri. In that sense, it was necessary for the management to affirm loyalty to the club's patron. According to Daouk, the press release was not issued upon request of the Hariri establishment who 'have no time for things of the sort', though as he emphasised, they were sure to be disturbed by such acts. Ghandour, the club's previous president seemed to assume a greater distance for the management in its relationship with the club's patron, and emphasised that during his time at the club, the Hariri establishment never directly asked for any public show of loyalty in return for the funding received. Yet beside the above justification that stems from Daouk's understanding of what is the patron's 'right', it was hard to clearly define in the club's management at the time exactly where the Hariri establishment ended and the club's board began. Two club officials, namely the 'elected' board member Secretary General Farshoukh, as well as the club's Media Officer were appointed by the club's patron and were part of his establishment. Daouk hinted at the board and some 'others' being involved in drafting the controversial document. Added to that, many board members had business ties with the Hariri establishment which they might have prioritised over the internal cohesion of the club.

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136 Maestro was the word used in Arabic, literally meaning music conductor, but used for individuals or groups controlling political groups behind the scenes.

137 In reference to Hezbollah's self proclaimed 'divine victory' in the summer 2006 war with Israel.

The public display of loyalty was not limited to the words of the board members, but was soon followed by a public display of loyalty at the level of fans themselves who performed in the second match pro-Hariri chants and cheers outweighing those used by opponents in the previous match. As Daouk asserted, fans also dutifully asserted that ‘it is his right’; it was the patron’s right to prohibit public criticism of him within a space that he was funding. While I could not speak to any of the fans actually involved in the pro-Hariri chants – or at least none of them professed their involvement directly to me – in piecing together the different accounts of the day of the second match, it appears that a few fans, possibly in complicity with some board members and the security forces, organised the pro-Hariri chanting in the second match.

Karim, a Sunni Nejmeh fan who was a supporter of Hariri and still close to the club at the time of fieldwork, confirmed the claim that the chants in the second game were organised by pro-Hariri Nejmeh fans. He described those fans as ‘a few malicious individuals’ who ‘with the aim of destroying the image of Nejmeh club and presenting it as belonging to a sole neighbourhood and sect, asked some groups to bring fans from just one neighbourhood, in other words that they would only bring Sunnis’. This member’s statement could be read as a criticism of the group that he aligned himself with politically. Rather than accusing outsiders or a ‘maestro’, he saw the problem as being with some fans who aimed to change the identity of the club and restrict it to members of the Sunni sect and the supporters of the Hariri Establishment only. According to him though, this was not done at the request of the Hariri Establishment, but more as a way of improving their standing in relation to the patron. Karim said that Hariri himself did not know of such actions and would not have approved of them. For those ‘trouble makers’, just as with the management, such a display of loyalty was not for the sake of gains within the club; the club was merely a stage that provided opportunities to demonstrate loyalty and to gain status within the Hariri establishment for benefits that extended beyond the confines of the club itself.

Again, club fan, Sami, shared the same view - that the chants for Hariri in the second game were acts of deliberate disruption:

‘There was another Asian match, to which they bring a group - a plot to which [two current club members] contributed - they bring a few guys from Tariq Al-Jadidah, they dress them in Nejmeh clothes despite them not being Nejmeh fans, they give them Hariri’s pictures and get them into the stadium. A group that is not in

attendance to watch the match, but to cheer and chant ‘God, Hariri and Tariq Al-Jadidah’.

Yet neither the club management nor Daouk condemned the pro-Hariri chants. Despite the fact that entry to the second game was restricted to a number of selected fans upon receipt of invitation cards from members of the board.



*Figure 38: Some of the coordinators of Nejmeh fans offices in various areas. Some of the fans pictured had been away from the club for several years when the picture was taken but were on an exceptional visit to the stadium for a friendly match between old Nejmeh and Al-Ansar players; 12/8/2009.*

### **Nejmeh becomes an Exclusive Club**

Ensuring continued loyalty to club’s patron after the events of the first match was important to guarantee continuity of funding. For those who affiliated themselves politically or based on sectarian belonging with Hariri this was generally not problematic, and for some of those it even provided an opportunity for gain beyond the club itself to prove that they belonged to the political camp of the affluent and influential leader. For those who were not part of Hariri’s clintele, such efforts at proving loyalty further alienated them, especially after a longer process of what they perceived as the labelling and classification of fans by management according to their background as well as the growing political antagonism in the broader context. Those fans had been alienated and excluded from the club in two ways; firstly by the redefinition of the club as belonging to the ‘family of the Future Movement’ and secondly by the management distancing itself from fans who vocally opposed Hariri’s politics.

One example of these now excluded fans is Abu Ahmad, a Shiite who politically supports the March 8 political camp, and has since distanced himself from the club. When I interviewed him in 2009 in a small park close to his shop in the Southern Suburbs, Abu Ahmad was still passionate about Nejmeh despite it being three years since he last went to the club. He had been a Nejmeh fan since he was only eight years old, and recalled being a ball boy in its matches in the late 1960s when Lebanese football giant, Shbaro, was Nejmeh's goal keeper. A blacksmith by profession, Abu Ahmad not only coordinated the club's Fans' Office in one of the areas of the Southern Suburbs, but also served for many years in the club's 'discipline team', a voluntary position similar to that of a safety steward in English football. As a member of the 'discipline team' a fan is encouraged to ensure that cheering remains sports related and is expected to intervene if a dispute between fans appears to be escalating or if any of the fans breaks the rules while on the terraces. Fans acting as stewards are usually chosen because of their wide base of relationships with the larger body of fans and the respect held for them which gives them the ability to intervene. Abu Ahmad was not new to problems in the stadium and like others who took on that role, he knew fans in his area by name, had daily contact with them and if needed could prevent a particularly disruptive fan from coming to the matches.

He was in attendance at both of the problematic matches, and claimed that the troubles in the first match were spontaneous and not worth the response from the management, much as the media reporting had portrayed it:

‘There was another match before [the press release] where there were a few problems, from the fans that is. Maybe it was at that time that they got annoyed. I was at that match. Before it started I had marked a block of seats for my group of fans so they are in one part of the stadium, but they opened another door for the spectators who went to the larger seating area on the other side and I could no longer control them. I went there and spoke to them and all, but I just couldn't control them, because it was done, disorder had already started... and the police officers provoked them, and they in turn provoked the police and that was it.. I could not control them. We could not control them. So then the decision of Daouk came out of suspending the Fans' Office and suspending everything<sup>138</sup>.’

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138 Interview conducted on 10/6/2009 in Arabic; the translation is mine.

Like other fans, he expressed his perception of the events in the first match as marginal by the way they narrated the story, beginning with the second match which according to them witnessed much more flagrant disturbance, despite the precautions management had attempted to take. He also claimed that the disruption was caused by fans and members from within the club and the Tariq Al-Jadidah neighbourhood:

‘It was the last.. last match. We were playing an Asia cup match, not a local one. We tried to defend, we tried.. eventually we realised that vinegar’s bacteria is from within. It was not people who came from Jounieh or from the Southern Suburbs, it was people from that very neighbourhood [Tariq Al-Jadidah] who instigated a fight, so that they cause some kind of rupture.. yeah, and they managed to do so, I am telling you they succeeded [...] I was standing in front of the Cite Sportive, and a group of 200-300 spectators arrived, holding flags of the Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Socialist Party, and cursing Sayyed Hassan and Mr. Nabih. They came from outside in this form, and I took pictures of them, I have pictures of them that I have kept and did not show to anybody, but I did show them in the club, and told them to see the flags of the Lebanese forces. They arrived close to me, I was responsible for the stadium, and responsible for that match. They arrived next to me, encircled me and started shouting and cheering. They had tickets, they got tickets somehow, from somebody intending to cause fitna. They wanted to cause fitna in the club, I did not allow them to go in. [...] I tried to control the situation, but then the decision came from higher places, people from the police and the government insisted that they go in and they did go in.’

Only in his description of the second match did Abu Ahmad talk about a deliberate act of disruption, a group of people who came to the match with the sole intention of causing problems, and who were allowed to do so by ‘higher authorities’. There was a conspiracy between them and the security forces, and Abu Ahmad’s efforts to protect the club, from his point of view, were not only obstructed but also frowned upon. Yet despite making direct reference to particular members of the club, whose names I heard being mentioned in relation to this event by other fans and members, he retained an element of ambiguity. He spoke of disruptive elements from within the club, just like grapes which have in them what they need to ferment into vinegar..

Abu Ahmad was still bitter about that period, including the press release by the board:

'Daouk's press release was before the match; he said 'we want to dissolve the Fans' Office', assuming there was a Fans' Office still, and 'we want to do this and that, and this club is part of the Future Movement and he who wants to be part of the Movement can be with us...?'

After the second game, Abou Ahmad, a Shiite from the Southern Suburbs who supported the Amal Movement claimed that he felt he was no longer welcome in the club:

'I did go to the club afterward, to the stadium at the time of the training and tried to talk about it. First Daouk came out and did not even talk to me, then another board member came out, I asked him "what is it' hajj?" and he says "you are asking? Don't you know what you have done?" and I ask, "what have I done?" he says I did not accept to allow some people in, that I am working against the club's policy. This is when I just stood aside.'

To be a member of Nejmeh, as Daouk stated in the press release you needed to, one, be from Beirut, which with the layers of meaning associated with being a member of the Sunni sect and, two, to 'belong to the Family of the Future Movement'. Abu Ahmad then, who was neither from Beirut nor a Hariri supporter was not a Nijmawi according to Daouk despite being a Nejmeh fan for decades.

Fans from other areas of the Southern Suburbs, who saw the claim that Nejmeh is a Beirut Club as excluding the Shiite community, also voiced complaints about the press release. In a creatively written text which was published in the local newspaper, As-Safir, fans from the Haret Hreik office of the Southern Suburbs affirmed their belonging to Nejmeh club, but not to any particular political group or sect. The 'great people of Nejmeh' as they called themselves, speaking to their 'honourable management', wrote: 'Your road-map<sup>139</sup> might force us to distance ourselves from your ship and get closer to the *coast*, and we might not maintain the *oath* we have taken upon ourselves, and might need a *sanctuary* to take us in after you have abandoned us.' All words in italics in the above translation from the club's press release are also the names of other competing football clubs, all based in the Southern Suburbs and all with a distinct Shiite sectarian identity. The fans who were from the mostly Shiite Southern Suburbs not only threatened to leave the club, but also

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139 In reference to the internationally brokered Palestinian-Israeli peace plan.

threatened to join the opponent who would more ‘appropriately’ suit their sectarian belonging.

Such a statement, though a clear attempt to contest the management’s press release publicly, allowed the fans from the Southern Suburbs to distance themselves from the zu‘ran and their political slogans by affirming that they ‘took refuge in sports to escape the poisons of politics’. It is also nuanced enough, possibly as it comes from the less powerful party in the equation, to convey heartfelt disagreement yet without burning the bridges with the management. In practice none of the signatories to the above press release did join a different sports club. However, as in the dilemma of those outside the sectarian based clientelistic system (as discussed in Chapter Five), they remained ‘outside the pitch’ and excluded from the networks of football fandom unless they matched their sports preference to their political and sectarian identity.

The press release issued by Nejmeah board on 21/6/2009 thus truly became the straw that broke the camel’s back - a load too heavy already with the tension between the historically predominantly Sunni urban centre of Beirut and its mostly Shiite suburbs, possibly best summarised by club fan Sami:

‘Nejmeah club was assigned, to its misfortune, a president, who is an ex-General Assembly member, a member of Nejmeah who couldn’t love Nejmeah for sports, so loved it by political decree. Mr. Daouk, on TV and live, speaking to people waiting for a sweet word from him to bring the fans back to the stadiums and not leave it in its grave like silence... we expected that he would say “yes, Nejmeah is a Beirut club and started originally in Beirut but it belongs to the whole of Lebanon”... . but he appeared on TV and said Nejmeah club is a Beirut club, and we had heard that Beirut is only for Beirutis. [...] He appeared again, and we expected after all the criticism he received that he would fix the mistake he made. This is not right, Nejmeah club began in Beirut, its roots are here but it has branched out, but [Daouk] cut out all these branches, and said Nejmeah is a Beirut club and its belonging is to the Future Movement, and he who loves Future Movement is welcome to Nejmeah and who doesn’t love and support it is not. This was the straw that broke the camel’s back.’

## النجمة يؤكد تعاقد مع العراقيين عباس وحسين ومشجعو الفريق في الحارة يردون على الإدارة

الى الرياضة هرباً من سجون السياسة..

نحن شعب النجمة العظيم، أعظم من الحسابات الضيقة. نحن من لم يبخل قط بمؤازرة الفريق من طرابلس الى صور والبيقاع، وحتى الى سوريا والاردن.

نحن من تعرض للضرب ولخرطوم المياه في الملاعب، وكلما تعرض فريقنا للظلم كنا نزيد عشنا له.

نقول لادارتنا الكريمة، خريطة طريقكم قد تدفعنا للابتعاد عن سقيمناكم والاقتراب من «الساحل»، وقد لا يبقى على «العهد» الذي قطعناه على أنفسنا، وقد نحتاج الى «ميرة» تؤوبنا بعد أن تخليت عننا.

تجمع مشجعي نادي النجمة في حارة حريك البيان التالي: استوقفنا البيان الصادر عن ادارة نادي النجمة الاسبوع الماضي ويهمننا أن نوضح ما يلي:

تذكر ادارتنا الكريمة بأن الرياضة تصلح ما أفسدته السياسة التي ما دخلت في شيء الا وفسدته.

نحن نفتخر بانتمائنا لهذا الوطن، ونفتخر بانتماء جميع أبنائه من الجنوب المنتصر الى الشمال الوفي مروراً بالجبل الأبي وبسراوات الصاعدة والضاحية الشاسعة، نفتخر بانتمائهم الى نادي النجمة تأكيداً على عدم انتمائنا الى أي تيار سياسي أو أي طائفة معينة «ونحن الذين التجأنا

أكد مصدر في نادي النجمة أن الإدارة أبرمت عقدين مع اللاعبين العراقيين المدافع الدولي باسم عباس ولاعب خط الوسط حسين علي حسين، وهي في طريقها الى التعاقد مع لاعب ثالث يلعب في خط الهجوم، على أن يتم لاحقاً قيدهم رسمياً على كشوفات الفريق في الاتحاد.

وذكر أن نادي الطلبة طلب مبلغ ١٠٠ ألف دولار مقابل الاستغناء عن لاعبه باسم عباس الذي يعتبر من أهم المدافعين في صفوف المنتخب العراقي، مشيراً الى أن نادي النجمة دفع ٧٠ ألف دولار لضم اللاعب على سعيد آخر جاءنا من

Figure 39: Text of press release issued by Nejme fans in Haret Hreik in response to Nejme's board press release of 21/9/2006. *As-Safir* 6/10/2006

### Preserving the 'Purity' of Sports Stadiums

The rhetoric of Daouk had yet another layer that further widened the distance between the club's board and Nejme's fans from the Southern Suburbs. The press release condemned the chants against Hariri in the first match and blamed it on 'disorderly suspicious and implanted groups' which 'Nejme club has nothing to do with' and 'is dishonoured by their claims of belonging to its fans'. In my interview with him, Daouk repeatedly used the word *zu'ran* as an adjective to describe the troublesome fans:

'There is a group known to be a group of outlaws so to speak, and nobody has any influence (*manma*) over them [...] some of them they say are drug addicts... they come and let their anger out in the stadium.. and they understand nothing of politics.. what is important for them it to scream and cheer and make themselves heard.'

In press interviews around the same period of the matches, Daouk stressed that his efforts to sustain 'the purity' of his sports engagement produced yet more distance between the

club and some of its fans. This language of ‘purity’ hit a nerve for the fans of the Southern Suburbs. Abu Ahmad described to me how before the second match, he was given tickets to distribute to fans from his area, but was told to ‘only give them to decent fans’. He complained that this carried an assumption that he only knew the zu‘ran. For many years the reputation of Nejmeħ fans has been of them being troublesome and zu‘ran, but more often than not it was the fans from the Southern Suburbs, Abu Ahmad’s neighbourhood, who had the most notorious reputation. In an argument that is rooted in a more complex ambivalent relationship between Beirut and its suburbs<sup>140</sup>, the fans from the Southern Suburbs, and Chiah in particular, have always been singled out as a hub of the ‘zu‘ran’. Zahi, another fan who left the club and despite not being from the Suburbs himself, complained of the singling out of the Chiah fans:

‘There was precedence, some groups of fans were always accused, and the words used to describe them were sensitive ones. They always said “the zu‘ran of Chiah”. I have heard that many times. What does that mean? Who told you that those zu‘ran are from the Chiah, and who said that the people of Chiah are zu‘ran? Why are you always describing them as such? I am not from Chiah to defend them, but I have worked with fans on the ground [...] you want to work with the fans, you can’t go about describing them as zu‘ran’

The significance of singling out the Chiah fans needs to be understood within the political crisis in the country and the wider dispute over Beirut’s sectarian and political identity and in the light of a longer process of differentiation between Beirut and its suburbs. As described in Chapter Three, the suburbs were for years home to the disenfranchised immigrants from Lebanon’s rural south and the country’s misery belt. Singling out the mostly Shiite fans from Chiah, which is one of the oldest areas of the suburbs and home of many Nejmeħ fans carried with it sectarian and class connotations that reached far beyond the boundaries of Nejmeħ club. Because of these background factors, the press release of the club’s management and its affirmation of the ‘Beiruti identity’ was criticised by some fans and media as a process of ‘sorting out’ (*farz*) or classifying of fans based on sectarian and political criteria. It was a process which many fans described as having started

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140 See Chapter Three for an extended discussion of that relationship.

when the Secretary General of the same board had questioned fans about their political allegiances around a year earlier.

Add to that, and as Abu Ahmad pointed out, blame only targeted him and other members who were not Hariri supporters. For example, despite attendance in the second match being mainly by invitation, he claimed that troublemakers were not those that he or board members had invited:

‘That match I am telling you about, we took our precautions, we only allowed in those who were recommended by somebody we know.. we did not want to get anybody who was an az‘ar, those zu‘ran a number of them are known – not by me personally - but they are known to the Fans‘ Office.. Zu‘ran, we know them.. they found a hundred ways to sneak in, they forged tickets.. printed forged ones and the cite sportive is big with many places to climb into the stadium through.. this is what we realized later..[...] even more than that, there was collusion.. Many parties were supposed to prevent them from entering.. because we had agreed with them that only those with tickets were allowed in.. but they didn‘t.’

In the above statement, Daouk wanted to show that those who caused the trouble did not belong to that ‘selected’ group; they were outsiders and had ‘sneaked in’ and the small group of zu‘ran become a scapegoat, blamed not only for the chaos in the stadium but for Nejmeħ’s defeat in that match. This rhetoric corresponds to the way the sports pages of the Hariri owned *Almustaqbal* newspaper discussed the troubles in the matches, blaming it on a ‘sick bunch’ using ‘dirty tactics of spreading the poisons of division’ (*Almustaqbal* 26/9/2006); the newspaper also described the trouble in the matches and those causing it as a ‘disease’. This argument corresponds with how the Hariri establishment presented itself, as discussed in Chapter Six, as a peaceful movement concerned with championing pluralism and coexistence. The duality between rhetoric and practice is evident here again, as Daouk condemns the zu‘ran while benefiting from their vocal support when needed.

Soon after the second match, following the initial reactions to the troubles that took place in it and some criticism of the management’s ‘selected’ fans, the argument began to shift. In newspaper coverage the heart of the problem was portrayed not as the press release issued by the management, but as general hooliganism by Nejmeħ fans, or football fans more broadly. The Minister of Youth and Sports, who was part of Hariri’s political camp, in an interview with *As-Safir* newspaper, criticised disparaging sectarian chanting in the stadiums and spoke about it as a ‘disease’ which was invading Lebanese sports and the

Lebanese political scene more broadly (As-Safir 30/09/2006). A few days later, *Almustaqbal* newspaper, the Hariri establishment's mouth-piece, interviewed the club's players all of whom condemned the 'offensive chants, and called for civilised support which matches the reputation of the club' (*Al-Mustaqbal* 2/10/2006), in what proved to be a management prompted public proclamation. Similar condemnations were also issued by the members of the LFA in the days that followed, with its Secretary General, Alameh, quoting Chehayeb's very words by stressing that 'the maestro' should not be allowed to use the sports arena as a 'space to detonate national unity, or a bridge to sectarian and religious fitna' (*As-Safir* 2/10/2006). The LFA's Vice President described what happened as a disease, and spoke about the need to protect Lebanese football and its 'pure stadiums', as they are the 'lungs that allow us to breathe together as members of one country' (*As-Safir* 2/10/2006). The problem by that time became the 'disease of sectarianism' seeping into the football stadiums through a minority troublesome football hooligans who were probably supported by disruptive external agents. The issue was not a problem with the clubs' management, patrons, or sports policy more broadly.

In practice though, after those events, *Nejmeh* emerged as a club divided along political and spatial lines. As befitting the broader Lebanese sports scene, *Nejmeh* and its fans now belonged to one political camp and to the city of Beirut: it was no longer the club acclaimed by many fans as being 'from Beirut but for the whole of Lebanon'.

## **Mercenary or Local Hero?**

The rupture within *Nejmeh* Club mirrored tension and division present within Beirut at the same time. Most notable are the events of May 2008 which were to the city of Beirut what the two games of 2006 and the subsequent press release were to the club; a critical event, a time when the city was being claimed, its identity negotiated, and the language of inclusion and exclusion being evoked.

Popular and political disagreement had been brewing since 2005 following the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. Accompanying the political deadlock and a series of assassinations and explosions, the country's populace polarised and experienced numerous street clashes between the supporters of the Future Movement on the one hand and the members of the Amal Movement and Hezbollah on the other. The March 8 supporters, then in opposition, staged a sit-in which paralysed Beirut's city centre from December 2006 May 2008. The same group withdrew their representatives from the government rendering it virtually defunct. Following a number of political decisions which were perceived by

Hezbollah as aimed at disempowering their armed resistance to Israel, and the growing – though largely denied - militarisation on the part of their political opponents, the armed wing of Hezbollah implemented a military take-over of the city of Beirut. Once Hezbollah had succeeded in disarming its opponents, it handed military authority over to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The clashes of 2008 in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and the North where the most violent the country had witnessed since the end of the civil war in 1990: they claimed the lives of 80 people and caused more than 200 injuries<sup>141</sup>.

In protesting at Hezbollah's moves, members of the March 14 camp denounced the use of violence using a territorial and sectarian argument which paralleled the one used in Nejmeh board's press release. Yet prior to the clashes, in contradiction to their non-violent self-representation, young men were actively being recruited to work in the private security firm, Secure Plus which was funded by the Hariri establishment. I explore the motivation for this relationship, taking into account the practical and rational motivation for the resort to violence and militarisation, as well as the rhetorical and symbolic ideals attached to it.

### **Militia, Private Enterprise, or Civil Defence?**

According to a report published by the French 'Le Figaro' (Minoui 2008) and based on interviews with one of the managers of Secure Plus, the company was established towards the end of 2006, and comprised two sections. One had around 600 uniformed guards carrying out security services in hotels and commercial centres. Most of this contingent were 'unemployed youth' who 'Saad Hariri wanted to support financially' an aim that supported their being hired as guards. The other section was less formal and included volunteer civil members (who were nonetheless paid \$300 per month) recruited from all over Lebanon: this group were contracted to do security rounds in different neighbourhoods day and night. Though the manager interviewed appeared quite candid compared to other officials interviewed in other reports, he described the work of the employees as 'civil defence' and strongly denied that the neighbourhood security personnel were armed or even trained to carry arms, though he stated that many Lebanese were

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141 The number of deaths and injuries is based on Kosmatopoulos (2011). The violent escalation ended with the Doha Agreement, brokered by Qatar and the Arab league and negotiated in Qatar's capital city by the various Lebanese parties concerned. The agreement gave Hezbollah veto power in a new cabinet of national unity, paved the way for the election of a new president and for an electoral law to govern the 2009 parliamentary elections. For details see: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm> - Accessed 23/3/2014.

already armed. Observers in that period indicated a marked rise in sales of small arms all over Lebanon, a sign of increased militarisation more generally.

The report mentioned above was produced before the events of May 2008. On May 12, A few days after the beginning of the Hezbollah takeover, the Los Angeles Times issued a report which asserted, based on the claims of Lebanese security experts and officials, that the Future Movement had 'built a Sunni Muslim militia [in Beirut] under the guise of private security companies', and its fighters 'were trained and armed to counter the heavily armed Shiite Muslim militant group Hezbollah and protect their turf in a potential military confrontation' (Daragahi and Rafei 2008). The same report indicated that Secure Plus refused requests for interviews and 'Hariri's media office denied there were any official links between Secure Plus and the Future Movement' (Daragahi and Rafei 2008). By contrast, the report also quoted a Hariri spokesperson saying that the movement believed in the rule of law and included 'members of parliament, not fighters'. Saad Hariri in a press conference given a day after the above article was published, and as a response to Hezbollah's takeover of Beirut, further distanced the Future Movement from Secure Plus and the use of violence more generally. In his speech Hariri declared that 'the use of weapons has nothing to do with [Future Movement's] history, ethics, or political organisation', and that the only militia the movement had was that of the 40,000 university graduates which the Hariri Establishment had given scholarships to in the past. He described the perpetrators of the attack again as zu'ran<sup>142</sup>.

In line with the self presentation of the Hariri establishment, Saad Hariri throughout his speech, used a rhetoric that championed the state and its institutions and claimed to strive for civil peace. At the same time, and just as in the Nejmeh board's press release, Hariri accused his opponents of being barbaric and zu'ran because of their use of violence and their attack on media institutions. He asserted that the move would cause fitna in Beirut and throughout the country.

The public denouncement of violence and denial of resorting to arms on the part of the Future Movement, taken with the anti-sectarian position it adopted, was inconsistent with the practices of the establishment at the popular level and indicated once again the dichotomy between self presentation and actual political practice. Several football fans I

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142 For the full speech see [http://www.14march.org/print\\_popup.php?Type=Archive&ID=37341](http://www.14march.org/print_popup.php?Type=Archive&ID=37341) – Accessed 14/3/2015.

encountered were actually on the payroll of Secure Plus and were working in direct coordination with the Future Movement. In fact, when I was in the house of a sports fan, Taha, who I learned had a role coordinating between the company and its personnel on the ground, I witnessed an exchange on the expected date for receiving salaries. As I asked what this was about, Taha replied ‘Hariri’s security company of course’, and he dismissed me as ignorant by rhetorically asking if I was actually residing in Lebanon. The presence of militants was far from hidden; on the street Hariri’s claim that no relationship existed between the Movement and Secure Plus was understood as one for media consumption or as I was told repeatedly ‘it was just talk’. Apart from the guards patrolling the streets of Beirut, I continued to hear from Taha and Naji about their role in watching over the neighbourhood, particularly as they lived in Tariq Al-Jadidah, close to the area of Mazraa which was a stronghold of the Amal Movement. I was told of times when they allegedly thwarted attacks on the neighbourhood or about the details of clashes that took place and were reported in the news<sup>143</sup>. Naji himself had started paying a mortgage for an apartment based on the salary he was receiving, and was in financial distress in September 2009 when – probably once the parliamentary elections finished - he and thousands of other Secure Plus employees were dismissed<sup>144</sup>.

### **The Utility of the Zu‘ran and the Middle Class**

While their presence was popularly acknowledged, the recruits of Secure Plus were necessarily supported by the community members as protectors of the neighbourhood. Like Hariri himself – and board members of Nejmeh in their relationship to militant fans – club fan and member, Mahmoud, distanced himself from those who ‘clap, cheer, and scream’ calling them ‘zu‘ran’. Mahmoud, for long time a self employed travel agent who could be seen as belonging to the petty bourgeoisie, was not a member of the Future Movement although he was a supporter of Hariri. Apart from the salary that he earned, the relationships that he could cultivate through his work in the electoral office provided his main motivation for working for the campaign.

‘They keep on suggesting that I join them in the [Future] Movement. This does not serve my interest. I support him, yes, I work with him, help him, probably for a

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143 Reports of clashes I was told about are to be taken with a pinch of salt, particularly as I soon realised they were often over emphasised, possibly in displays of masculinity exaggerated for my benefit as a female researcher.

144 As reported by several television stations, including Aljazeera TV on 10/9/2009.

remuneration. I am working for the elections now, they will pay me my dues, and afterwards I will just leave. That is it. I might be invited to an event or something of the sort, and I would go. Today for example, there is the [electoral] rally in Tariq Al-Jadidah, I am going, I have no problem with that, but I will not go clap, cheer, and scream. There are other people who are sent to do that.'

To describe fellow supporters of Hariri as zu'ran is far from being a compliment, although Hariri's employment of such young men did not discredit him as a leader. Such support was regarded in fact as a necessity for every leader according to Mahmoud:

'Each zai'im needs a few zu'ran. That is how I would explain it. If I am planning to become the za'im of a certain neighbourhood, who would come and clap and cheer for me every time I am giving a speech? If I am just starting as a leader, and need to convey how much people admire me, I need to advertise myself.'

Mahmoud explained the process and hierarchy of this leadership mode, which at the bottom ranks included the zu'ran, mostly youths from a certain neighbourhood who not only clap and cheer, but carry arms, stand guard, and start quarrels whenever needed. Their motivation for taking this role was mostly financial, and as Mahmoud said, they could be swayed into another camp if paid a larger sum, although such a purchase of loyalty was not necessarily easy. He rhetorically asked me, 'when the Future Movement wanted to start a militia, who would have been willing to carry arms with them? Would I carry arms? Would you? We might lend our support, but we wouldn't start shooting bullets on the streets.' According to him, those who were willing to work with the security company, were poor men interested in the few hundred dollars they could get out of it;

'A person could be an employee getting 400\$ dollars a month, Saad Hariri comes to him and tells him to work as a security guard at night, in return to another \$400. That person would grab a chair and sit guard. They give him some basic training on the use of weapons to be able to defend himself, but he is still getting those \$400. Come now ask a guy to do the same thing but without giving him any money, he wouldn't do it. He might support Hariri, but would he risk his life? He wouldn't do it.'

That the za'im would continue to cover a follower or an intermediary, knowing well that this person was only giving support because of the financial compensation, was natural in Mahmoud's view. He used another not so flattering description of the zu'ran, by citing an

Arabic proverb; 'having a dog bark with me, is better than a dog barking at me'. To call somebody a dog in Lebanon is quite offensive, and the saying was given on behalf of a leader who approximated his own followers to dogs. The zu'ran's ability to cause trouble was a double-edged sword: a leader would rather have this group of supposedly mischievous and lower status individuals working for him, as their work against him or for an opponent would probably be damaging.

The way Mahmoud explained Hariri's and the strong-arm men's decision to engage in a relationship based on the demonstration of loyalty and violence – as well as his own decision not to – is a rationalist, interest-based one. His explanation was to some extent in line with Fearon and Laitin's (2000) summary of narratives by several theorists on the construction of conflict boundaries and antagonisms. Such theory describes how elites induce the masses towards violence for political gain, while young men – if available to perform the role of thugs – respond because of personal motivation. Mahmoud's own class position allowed him to simultaneously distance himself from the members of a 'barbaric' lower class who were receiving direct gains from involvement in the fighting – and preserving his own image as civilised and modern – while at the same time he was benefiting from his performance of loyalty towards the Future Movement.

### **Popular and Discursive Justification of Strong Arm Racketeering**

Beyond the practical / rational basis for the youth of the Tariq Al-Jadidah and other neighbourhoods taking on the role of strong-arm men racketeering on behalf of Hariri, I observed an oratorical construction which supported that role. This included different dynamics operating in parallel, one was the historic and popular script of heroism and self defence, and the other was a sectarian communal identity based one.

Around the same period that Secure Plus was established, a first year graphics student designed – upon the request of a friend of his – a logo for his neighbourhood. The student, who was interviewed by the local newspaper, *The Daily Star* (28/2/2007) explained that 'every store has a logo and every political party. Why can't our neighbourhood?'. The logo he produced featured a black panther and bore the letters 'TJ', the initials of Tariq Al-Jadidah. His design went public and became popular following demonstrations on 14/2/2007, the second anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. On the day the designer himself was surprised to see his logo on flags and t-shirts in the demonstrations. As I was doing research, flags bearing the logo were being sold on the streets of Tariq Al-Jadidah and young people held flags that they had made by

stitching the logo together with the flag of the Future Movement. In other areas, I also observed how the name inspired the construction of territorialised identity; in the predominantly Sunni border village of Chebaa<sup>145</sup>, pro-Hariri youths called themselves ‘the Eagles of Chebaa’: the choice of the Eagles as an emblem for the group was inspired by the area’s mountainous nature<sup>146</sup>. Again, in the small Roumi neighbourhood of the Mazraa area, a young man sprayed the walls with pro Amal movement graffiti, adding the signature of the ‘Lions of the Roumi neighbourhood’<sup>147</sup>.

The ambiguity of the emergence of neighbourhood watch groups within Secure Plus, contributed to their perception as a popular, voluntary initiative from the people; a perception that fed into and benefited from the emergence and growing popularity of the panthers logo. In the article mentioned above, one shop keeper expressed his intention of selling blue coloured buttons bearing the logo, a move that the reporter argued would ‘would blur the line between political party and neighbourhood unity, since the colour blue is associated with Hariri’s Future Movement’ (Daily Star 28/2/2007). The reporter also spoke of the term ‘Panthers’ being applied to the youths in Tariq Al-Jadidah who had organised unofficial patrols in the neighbourhood.



Figure 40: Logo of the Tariq Al-Jadidah Panthers.

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145 Chebaa is a South Lebanese village, the largest in the mostly Sunni area of Arkoub. The village has been of significance in the current conflict due to its location on the border and the political variety it embraces despite its homogenous sectarian composition. Information about the Eagles and their training was obtained from a local Chebaa resident who was close to the Future Movement, although I do not know if the group was informally initiated or if it had the support of the Future Movement.

146 Interestingly, Johnson (1986) speaks of the appearance of a short lived Sunni militant group in July 1975 in yet another Beirut neighbourhood called the 'Eagles of Zaydaniyaa' (Johnson 1986: 182).

147 In the mixed Roumi Neighbourhood, there probably is no real group apart from that piece of graffiti and one young man with a lot of free time and spray paint.

The expressed need to ‘protect the neighbourhood’ of Tariq Al-Jadidah built on a predominantly sectarian discourse which posited the political conflict and the threat against the neighbourhood, and the city of Beirut more generally, from the perspective of the Future movement supporters, as a response to a sectarian threat against members of the ‘Sunni’ communities. Most prominent of those was the declaration made by Lebanon’s Mufti Qabbani, the highest Islamic Sunni authority at the time, in the wake of the May 2008 events. Mufti Qabbani asserted that Hezbollah’s ‘attack on Beirut is an attack on the dignity and security of the people of Beirut’ and he claimed that ‘Sunnis are fed-up with such security encroachment’<sup>148</sup>. Despite the Future Movement’s claims of being a non-sectarian group, the public display of support from the Mufti for the Future Movement was nothing new and was typical of the Movement’s self representation; Qabani as early as December 2006 had convened Friday prayer in the Grand Serail, the government’s headquarters which was presided over at the time by the Future Movement affiliated Prime Minister Siniora (Almustaqbal 2/12/2006). Friday prayers continued to be convened in the Grand Serail for over a year under the excuse that security concerns prevented the Prime Minister from leaving his quarters, but in fact the move was a clear declaration of sectarian identity (Al-Akhbar 24/9/2008). Numerous similar examples have indicated the strategic choice of the Movement’s conforming to rather than transforming the sectarian Lebanese socio-political order even before the assassination of Rafic Hariri (Baumann 2012a).

In that sense, the movement’s use of the sectarian representation can be seen as an example of how the elite were taking advantage of constitutional and other institutional rules and norms which allowed them to centralise or arrogate power if they could claim that the group faced a security threat (Fearon & Laitin 2000: 855). This public discourse at the level of the leadership both fed into and was used by the supporters on the ground. Supporters, as I argued in the previous section, might adopt this discourse as a justification for their own pursuit of financial gains, as in the case of staff of Secure Plus, but at the same time as the adoption of the logo and the presumed need to ‘defend the neighbourhood’ indicate, they also subscribe to what Fearon and Laitin call ‘scripts of proper or heroic action that invite young men to reenact them’ (2000: 874). A script which built on both the historic legacy of the Qabadays, and their role in protecting the neighbourhoods as Johnson (1986) describes it, as well as the production of a unifying

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148 For a summary of Mufti Qabbani’s speech on 7/5/2007 see <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/Politics/2008/5/328514.htm> – Accessed 19/3/2015.

emblem like the logo, provided a unifying sectarian identity promoted by religious authorities and members of the political elite alike.

To return to Naji for example<sup>149</sup>, while he was clearly motivated by the extra income that could be made working for Secure Plus, the justification that he provided for his engagement was more complex. Naji had spoken to me of his role as a fighter with the Mourabitoun against the Syrian Army back in the 1980s and he described his current role as a continuation of that previous engagement in defending the area. In the current conflict, Naji's paid role within Secure Plus complements a perceived obligation to defend the neighbourhood. As described in the previous chapter, such a role as he himself expressed it, was not contradictory with his acceptance of the Hariri's establishment's rhetoric of democratic civic engagement. The ideal of the unity of the neighbourhood, and the need for its protection against a perceived politico-sectarian threat which justified his salaried militant role with Secure Plus assuaged any possible contradiction with the democratic non-violent values he claimed to subscribe to.

The culturally approved script of the need to protect the neighbourhood brought together young men under the umbrella of the Future Movement and crystallised support for the organisation. In parallel though, it carried within it the exclusionary discourse that depicted those who were either not in Hariri's political circle or were not members of the Sunni communities as outsiders to both the neighbourhood and the city. The press release issued by Daouk after the games in 2006 took pride in the club belonging both to 'the family of The Future Movement' and to Beirut, excluding those who were not from Beirut or supporters of the Future movement. Similarly the political rhetoric around the dignity of Beirut and its people being sabotaged by the Hezbollah take-over posited any Hezbollah supporter as an outsider to the city. This tactic was coupled with Saad Hariri's portrayal, in his speech, of those taking part in the attack as zu'ran and by the media's publication of images showing them as thugs.

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149 It is important here to differentiate between two types of Secure Plus recruits; the first were young men from rural areas who often did not know Beirut well and were there primarily for the money. The second were local residents of Beirut whose duties were within the neighbourhood they lived in: they probably had more of a stake in contributing to the work of the company. Naji is an example of the latter.



*Figure 41: Future Movement supporter carries a mosaic of flags. Clockwise from top left, flag of the Future Movement with picture of Rafic Hariri and his Son Saad Hariri, Lebanese flag, flag of Future Youth – the youth division of the Future Movement, and logo of the Tariq Al-Jadidah panthers.*

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the practical and rational as well as the rhetorical and symbolic aspects of the vocal (and at times violent) performance of loyalty by football fans within Nejmeh. It has also revealed the role of strong-arm men in their support of the Hariri Establishment at the time of conflict escalation. The approach of the Hariri Establishment, both within and beyond the club, was characterised by a duality which combined, on the one hand, an overt anti-sectarian discourse that publicly rejected the use of violence and called for coexistence with a repeatedly denied support for armed men working under the guise of a private security company and, on the other hand, a nuanced sectarian discourse. This duality (in which support for armed men was denied) allowed the elite to make instrumental use of violence while at the same time maintaining a ‘modern’ and ‘civilised’ image of support for the state and the rule of law. For supporters, practical and resource driven motivation for the performance of loyalty was combined with acceptance of a rhetorical and symbolic justification for the use of violence based on the ethos of honour and the need to protect one’s own neighbourhood from sectarian threat. The result of this process was rupture along sectarian lines within both the club and the city.

In the wake of the events described in this chapter, rupture both in the club and the country appeared to be too deep and too difficult to reconcile. The concluding chapter of this thesis consolidates the discussion of clientelism and sectarianism and the practices of emergent elites and presents prospects for further research.

# 8

## Conclusion

### *Football*

*The pitch said: / 'Twenty-two players / Running, attacking, defending /  
Planning, dodging, and shooting /... the crowds are cheering  
Yet.. / there is no ball /  
Oh God! / How ridiculous has the conflict become?  
Mourid Barghouti'<sup>150</sup>*

*I support Hariri, but Nejmeh club is special. Even in the first meeting with Babaa Hariri [...] I told him, Nejmeh club is not owned by its management, or its general assembly, and not even its fans. It is owned by the whole of the Lebanese people, just like the gold at the Lebanese Central Bank, it can't be touched. Babaa, replied saying 'Amaneh, my dad has entrusted me with this club'. [...] I would have liked Nejmeh to retain its distinctiveness, for it to stay, following how we [in the club] all loved each other, for the whole of the country. I didn't want it to become partisan.'  
Nejmeh club board member and long time fan.*

## The Match Ends Nil-all

*Winter 2011, Sidon Municipal Stadium. Nejmeh is playing in one of the LFA championship matches. My husband-to-be is in Lebanon on his second visit and will be finally watching a match played by the club he had heard so much about. After five seasons, the stadiums are now open to the fans and for the first time I am able to buy two tickets to a Nejmeh game instead of watching from the director's box by special permission with a select few. We are both excited to see Lebanon's most popular club – the Manchester United of Lebanon as I claimed – play with the support of its vibrant fans. Yet the scene on the stands is disappointing; the audience, though mostly Nejmeh fans, is not more than three thousand and the team's*

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150 Poem is from Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti's Complete Works, p. 117.

*performance is at best mediocre. While the game is purposely scheduled for a week-day in the middle of the day as a strategy to minimize attendance and trouble during the match, this does not explain the low attendance. I try to compensate for the poor performance by offering my fiancée traditional football match snacks, boiled fava and lupin beans and cheap instant coffee but this seems not to do the trick, and we leave before the match ends. The stadium, which is at the entrance of Hariri's home city, Sidon, feels as dilapidated as the match and the team; the tiling is broken and the floor is often uneven, both marks of poor craftsmanship and, most probably, corrupt contractors.*

*The ambience is disappointing, and is starkly different from the festive mood that greeted me when I went to a match with my, by then, husband, to watch his local team, Norwich City Football Club, or the Canaries as they are nicknamed. Although Norwich City was not in the Premier League at the time, we marched through the city's streets and alleys with thousands of fans on their way to the game, who appeared to have a pre-match routine. The stadium was full to capacity as the fans joined together singing for the team and in front of me a proud father hugged his young son who proves he knows the words to the team's song by heart. Despite Norwich losing two nil, we left the game excited and content.*

*This was not the football culture I knew in Lebanon, not during field work nor after then ban on fans' attendance in the stadiums was lifted. In Sidon in the summer of 2011 when Nejmeh was playing, the scene in fact looked wretched and dystopic.*

## **The Story of Nejmeh's Transformation**

I set off to the field many years ago to understand the negotiation, reproduction, and subversion of socio-political antagonism. The questions I raised were guided by literature that emphasised the role of elite in fomenting antagonism in their process of consolidation of power (see Fearon & Latin 2000) and the corresponding arguments that ordinary people also contribute to this antagonism as they pursue their own goals (Brass 1997, Kalyvas 2006). I thus chose to focus on how this construction of antagonism is negotiated at various levels of the political hierarchy, particularly as a new model of elite emerged and gained power in Lebanon. I took Nejmeh as an example of a club which once brought together fans from a wide spectrum of political and sectarian belonging, and I explored the process by which the club's identity was reinvented and the fans were divided. I argued that sectarian antagonism is a by-product of power consolidation, but not one that is solely led by the elite. It is, rather, recreated by actors across the political hierarchy. The thesis has presented the way that power consolidation is negotiated within clientelistic hierarchies and the processes of elite formation.

The changes in Nejmeh that this thesis has narrated are described by some football fans as the 'death' of Nejmeh Sports Club. The narrative of how, as fans of the most popular Lebanese club, they felt deprived of their 'lover' or 'home' and the many years of their lives spent in the club's service. What fans lamented was the transformation, over about a decade, of an inclusive and popular football club into a partisan space under the control of one political group. The transformation was instigated by the efforts of Nejmeh's leadership which were intended to ensure not only its sustainability but its improvement in a manner that befitted its 'glorious history'. Yet many years later the club still suffers financially and seems less able to sustain itself than ever before. Beyond Nejmeh, the post civil-war period brought with it aspirations of growth and prosperity, in socio-economic and political contexts as in the domain of sports. As in the club, these aspirations have not materialised; indeed the dismal situation of the club has mirrored the general political and economic degeneration experienced in Lebanon.

When my field work ended Nejmeh was under the complete control of the Hariri establishment and the club's patron at the time Saad Hariri, and there was virtually no power in the hands of other actors in the club. This, I argued, mirrored the consolidation of political power in Lebanon in the hands of a small number of political elite members who shared power within a power sharing sectarian arrangement. In the thesis I elucidated the process by which this consolidation was achieved both in the club and beyond. I have anchored it within a twenty year process of invention and reinvention of Beirut's identity and glocal changes in favour of a neoliberal economy. While on the surface Nejmeh appears to have been divided across sectarian lines, my closer examination elucidates more critical transformations in the political hierarchy and the anticipated role of the elite and the urban bourgeoisie.

In particular, I described the emergence of one model of entrepreneurial elite which championed a laissez-faire capitalist economy; namely that of late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, followed by his son Saad Hariri. The anthropological literature on elite cultures and elite formation in general, and on Arab societies in particular, is relatively new and rapidly developing, and this thesis contributes to the field by providing a thick description of the emergence, formation, and consumption of a redefined model of elites, which appears to be increasingly prevalent in Lebanon and the wider region.

I focused on Hariri's instrumental and spectacular use of wealth in the production of a political image of a unique leader, Hariri, capable of transforming dreams into a reality.

Hariri promoted a post war Lebanon yet to be built – as both state and infrastructure – aspiring to the highest standards<sup>151</sup>, within a peaceful, democratic and non-sectarian political context. Such imagery captured the imagination of many of the Lebanese emerging from years of civil war and related, in part, to Hariri's political beginnings as a mega-philanthropist and a self-made, professional and successful entrepreneur. The rhetoric of democratisation of state institutions, and non-sectarianism was also championed by Saad Hariri, even when conflict escalated after the assassination in 2005 of his father Rafic Hariri.

In fact, such a model made use of tried and tested tools of power and governance even though it self-presented as novel, not least in the development of hierarchical relations in clientelism, violence, vote buying, corruption and sectarianism. As my research within Nejmeh showed, changes introduced by the post war neoliberal economic policies that Hariri championed not only further strengthened his political power and leadership position among Beirut's communities but also marginalised other actors within the socio-political and clientelistic hierarchy. Spaces like Nejmeh, which once managed to survive outside the smothering patronage of one leader or another, have no means of viability today.

The dismal situation of both country and club was to a large extent the result of subscribing to a political machine which at once nurtured these aspirations for growth and prosperity while also constituting the main hindrance to their achievement. This situation can be compared to that Berlant presented in relation to neoliberal aspirations for the 'good life', which she considered to be largely a form of 'cruel optimism'; that is, the desire

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<sup>151</sup> Such promises are best summarised by Makdisi in one of his critiques of the downtown reconstruction plan championed by Solidere. Comparing the promises made in 1997 with present day Lebanon is further testimony to the tenuousness of these promises: 'The reclaimed land, for instance, will require an impressive infra-structure to protect it from the sea, consisting of submerged caissons and a lagoon formed by artificial breakwaters. The new road network will be backed up by a series of tunnels and extensive underground parking facilities (for 40,000 cars). The central district will have its own dedicated underground power supply system. It will also have the most advanced telecommunications infrastructure in the world. The telecommunications services will allow for high-speed data communications, transactional databases, and of course international communications via satellite earth stations and international submarine fibre-optic cable links. Beirut's basic copper phone network will be backed up in the central district by digital fibre-optic lines capable of carrying video signals as well as audio. Finally, the district will be covered with GSM cellular service provided by no fewer than ten base stations (GSM represents the leading edge of digital mobile telecommunications). Finally, the central district, which is already close to the city's port, will be served by Beirut's newly expanded international airport (which is being upgraded to serve 6 million passengers annually) via the new expressway. And, for those who prefer the luxury of travelling by yacht, two marinas will be directly incorporated into the central district.' (Makdisi 1997: 683-684)

and aspiration for something which in practice ‘actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially’ (2011: 1).

In the two sections that follow, I highlight a number of more specific findings that have emerged from this research in relation to the two main themes that I have explored namely the the operation of clientelism and elite formation. I also indicate possible avenues of further research, which were beyond the scope of this thesis.

## **Beyond Sectarianism and Clientelism**

Rivalry, opposition, and conflict are recurrent themes in the study of football (Kuper 2006; Montague 2008; Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001). More often than not, these features are related to the opposition of two football clubs symbolising rival ethnic, religious or political identities. The vast majority of literature about sport in Lebanon has followed this trend with a focus on sectarianism, often presenting clubs as internally unified communities with well-defined sectarian identities. I have demonstrated, to the contrary, how sectarianism was only one of several instruments for achieving control over a sports club and its members. Appreciating that football is a ‘repository of various identities’ (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997), it is important to examine the many spatial, political, and religious identities present within each sports club and even those held by every individual fan. Hence I chose to describe conflict within the body of one club’s membership and fans rather than between two competing clubs and detailed the many ways in which Nejmeh’s identity was invented and reinvented over several decades.

This thesis has also explored conflict and contestation in sports beyond the much-examined sports hooliganism in the stadium. I began by exploring the club’s management at the upper tier and negotiations outside the stadium on issues of funding and governance; both topics have previously been largely neglected in the literature on sports in Arab countries. In addition, I approached fans not merely as spectators but as political actors within a larger web of political affiliations, a tactic which allowed me to show how their performance in the stadia was only one of several avenues of political action, both within the club and beyond.

Some of the features of sports patronage and fandom which are unique to Lebanon illuminate the study of the Lebanese political scene and the transformations within it in the past two decades. For example, mainstream sports literature suggests that fans cheer for the club that represents their regional and sectarian identity but, in Nejmeh, club members and fans were requested to subscribe to a certain identity before they were allowed to support

the club. In other words, they needed to ensure that their loyalty fits the political camp of a new club patron, whose patronage was critical since there were no alternative sources of club funds at the time. Fans who sustained their allegiance to the inclusive and multi-sectarian Nejmeh club they knew before the change in patronage found themselves outside of the club. They still wanted to support it but they were excluded if their political and sectarian belonging did not fit with Nejmeh's new patronage. Indeed, the case of Nejmeh illustrates how difficult it is in Lebanon today to sustain a high ranking sports club outside of political and sectarian patronage and partisanship.

In addition, this story of Nejmeh's patronage illustrates a transformation in the relationship between political elites and their constituencies in the post-war period. In the Lebanese context, a sports club is a convenient icon that complements other symbols of a leader, yet a club is not essential to winning popular support. Indeed, even in the case of this most popular of Lebanese clubs, it was fans and members who were looking for a patron to ensure Nejmeh's future rather than the political elite who were attempting to gain control.

Mapping pre-war clientelistic networks in Beirut, Johnson suggested that a *za'im* maintains the support of his clientele by (a) returning regularly to office to 'influence the administration and continuously provide his clients with governmental services' and (b) 'by being a successful businessman, so that he can use his commercial and financial contacts to give his clients employment, contracts, and capital' (1977: 209). Accordingly, state institutions are mere instruments for the *za'im* through which political status can be maintained and a base of clients expanded.

Yet as this thesis has illustrated, the political climate is such that elite individuals occupying the 'top tier' have, through the systems of consociational power sharing, consolidated their control over the majority of state institutions and functions and surpassed the need for the ballot box to maintain political power. In what is popularly termed in Lebanon the system of apportionment in agreement between the politicians themselves, each Lebanese political leader is allocated his share of the Lebanese populace as well as state resources through the use of sectarian identity-based politics. Competition between brokers and clients for the favours of a *za'im* further consolidates his power. The loyalty which a *za'im* desires is not an end in itself; it is a tool to sustain political control and capture of government resources. Political popularity also puts leaders in a position to receive international support extended by regional and international players to communitarian leaders and thereby achieve means to influence political agendas in Lebanon. Within such a political climate, the spectacular

performance of loyalty by a leader's constituency is to a large extent of greater political utility in determining the share of funding and power that a leader receives than supporters' electoral behaviour. The obligations of elites towards their clients in return are minimal and the support extended to them is often – as the case of Nejmech clearly indicates – inconsistent.

As these words are written in 2015, the Lebanese people are 'represented' by the same members of parliament who were elected in the June 2009 elections discussed in previous chapters whose mandate expired more than two years ago. As the configuration of the new allotment of parliamentary seats awaits agreement between the political elites and the unfolding of regional events, existing parliament members appear to see no need to turn the matter back to Lebanese citizens whose opinions on this issue appear inconsequential. In what can be seen as yet another 'theatrical' production, parliamentarians did, however, take the time to vote twice on an extension to their mandate - which was modified on an exceptional basis following a post war 'new legal tradition, that of the "exceptional" and "temporary" arrangements' (EU EOM 2005: 16). The voting took no more than 10 minutes<sup>152</sup> and complied with bureaucratic and legal procedures.

## **Elites and the Marketing of Dreams**

I have illustrated the process of forming a redefined model of the political actor in Lebanon, that of the entrepreneurial elite, as it is negotiated at different social and political levels by a variety of actors. I have shown how this process combines both instrumental and rational elements with symbolic and affective ones. Central to the process is the large-scale deployment of wealth, won and used in global neoliberal policies and philanthrocapitalism. The performance of wealth translates into long term viability in the public eye and seems to promise the ability to make dreams a reality. Paradoxically, this promise is far from achievable as the same elite also contribute to the precariousness, corruption, and brutality of their supporters' lives. Beyond the provision of protection and support in exchange for political loyalty, Nejmech fans and aspiring members of various Lebanese communities gave their loyalty in exchange for a future promised to them. A

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<sup>152</sup> For details see *Al Akhbar English*. 2013. 'Protests as Lebanon's Parliament Extends Mandate', May 31. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/15966>; and Lakkis, Hasan, and Wassim Mroueh. 2014. 'Lebanon MPs Extend Parliament's Mandate by More than 2 Years.' *The Daily Star*, May 11, sec. Lebanon News. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-05/276509-aouns-bloc-will-boycott-session-set-to-vote-on-parliaments-extension.ashx> both accessed 27/8/2015.

well-presented fantasy of what is yet to come – as promised by the elites – is more conducive to the promise of loyalty than the meagre benefits than can be offered in practice today.

In this fantasy of the future, Nejmeh is guaranteed funding and is thus considered capable of competing in the sports arena without further concerns about its sustainability. Whereas in Lebanon, and as perpetrated by the rhetoric of the elite, a non-sectarian non-violent democratic state rules and achieves prosperity for those who believe in it. This future for both Nejmeh and Lebanon matches an image that is imagined by fans of the ‘civilized’ and ‘modern’. Yet the ‘Future’ here is not merely ‘a magical word coined by Rafic Hariri’ (as described by his son). The Future translates people’s dreams and aspirations into a spectacle, a performance. The spectacle itself then becomes the object of desire, despite it being well beyond the reach of people who aspire for it, and possibly different to what they truly desire. The dream for Nejmeh for example, would it, as for the teams of other countries around the globe, to have full-time professional players in a modern stadium and computerized day-to-day operation. Yet the club’s long standing popularity stems from its strong roots in the community and from being the team of the underdog. In another example presented in Chapter Five, in Lebanon, much as in other countries, many people enjoy casting their fingers in electoral ink and voting, even though they know that this process does not mean actual democratic rule. The symbolic system necessary for sustaining clientelistic relations between an elite and its constituency (Auyero 2000) thus transcends sectarian, regional and national identities while advertising and the media create an imagined community, but not one of the present moment and of the national alone, but a promised future global one.

The spectacle and the future aspiration attaching to it obscures the underlying political negotiations, is necessary to sustain popular loyalty since the promised future remains elusive. In actuality the duplicity of rhetoric and practice prevails. The club is broke; its operation is far from ‘modernised’ and it in no way matches the global imaginary that has been promised. The rhetoric which champions democracy and state institutions is combined with widespread corruption and vote buying. In addition, as Chapter Six demonstrates, a non-sectarian, non-violent rhetoric coexists with sectarian favouritism and the arming of young men. A monumentalisation of the past (Herzfeld 2000) and championing of the ancient and rooted city of Beirut and Nejmeh club is the route to both the city and club’s obliteration and to the ‘reconstruction’ of a ‘Future’ founded on

their debris as exemplified by the Solidere project discussed in Chapter One (Makdisi 1997).

## **Directions for Future Research**

In sports as in politics, those who are most marginalised by the clientelistic system are not those who are at the lowest ranks of sectarian based clientelistic hierarchies. They are, as this thesis has argued, those who chose to be outside of or who did not fit within their assigned sectarian leader's clientelistic hierarchies. These are for example the Sunnis who chose not to pledge allegiance to Hariri and are outside of his favour and are therefore of little use within the networks of competing leaders. They are also the Nejmeh fans who do not support Hariri politically but wish to remain part of the club they have supported for years. While other sports spaces that match their sectarian and political identity might be open for them, their belonging there is also conditional to pledging allegiance to whatever power governs those alternative groups. This issue, which I noted in Chapter Five, merits further exploration that was beyond the scope of the research for this thesis. While a minority of Nejmeh fans joined competing sports clubs supported by different actors within the March 8 political camp, the majority which probably constitutes around half of the club's fans, have not found an alternative space for themselves in the realm of sports. Existing literature on clientelism often presents patron-client relationships as an all encompassing system. An exploration of the role of people who are arguably outside of or occupying liminal spaces within a clientelistic power sharing system, or those disempowered by refusing to engage within it, could enrich our understanding of the potency of political clientelism and the many forms of resistance to it.

As Arab countries go through a period of radical transformation, the thesis also invites exploration into the role of the spectacle and the emergent models of entrepreneurial elite in future political formations beyond Lebanon. Other countries in the region are embarking on what the aid community labels a period of 'transition', which promotes a neoliberal model of state building and reform and a capitalist economy similar to that of post war Lebanon. This transition grows parasitically on dreams and aspirations for change which people on the Tunisian streets and Tahrir square have nurtured, and it also modifies these aspirations for freedom and justice.

These transformations take place within a global context where, despite the evident fragility of neoliberal promises, anticipation of a better future and hopes for economic prosperity are sustained. The promise of making dreams a reality – not far from the 'dreamland'

which Mitchell describes in Egypt (2002) – feeds into the ‘cruel optimism’ which Berlant (2011) discusses. Within Arab transformations, further study of both the elite with their fantastical promises – associated with positions of power - and their clients, who consume these promises is a necessary endeavour. As new systems of governance are constructed on the remnants of allegedly toppled regimes, elites seem to reinvent themselves and ensure their continuity in central positions. Key individual political and economic actors –both the longstanding within the systems of power and the newly emergent - along with the systems that have kept them in place and which ‘reproduce’ them – need to be better understood if only to offer some respite from the naivety and fervour of the revolutionary moment.

Further study of elites will be enriched by tried and tested anthropological perspectives that have been beyond the scope of this study. Analysis of kinship and family would help us to understand how emerging elites reinforce their status within existing networks as well as extending them through business partnerships. ‘Philanthrocapitalism’ is a model of public engagement that has been adopted not only in Lebanon but also in the gulf region, and appears to be of increasing international significance. Further ethnographic study might show how political and economic influences are affected by contingent fluctuations in oil prices or the policies of international aid agencies. Sustained attention to philanthrocapitalism is particularly critical in the context of the current Syrian refugee crisis that has elicited aid - which often carries a political agenda - from individual philanthropists.

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