ANCIENT CROSSES AND TOWER-KEEPS: THE POLITICS OF
CHRISTIAN MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

The interplay of religion and politics has been a consistent theme in the comparative politics of identity, and more specifically with regard to Middle Eastern politics. Yet coverage of religion and politics in the region is generally focused on the Muslim majority and neglects the existence and impact of non-Muslim religious elements in Middle Eastern societies. The most prominent of these are the various groups of Christian Arabs.

This work begins with a reassessment of common comparative theoretical approaches to the study of religion and politics. It introduces a critical and dynamic constructivist approach to religion, defining it as belief. Using belief, the political environment, and relative demographics as a guide, it creates four general types of Christian groups as a means to understand Christian group activation. These types match up with three general modes of engagement with the outside political culture in Middle Eastern contexts: competitive-nationalistic systems, neo-millet systems, and secular non-sectarian systems.

These analytical tools are applied to the political activity of Christian groups in three Middle Eastern polities: Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine. In Egypt, a stable neo-millet system is the result of the dominance of a single deferential organization among Christians: the Coptic Orthodox Church. In Lebanon, years of competitive nationalistic politics have given way to an emergent neo-millet system as a result of the decline in identity-based nationalistic parties and the increasing prominence of the traditional Church hierarchy. Among Palestinians, nominalism, deference, and voluntaristic activism mix to create a neo-millet system with aspects of other systems of engagement.

This study concludes that neo-millet systems are the natural outcome of a strongly identity-focused religious belief system among Arab Christians, one the author terms "tower-keep" theology. However, the dynamics of change fostered by new styles of belief, the challenges of responding to an eroding population base, and the influence of diaspora communities and coreligionists abroad all point to new systems of engagement to come in the future.

Résumé

L'interaction de la religion et de la politique est un thème constant de la politique comparative de l'identité, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la politique du Moyen-Orient. Cependant, le reportage sur la religion et la politique dans la région se concentre généralement sur la majorité musulmane et néglige l'existence et l'effet des éléments religieux non-musulmans dans les sociétés du Moyen-Orient.

Cette oeuvre commence avec un réexamen des façons théoriques et comparatives dont on a historiquement abordé l'étude de la religion et de la politique. On présente une façon d'examiner la religion qui est critique et dynamique, selon laquelle on définit la religion comme croyance. Ayant recours à la croyance, à l'environnement politique et aux démographies relatives comme guides, on établit ici quatre types de groupes généraux qui nous permettent de comprendre l'activation des groupes Chrétiens. Ces groupes correspondent à trois moyens d'entrer en rapport avec la culture politique de l'extérieur au Moyen-Orient, les trois moyens étant: les systèmes compétitives-nationalistes, les systèmes neo-millets et les systèmes séculaires non-sectariens.

On se sert de ces outils analytiques pour étudier l'activité politique des groupes Chrétiens de trois administrations politiques du Moyen-Orient: l'Egypte, le Liban et la Palestine. En Egypte, la dominance d'une seule organisation Chrétienne, l'Église orthodoxe copte, a donné naissance à un système stable du neo-milletisme. Au Liban, des années de politiques compétitives et nationalistes ont cédé à un système neo-millet qui résulte de la déclin des parties nationalistes basées sur l'identité, ajoutée à la prominence acroissante de l'hiérarchie traditionelle de l'église. Parmi les Palestiniens, le nominalisme, la déférence et l'activisme bénévole ont tout contribué à un système neo-millet qui comprend des aspects d'autres systèmes d'interaction.

Cette étude termine par conclure que les systèmes neo-millets sont le résultat naturel d'un système de croyances religieuses qui sont fortement concentrées sur l'identité parmi les Chrétiens arabes, ce que l'auteur appelle une théologie de <<donjon>>. Cependant, les dynamiques de change encouragées par de nouveaux styles de croyances, les défis de comment réagir à une base de population en diminution, ainsi que l'influence des communautés disapores et les coreligionnaires étrangères indiquent tous que de nouveaux systèmes d'interaction viendront à l'avenir.

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Chapter One – Religion, Politics, and Christian Minorities in the Arab World

Religion and Middle East Politics

In the past two decades there has been a surge of interest in the relationship between religion and politics generally and in the Middle East in particular. It would be fair to say that this interest was encouraged by the rise of religious groups as important substate actors and by the tragic events that have quickened the average person's interest in matters otherwise obscure. For example, the emergence of religious groups as central actors in the politics of Middle Eastern countries in the early 1980s prompted scholars and policymakers to take new notice of these societal and political actors. The apparent sudden appearance of radical Islamic groups throughout the region took many by surprise with their ferocity and their ability to mobilize public support. In Iran in 1979, a mass movement of the lower and middle classes, mobilized in the streets and *bazaars* and led most prominently by the Ayatollah Khomeini, was the first of a series of radical religious groups to bring new light to the topic. Soon afterward came the emergence of radical and terrorist groups claiming solidarity with the Palestinian cause and with Muslims around the world. To many eyes these groups forged an avenging force against Western cultural, military, and commercial imperialism.

In the late 1980s, the continuing warfare in Afghanistan and Lebanon, among other places, provided incubators for these groups. To many in the west, these groups were synonymous with intolerance, violence, and terror. What is more, they were largely assumed to be expressions of the most fundamental tenets of Islam. The events of September 11, 2001, certainly another "date that will live in infamy", have only broadened and popularized the scope of this debate and made it more relevant and

emotive. The involvement of radicals that claimed Islam as their justification for engaging in the most atrocious acts of terror has made the Middle East and religion a topic of daily concern on television sets, radio talk shows, and personal conversations world wide.

The scholarly response to these developments over the past decades has been extensive and varied. Religion as a topic of concern in Middle Eastern politics has long been a central component of area specialization and forms a challenge to generalized scholarship of politics, history, sociology, and anthropology. Milton Esman wrote in the 1980s that

> The manifestations and expressions of ethnic politics in the
> Middle East are in most respects similar to those that have
> been observed throughout the Third World. The principal
> exception is the greater prominence and salience of the
> religious definition of communal solidarity in the Middle
> East...Despite secularization, religiously defined solidarities
> have not been depoliticized; instead, they have become
> important actors on the political scene.[1]

Stressing the singular integration of religion and state (*din wa dunya*) in Islam, Bernard Lewis, recognized (and sometimes pilloried) as the doyen of traditional and Orientalist scholarship, argued that one must understand the region on its own. Unlike Western states, religion retains prominence in the East, since "Islam is still the most effective form of consensus in Muslim countries, the basic group identity among the masses."[2] The assumption handed down from early conceptions of political culture in the region suggests that religion - and more specifically, Islam, assumes a position of high importance in determining allegiances, institutions, and actions in the region.

Objections to this notion of the primacy of religion form a central part of the critique

to traditional (Orientalist) scholarship popularized by Edward Said.[3] Traditional

scholarship, it was said, turned Eastern polities into mystical, timeless, ahistorical and

monolithic systems which operated upon norms which were markedly different from the

West. With respect to religion, two criticisms were typically invoked. One was that the

role of religion in defining politics should not be overstated, and that in fact people in the

Middle East understand domestic politics and state authority in much the same way that

their counterparts do in various regions of the world. The other was that religion should

not be oversimplified and reified in the analysis, giving way to a simplistic and

deterministic view of how religion steers the action of parties, tribes, unions, and other

groups. The former criticism takes issue with the uniqueness of Middle Eastern politics.

The latter demands more rigour and the recognition of complexity in consideration of the

topic.[4] In response, political scientists have often eschewed approaches that stress the

political culture or religion in developing states, choosing rather to consider politics in the

region through the application of "more generalizable" concepts such as institutionalism

and political economy.

However, in the wake of the challenges coming from religious movements in the

1980s and 1990s, strategic analysts were immediately motivated to assess the importance

of radical Islamist networks as a revolutionary force threatening Western interests in the

region. Scholars followed suit by assessing the root causes of radical religious

movements and their importance to the essential core of Middle Eastern politics. Prior

assessments arguing for the importance of religion to Middle Eastern countries had

faulted the Islamic religion for its emphasis on fatalism and deference, which rendered

populations less prone to criticize their governments and thus hindered democratic development throughout the Arab world. With the rise of Islamist-inspired critical and radical substate elements in the Middle East, this position was turned on its ear: a new wave of scholars claimed that Islam led Arab citizens to be continually critical of their governments, and most likely to dissociate from satisfaction with any type of regime, no matter what its claim to legitimacy. Both versions have been criticized for failing to account for the diverse strains of thought among Islamist groups.[5]

Yet following on this controversy over the influence of Islam in politics, there has been an intensification of the analysis and a deepening of interest in the way Muslim groups relate to states and one another. There seems no limit to the volume of debate over the subject. Among others, prominent scholars Nazih Ayubi and John Esposito weighed in with books focusing upon the influence of Islamic groups on challenging the state and its institutions in the early 1990s.[6] Later, various edited works sought to put Muslim groups in context through considering them in their theoretical and regional contexts. Among these stand works such as Esposito's *Political Islam* and Sidahmed and Ehteshami's *Islamic Fundamentalism*.[7] What is more, sociologists and political scientists alike have found common cause in understanding the phenomenon, culminating in the work of Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori in *Muslim Politics*.[8]

More polemic arguments have focused upon the role of religion in enhancing popular mobilization and democratization.[9] On one side are those who emphasize the tendency for radical religious groups to inhibit democratic development through exclusivist and intolerant practices.[10] On another side are those who stress the plurality of religious

groupings and their tendency to adapt to differing political climates.[11] What is more,

mass emigration of Arabs to Western societies leads to growing interest in the

involvement of these groups in the diaspora and at the level of the global system.[12] The

increasing volume of scholarly works on the topics of Islamism, radical Islamist

movements, and Muslim networks, in addition to a vast literature on the topic of Islam

and democratization, led some to question the necessity of pursuing the topic any further.

The growing windfall of analysis of Islam and politics in the Middle East only became

a subject of greater controversy after September 11, 2001. Shocked by the horror

inflicted by radicals in the name of Islam, scholars looked askance at ways to explain and

adapt to the implications of one fell day. Many reacted with sorrow over the event but

cautioned their readers (and sudden mass audiences) not to overstate the implications of

the actions of a small group of committed terrorists. A counterpoint came from Martin

Kramer, whose ardent polemic *Ivory Towers on Sand* was published in late 2001. He

declared the inability of Middle Eastern studies to predict and to adequately explain the

activities of Osama bin Ladin and his group to be a dismal failure:

> In retrospect, the new elite in Middle Eastern studies had failed to ask the
> right questions, at the right times, about Islamism. They underestimated
> its impact in the 1980s; they misrepresented its role in the early 1990s; and
> they glossed over its growing potential for terrorism against America in
> the late 1990s.[13]

Kramer's work could not be separated from a growing public controversy about the

politicization of Middle East studies and the role of the academic community in properly

assessing security challenges from religious groups. The publication of names and

"dossiers" of professors, purporting to reveal and classify their backgrounds and

allegiances sparked further controversy.

The lasting impact of the controversies and waves of scholarship has been the serious consideration of religious groups in their societal and institutional impact. One way or another, urban networks established by new religious groups, self-help organizations, local and regional militias and vigilante organizations, terrorist cells, and various non-governmental organizations, both consciously and unconsciously political, have all assumed new and important significance to Middle Eastern politics, and to politics in the developing world more generally. Quite apart from the centrality of the debate over Islam and politics that has been so trenchant to public and academic work in the past few years, it seems necessary to come to some understanding of religion as a political motivator. How does the political scientist seek to integrate religion and religious movements into an understanding of society and state relationships?

Religion and Politics

Whereas area specialists may urge one to take regional peculiarities seriously, it is by no means necessary to assume that the importance of religion to politics is a matter unique to the Middle East. Indeed, the increasing breadth of scholarship enjoining the topic argues that religion is a primary force in social movements, government institutions, and political parties throughout the world. Some see this as part of a contemporary "religious resurgence" which has emerged as a result of the end of the Cold War and the concomitant reduction in military threat between the superpowers.[14] But others argue that there is something more in the way religion – or religious movements – serve to filter the

political environment and alter politics. In fact, religion remains a potent force, even in the regions of the world where secularism had assumedly eliminated it from public discourse.[15] The renewal, modernization, and further evolution of religion in the developed world have altered its influence in various ways, but religion and religious viewpoints retain a clear influence in various places. Although Middle Eastern religions may be unique in terms of doctrinal tenets and their specific influence upon political negotiation and action, they are by no means unparalleled in form.

Notwithstanding the growth of generalizable scholarship in the matter of religion and politics, the criticism of the oversimplification of religion in regional scholarship remains. It is true that amidst the voluminous material regarding religious movement in the Middle East, there has been little acknowledgment of the activity of religious minority groups in majority Muslim societies. In particular, there has been little consideration of non-Muslim groups in the Middle East. Such is symptomatic of the aforementioned tendency for scholars to eschew minority views in favour of emphasizing the influence of the majority in shaping and motivating political culture. Traditional (or "Orientalist") scholarship has thus run the danger of overstating the homogeneity of Middle Eastern societies. In the attempt to assess how larger movements affect the nature of a given polity, it is common to want to focus upon majority culture - the language, the practices, the values, and the religious beliefs of the greater part of the population. This perspective gives little room for integrating the reality of individual and collective choice in creating and molding the diverse aspects of a political culture – and tends to minimize the importance of discordant voices in any given society.

Majoritarian culture has been the subject of many assessments of Middle Eastern

politics, for good and ill. One largely effective use of generalizable notions of political

culture was Michael Hudson's *Arab Politics: the Search for Legitimacy* (1977). Hudson

presented a case for political culture as the prime catalyst in the process of regime

consolidation, building upon the work of Sidney Verba.[16] But disaggregation of cultures

and coverage of minority conceptions of political culture did not figure strongly in the

work. The development of a greater understanding of a pluralism of beliefs in the

Middle East is a serious short-coming to which contemporary scholarship, with its

preoccupation with disaggregation and deconstruction, must turn. Reconceiving the state

vis-a-vis social forces (themselves attached to competing sources of political culture)

would seem to give greater credence to the importance of minority viewpoints. The

relationship between specific elements of the political culture and the social forces that

shape politics in the developing world is one part of this process.

Considering Religious and Cultural Minorities in Middle Eastern Politics

In a full chapter discussing cultural and state roots of pan-Arabism, Crawford Young

suggests that one needs to take account of several cleavages that distinguish groups and

cultures, and their ambiguous impact upon pan-Arabism. Of special note are the Kurds,

the various sects in Lebanon and Syria, various tribes in Sudan, and the division of Iraq

among Sunnis and Shi'is.[17] Hudson also treats the topic of cultural pluralism in a single

chapter of *Arab Politics*[18], and Godrun Kramer considered the topic in a chapter of

Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World[19]. Yet the treatment of

religious and cultural minorities as a political force in Middle Eastern states remains by and large unconvincing or geared toward specific cases. Some comparative studies of pluralist discourses and the impact of minority groups do exist. Of particular interest is Bengio and Ben-Dor's *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* , an edited volume that deals with various cases but insists on the identification of religious minorities with ethnic ones, thereby indicating that there is a little viable theoretical distinction between those who profess ethnic difference and those who differ from majority conviction in the matter of religion.[20] Bengio and Ben-Dor's work was a sequel to an earlier volume, *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East*, which addressed the topic from several perspectives.

So the tendency to overstate the unity of common religion as a force in political culture generally remains unchallenged. For example, while Eickelman and Piscatori's *Muslim Politics* takes bold strides toward disaggregating Islam(s?) as a mobilizing force in majority Muslim societies, it fails to assess the existence of minority religious views in such states. This is not to fault the authors, who are interested specifically with the role Islam plays in political mobilization. However, it remains difficult to understand the operation of non-majority religious groups in a larger setting dominated by the presuppositions and terminology of another group.

The very existence of minority religious groups in Arab states continues to surprise many in the West who are accustomed to the association of Arabism with a majoritarian Islam. There has been sporadic interest in religious minorities when their interests or issues assume centre stage. The surge of Islamic radicalism among Shi'is in Iran and

Lebanon forced the world to consider distinctions among Muslim groups. Occasional news stories highlight claims of persecution by Christians in various Middle Eastern states, or cover the religious dimensions of the protracted conflict in Sudan. Once in a while, prominent personalities increase the profile of a specific minority, as have the Alawi President of Syria, Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar, or Butrous Butrous-Ghali, an Egyptian Copt who became Secretary-General of the United Nations. However, the interest remains temporary and has not translated into a continuing study of the place of religious minority groups.

Perhaps the most pivotal group among the religious minorities of the Middle East are Christians, one of the most numerous of the religious and ethnic minorities and present througout the region. Yet to date, only one work has truly sought to consider the topic: Robert Betts's *Christians in the Arab East* (1978), which was primarily historical and focussed upon structural politics within the Middle Eastern churches. Other studies of specific national groups exist, such as B.L. Carter's *The Copts in Egyptian Politics* (1987), Daphne Tsimhoni's *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948* (1993), or Michael King's *The Palestinians and the Churches*, vols.1,2 (1981, 1985), yet no recent generalizable comparative study has been published.

This is the topic to which we will turn. This work seeks to address the question of Christian contributions to the politics of Middle Eastern states by focusing upon organized groups among Christians in the region. It links Christian belief systems with an emphasis on their role in bringing together like believers into organized churches, parties, institutions, and other groups in Middle Eastern states. The aim is to make

contact with the comparative literature on religion and politics more generally, and in the

Middle East specifically, as a means to challenge received scholarship on religion and

politics. Christian groups in the Middle East will then be assessed as religious

movements based upon a generalizable classification of the phenomenon.

Understanding Middle Eastern Christian Sects

Christianity has a long and complex history in the Middle East. From the founding of

the earliest churches following the life of Jesus Christ in Palestine, circa 30 CE,

Christianity developed into a mass religious movement that eclipsed its own roots in

sectarian Judaism to become multinational and worldwide in scope. Under Roman

Emperor Constantine from 313 it was tolerated and sponsored as the primary imperial

religion, later to become the only official religion of the Empire in 391 under Emperor

Theodosius. The establishment of Christianity as state dogma was associated with the

further refinement of Christian doctrine, leading to several successive ecumenical

councils that fixed various versions of orthodoxy. The process of producing an orthodox

version of Christianity led to the anathematization of "heretic" groups from the

mainstream, and later to more sweeping divisions into sects.

These schisms over official church doctrine most affected Christians in the Middle

East, such that even prior to the Muslim conquest in the early seventh century, Roman

Christendom in the region had split into various groups defined by autonomous rule and

diverse notions of truth and authority. The first of these were the Nestorian and non-

Chalcedonian Orthodox churches of Egypt and the Levant. Later came monothelite and

heterodox offshoots of the Orthodox Church, some of which have been lost to antiquity.

Lastly came the great schism of Christianity dividing the Eastern Orthodox from the

Roman Catholic Churches in the eleventh century. Most of these groups remained

throughout the Middle Ages, when Roman Catholic diplomacy led to the reunification of

part of several Eastern churches with the Church of Rome. The further division of the

Roman Catholic Church throughout the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries had little impact on Christians in the Middle East until the

nineteenth century, when Protestant mission activity came to the region. Protestants won

over small numbers of Eastern Christians, but their challenge to the Churches in the

region has prompted the established churches to innovate and to address the reasons for

conversion. The outcome of centuries of discord and reconciliation has been the creation

of a bewildering array of denominations and sects.

Christian sects can be arranged into four distinct families. Often grouped with the

Oriental Orthodox Monophysites, the smallest family is the group of Nestorian churches

dating back to the earliest controversy of the church in Asia. Named for Nestorius, a

fifth-century Christian monk anathematized for his formulation of the nature of Christ,

the churches are the legacy of non-conformist elements active following his death. Their

separation from Orthodoxy and their isolation from the Western churches have

contributed to their consistent dwindling, but their historical descendents remain among

small communities of Assyrians and Chaldaeans, in Iraq and various places throughout

the global diaspora, in addition to the sizable Mar Toma Church centred along the

Malabar Coast of India.

A second family would include the "Oriental Orthodox" churches that split from predominant Orthodoxy over the question of Christ's nature at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. Their formulation of the single nature of Christ caused them to be labelled Monophysites. In Syria and the Levant they are known as Jacobites (after fifth-century patriarch Jacob Baradaeus). This family includes the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, the Syrian Oriental Orthodox Church, and the Armenian Orthodox Church.

Figure 1.1: Historic Origins of the Middle Eastern Churches

ORIGINS OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN CHURCHES
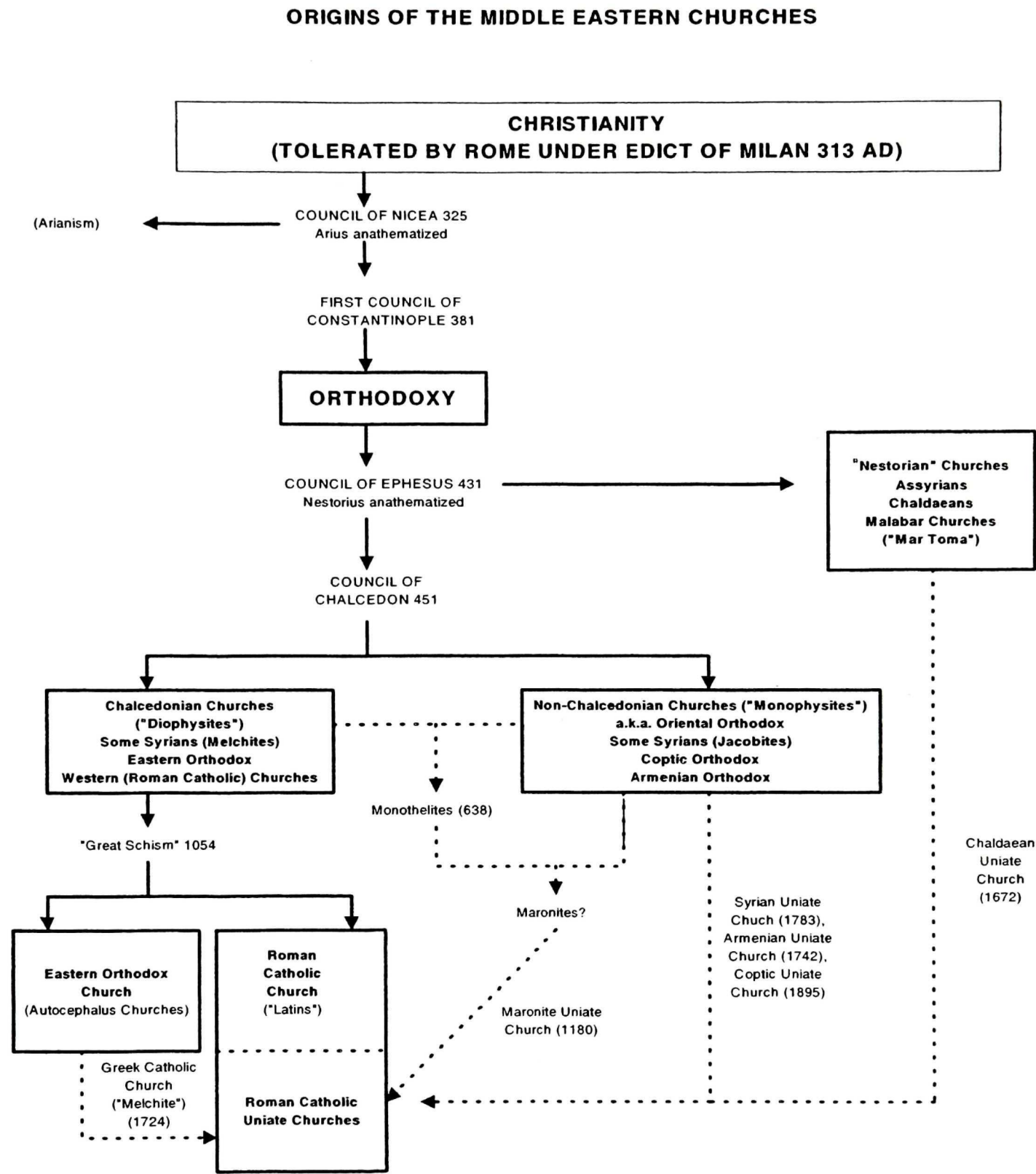
The Eastern Orthodox family is the main branch of Christendom that followed the

development of Roman and Byzantine power. In early centuries, The Orthodox groups

were known as the Melchites, or "royalists" as a result of their association with the

official church of the Empire, as opposed to the Jacobites and Nestorians. Today the term

has developed a more specific meaning, usually referring to Uniate adherents of the

Eastern rite. The Eastern Orthodox family divided from the See of Rome in the "Great

Schism" of 1054. It maintains a toehold in most countries of the Arab Mashreq, under

four separate autocephalus patriarchs, representing the sees of Constantinople (Istanbul),

Antioch (now based in Damascus), Jerusalem, and Alexandria.

Finally, there are the Roman Catholic Churches of the Middle East, united by their

common acceptance of papal authority. Among these are the "Latin" Church, the direct

representative of the Roman Catholic Church, and the six "Uniate" Churches that adopted

papal authority over the years from the Middle Ages to the present day. Among these are

the Lebanese Maronite, Chaldaean Catholic, Greek Catholic (popularly known as

"Melchites"), Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, and Coptic Catholic Churches. The

Roman Catholic Churches maintain a devolved autonomy under the Holy See such that

each is led by a separate patriarch.

International and Regional Influences on the Middle Eastern Churches

Middle Eastern Christians have a lengthy history of transnational association. Despite

the schisms that divided church hierarchies up to the division of Christendom between

East and West in 1054, contacts between Arab Christians and their coreligionists in

various places continued through trade, cultural interaction, and church diplomacy. Nevertheless these contacts were not eminently political from the perspective of Arab Christians, and for the most part they did not translate into political alliances with the arrival of the Crusaders in the middle ages. In fact, most of the Crusader kingdoms viewed Christians of the Eastern rite in the same light as Jews or Muslims, and Eastern Christians held the same suspicions of their Western counterparts. However, the diplomatic activity of the Vatican through the centuries, coupled with a dwindling sense of the theological nature of the dispute with Rome, brought several groups of Christians into contact with the Roman Catholic hierarchy and established relationships between Arab churches and the West.

Early contact with the Roman Catholic Church brought the Maronites into union with it as early as 1215, although formal ties did not arise for several centuries. Beginning with the arrival of Jesuits in various regions of the Ottoman Empire, Christians began to associate with the Western church through education and commerce. As a result of the Uniate movement within the Eastern churches, several groups recognized the supremacy of the Pope and established communion with Rome. In Lebanon and Syria, Melkites formed Greek rite ("Greek Catholic") Catholic churches and Syriac rite Orthodox churches broke from their monophysite heritage and established the Syrian Catholic churches. In the eighteenth century, an Egyptian Catholic Church was founded, as was the Armenian Catholic Church.[21] The arrival of Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century developed new networks as well: among them were the Protestant colleges of Beirut and Cairo, later to become the American Universities of Beirut and Cairo,

respectively. But the success of Protestant groups was less impressive than that of the

Roman Catholic Church. Robert Haddad attributes this to the demand for severe changes

to doctrine and liturgy at a time when doctrinal beliefs had become less and less

significant to the average Christian.[22] Certainly the hierarchical structure of both Eastern

and Western Churches was more congruent than that of modernist and Protestant

churches and facilitated an easy fit. These new networks, coupled with Latin immigration

and mission work, gave the Roman Catholic Church a new foothold in the Middle East

and established it alongside the Eastern Orthodox churches as one of the strongest

regional Christian groups.

Ecumenism and patronage networks were fostered with the arrival of European

religious and trade missions and diplomatic staff during the later Ottoman period. The

establishment of Western-sponsored schooling in major centres contributed to the rise of

a bourgeoisie among Christians.[23] Political action centring in the diplomatic missions

brought about the modification of Ottoman laws governing the status of Christians in the

empire, culminating with the *Hatt-i-Sherif* ("noble rescripts") and *Hatt-i-Humayun*

(*"Humayun* ordinances"), granting rights of freedom of religion and religious assembly

within the empire. The end of colonial rule and the establishment of republican regimes

made international links a liability to the Christian groups, even as their involvement in

the early national movements tended to innoculate them from serious repurcussions.

However, the suspicion with which their associations with foreign organizations were

viewed motivated Christians to downplay these ties. Certain groups managed to continue

successful relationships with international interests. In particular, the properties and

strong indigenous support of the Roman Catholic Church gave it a historical presence in

the region despite the limitations of state regulation of mission activity that affected

recent modernist arrivals.

Thus until recently, there has been little reciprocal pressure for active international

links between Western Christian groups and those in the Middle East, apart from the

official and hierarchical contacts of the past. Western missionary activity that has had a

strong impact upon sub-Saharan Africa, China, and South Asia, among other regions, has

not created impressive inroads within the region, except to further divide Christian

denominations. Colonial partnerships between Christians and erstwhile imperial powers

have forged links with specific countries - most importantly between France and Lebanon

- but with the rise of nationalist and Islamist movements and the decline in numbers

among Christians, these links have deteriorated. However, the movement of large

numbers of Arab Christians into settler societies over the past several decades has

breathed new life into links that are now transnational in nature. This Arab Christian

presence in North America, Oceania, and Europe has broadened the scope of politics for

Middle Eastern Christians.

The development of regional Christian organizations past and present has been stunted

as a result of state controls and denominational differences. The eclectic, independent,

and often pugnacious nature of Christian denominationalism in the region has led to a

continued reticence in undertaking regional ecumenical efforts. Yet the reform

movements taking place in various churches, in addition to indigenous evangelical

churches and international partners, are beginning to contribute to an increase in regional

interactivity among Christians. Even so, ecumenism and unity among Middle Eastern

churches remains in its infancy.

Christians in Muslim Lands

The study of Christian minority groups in predominantly Muslim states has led to a

politicized and often acrimonious debate over the status of non-Muslims in these places.

There are two basic trends in this analysis. One, influenced by an instrumentalist

rendering of religion, seeks to minimize the degree to which religious ideas force second-

class status upon Christians. To this view, Christians in Muslim territory are different

only in their patterns of worship and behaviour, but they are not fundamentally

challenged by the majority culture. It thus follows that the persecution of Christians,

where it exists, needs to be put into context: it is often motivated by class conflict,

clashes over clientelistic politics, or imperial ambitions on the part of great powers or

external actors.[24] Sectarian divisions and disputes that ignite into violence are generally

motivated by other forces at work to manipulate and control religious minorities to their

own ends. In this way, Christians and Christianity become little more than a "political

tool" used by various interests, as various regimes have used them in creating an internal

"other" as a counterbalance to opposition forces.[25] Similarly, some have pointed to its use

in the inflammatory rhetoric of Islamist movements.[26] To argue that there is an inevitable

clash of interests between Christian and Muslim Arabs is thus to impose a Western or

neo-imperialist construct upon a community that is in fact united by far more potent

forces such as pan-Arabism, nationalism, and a sense of linguistic and cultural

community. Hence Edward Said argues that the very mention of topics such as the *millet*

system that governed Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire is little more than a ruse

to integrate Western prescriptions as "preferred policy solutions" into the study of Middle

Eastern politics.[27]

The other trend in analysis stresses the historic distinction of Christians from the larger

Muslim society, their continuing victimization and marginalization at the hands of the

majority community. The development of a distinctive "minority" predicament became

important to the nature of Christian activity. Such is the perspective of historians such as

Paul Fregosi and Bat Ye'or, who have developed lengthy works documenting persecution

and discrimination against Christians under successive waves of Muslim conquest and

control. Beginning with the Islamic conquest in the seventh century, Christians received

the appellation *ahl el-dhimma* (*dhimmis*) or, (perhaps more generously) *ahl el-kitab*: the

"protected people" or "people of the Book". Sectarianism, which had developed as a

result of various doctrinal controversies over the early centuries since the birth of

Christianity, left Christians in small kinship-led groups, easily divided and ruled. They

were subject to various pressures, such as forced conversions, the imposition of the *jizya*

tax levied upon non-Muslims, public humiliations, exile and exclusion, and sequestered

into their own communities where local chieftains and elders used connections with

Muslim overlords to develop private empires. The *millet* system, whereby Christian

communities were granted exclusive powers over religious and personal status law,

educational matters and *awqaf* (religious endowments), both served to satisfy the

communities and to control against expansionism or irredentism. Christians were thus

forced into a static system that denied innovation and encouraged nominalism and

clientelism.

Bat Ye'or argues that the *dhimmi* status imposed upon Christians in majority Muslim

states reduces Middle Eastern Christians to a pathology that encourages venal

arrangements with despotic governments and a political minimalism that isolates and

alienates them from the larger political culture while silencing their voices and heritage.[28]

In the same vein, Habib C. Malik goes on to describe the impact of *dhimmi* status:

> The heart of the story of Arab Christianity must of necessity
> involve a deeper assessment of *dhimminess* as a debilitating
> psychological and spiritual condition besetting the
> individual and the community alike......Sycophancy and
> sincerity merge strangely in the depths of the *dhimmi*
> psyche, which is fundamentally conditioned by fear. Thus
> being a *dhimmi* produces an insidious form of existential
> degradation.[29]

Dhimmis become institutionalized second-class citizens, subject to eventual "obliteration

and exclusion".[30] It was only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Porte

began to endorse special privileges for foreign nationals and (by extension) Christians in

Muslim lands under the "capitulations" and the *Hatt-i-Sherif* of 1839, that Christian

groups began to enjoy any type of legal status in Muslim territory. By this time, however,

it was too late, and the majoritarian impulse inculcated through years of oppression had

left a lasting impact. Christians remain disenfranchised and unable to participate fully in

Muslim-majority societies, leading to continued conversion, exile, and marginalization.

These two paths of thought have translated into two popular discourses at the level of

the political community. For example, Paul Sedra suggests that among Egyptian Copts

there is a strand that emphasizes national unity and solidarity, stressing the harmonious

relationships that exist between Christians and their neighbours of the Muslim faith. But there is a second strand that presents Christians as a persecuted minority, a wholly indigenous group suffering from dispossession and discrimination at the hands of a foreign (and foreign-inspired) Muslim elite.[31] Similarly, there are periodic divisions in Arab lobbies outside the region between Arab Christians who favour pan-Arab causes (most notably the Palestinian cause) and those who wish to engage Middle Eastern governments in favour of their coreligionists. The two discourses each emphasize Christian groups as minorities in majoritarian Muslim states who depend upon the will of the majority: one insists upon the need for agreement with that majority, the other upon the need for the tolerant goodwill of the majority.

But neither explanation is adequate to address the nature of Christian responses to their status, nor to their diversity of types and experiences. Rather than emphasize minority status (which is a constant, although exact levels of exclusion or persecution may not be so) or issues which minimize the importance of the religious component, it is necessary to consider Christians as subject rather than object. Only through a detailed rendering of these groups may we begin to truly understand their activity.

Diverse Experiences

It would be mistaken to reduce Christian involvement in Middle Eastern countries to a simple undifferentiated phenomenon. Christians living as non-majority groups throughout the region display a variety of levels and types of interaction with the larger polity. In a recent journalistic account, William Dalrymple observes that Christians

throughout the Middle East have responded to their minority status in various ways. Near

the close of a journey that put him into contact with Christians living in Turkey, Lebanon,

Israel, and Egypt, he writes a summary of what he had found:

> [In Turkey,] it was their ethnicity as much as their religion
> which counted against the Christians: they were not Kurds
> and not Turks, therefore they did not fit in. In Lebanon, the
> Maronites had reaped a bitter harvest of their own sowing:
> their failure to compromise with the country's Muslim
> majority had led to a destructive civil war that ended in a
> mass emigration of Christians and a proportional
> diminution in Maronite power. The dilemma of the
> Palestinian Christians was quite different again. Their
> problem was that, like their Muslim compatriots they were
> Arabs in a Jewish state, and as such suffered as second-
> class citizens in their own country, regarded with a mixture
> of suspicion and contempt by their Israeli masters.
> However, unlike most of the Muslims, they were educated
> professionals and found it relatively easy to emigrate,
> which they did *en masse*...Only in Egypt was the Christian
> population unambiguously threatened by a straightforward
> resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism...[32]

Dalrymple's summation highlights a real variety of experiences among Christians in

Middle Eastern states. Similarly Bat Ye'or concedes that "emancipation" experiences

among Christians vary, from the more assertive and reactionary nationalist movement in

the Balkans (and, one might add, Lebanon) to the more peaceful and non-nationalistic

activities of Copts in Egypt.[33] Yet the similarity of their "minority" status remains

constant. Given the fact that "Christian" groups in the Middle East find themselves to be

minorities in states with Muslim majorities, one might expect them to take similar

approaches to integration into the larger political culture, coupled with similar attempts to

change or alter the political culture to their advantage. However, one is struck by a

surprising complexity of experiences among Christian groups in various Middle Eastern

states.

In Egypt, a large and generally quiescent group of Christians has traditionally

eschewed political involvement while emphasizing their secular Egyptian identity and

pursuing equal status with their Muslim compatriots. Their tendency to avoid communal

demands is clearly in evidence throughout political and social studies of the Copts in

Egypt. Edward Wakin's early treatment of Copts began what has become a familiar

refrain: "[l]ike the crosses in Akhmim textiles, the Copts are so thoroughly woven into

the fabric of Egyptian society -- geographically, sociologically and physically -- that they

easily escape outside notice."[34] Copts rarely figure as independent autonomous actors in

analyses of Egyptian politics, occasionally appearing as targets of Muslim radicals or a

Western neo-imperialist stalking-horse.[35] Interest in the issue has prompted journalists

and Coptic leaders alike to assert the desire of all Copts to distinguish themselves as full

Egyptians, a part of the "fabric of Egypt".[36] Aside from specific points at which the

Coptic church has adopted a more aggressive posture, Christians in Egypt have largely

remained content to participate through token representation in the People's Assembly

and in Cabinet. Until recent times, coherence and effectiveness as a political force has

been elusive, if indeed it was a desired end. Thus it might be less than surprising that in ⁻

considering various minority religious groups in the Middle East, Crawford Young

mentions the Lebanese Maronites and the Greek Orthodox found throughout the region,

but neglects to mention Copts, the largest group of Arab Christians by number.[37]

Lebanon is the only Arab Middle Eastern state where Christians have formed a

majority of the population in the recent past. In recent times, that proportion has

dwindled, but the strength of Christianity in Lebanon is a unique feature of that state.

Christians have been more visible in the development of Lebanese politics than elsewhere

in the region. As a result, Christians and others often hold up as a bellwether for the

status of Christians in the region. Habib C. Malik, himself a Lebanese Christian, goes as

far as to say that

> ...Beirut is a veritable listening post for the conditions,
> grievances, and aspirations of indigenous Middle Eastern
> Christians. It is also home to the traditionally freest and
> most self-assertive Christian community of the region, a
> community that is always looked up to and watched closely
> by the others for early signs of impending persecution. In
> short, the better off Lebanon's Christians are, the easier the
> rest of the region's Christians can breathe.[38]

Such an exalted notion of the position of Christians in Lebanon has been associated with

the large-scale organization of Christians into nationalist political movements. The

assertiveness of the Lebanese Christian community is part and parcel of a political system

that hinges upon traditionally defined religious loyalties. In fact, Lebanon is unique in its

almost complete integration of confessional groups with political movements.

Assertion of sectarian rights has been at the core of politics in Lebanon since the

Muslim conquest. As a result, confessionalism has been a continuous theme of political

mobilization for much of the last century, and the rigidity of this confessional system is

most commonly blamed as the cause of the civil war. In stark contrast to the Egyptian

case, in the past Maronites and others in Lebanon have sought to defend their position

and autonomy of action through the formation of what has been called a "national

resistance". In the advent and during the process of the Lebanese civil war, Maronites

actively armed and fought other confessional and factional groups, but were also prone to

fighting among themselves. A counterpoint may be observed among the smaller Greek

and Armenian Orthodox (and other) groups, who have proven somewhat less prone to

violent relationships with their compatriots. Nonetheless, the story of Christian action in

Lebanon includes their involvement in a civil war and the legacy of their search for

dominance.

Among Palestinians, organized religion has rarely played a major role in dividing the

political community. The Palestinian national movement traditionally stressed secular or

Marxist nationalist principles that allowed for the inclusion of certain Christians.

Christians have participated in the national movement, often in the higher echelons of the

leadership. But the emergence of Islamist national movements in the early 1990s brought

the tradition of nonsectarian mobilization into some doubt.

The Palestinian experience is paralleled elsewhere. In Jordan, a small Christian

community has remained largely quiescent and content with the political order as it is,

showing marked deference toward the Hashemite monarchy. Participation in government

has been unremarkable but not entirely out of line with the marginal presence of

Christians. Political mobilization along religious lines has not been the rule although the

recent emergence of an Islamist opposition force might be considered a latent influence in

favour of confessionalism. Christian participation in the regimes of other Middle Eastern

societies has been consistent with their integration into the larger polities. The dwindling

Christian population of Iraq has generally proven equally loyal to the centralized regime

of Saddam Hussein, also finding important positions in the executive of the government.

The effect of mass emigration of Christians from the Middle East has further

complicated their involvement in politics both domestically and internationally. Their movement from their countries of origin to Western settler societies does not necessitate their extraction from the political system of which they have been a part. Rather, it complicates and broadens their participation, moving domestic politics to the level of the international system and vice-versa. The involvement of diasporas, themselves transformed by new host societies, in transforming the domestic system is a marked phenomenon of a more and more globalized system. Large expatriate communities of Lebanese, Palestinian, and Egyptian Christians (among other large groups from such diverse locations as Iraq, Syria, and Jordan) form communities that retain traditions from home. At the same time, they find themselves inexorably changed by their association with coreligionists and other Christians in their new homes, leading toward a new ecumenism and a feeling of obligation toward the people they left in their countries of origin. New globalized movements of Christian solidarity arise and are bolstered by their involvement.

Accounting for Diverse Outcomes

Throughout these countries, and at the global level, one sees variation in experiences. In Egypt, Christians have habitually shunned an assertive role in politics. In Lebanon, they have become a founding part of a sectarian political system that they continue to uphold. Among the Palestinians, Christian groups are certainly involved in political action, yet do not play an active role in differentiating their parishioners from the nationalist movement that has historically claimed the support of all. Globally, Christians

of Middle Eastern origin are increasingly involved in raising the profile of their

compatriots at home through ecumenical involvements and political alliances in their new

host countries. Some Christian groups regard the larger political structure in their

countries of origin to be relatively legitimate. Others clamour for change. Some are

active participants in legislative assemblies, bureaucracies, militaries, and official

governing bodies of these states, from high levels of involvement in countries such as

Lebanon and Syria to low levels in states such as Egypt. In addition, there is the "fight or

flight" dichotomy: although many Christian groups have remained in the Middle East

and worked to operate within their native states, others choose to leave the region for

western locales, where they will either fully integrate into the domestic political scene or

step up their efforts to "help" their compatriots remaining in the region.

What accounts for the divergences in patterns of integration and participation of

Christian religious groups? Dalrymple and others stress various environmental factors in

explaining the varied experiences of Christians in the Middle East, and certainly factors

such as their demographic weight, the relative security and stability of their host

communities, their opportunities for coalition with other groups, their relative wealth and

ability to mobilize world opinion in their regard all contribute to their role in Middle

Eastern politics. Relative numbers help to explain the importance of Maronite groups in

Lebanon, as they help to explain why churches and Christian organizations play a lesser

role in Palestine. Rigid authoritarianism in Egypt goes a long way toward explaining

marginal interventions among Coptic Christians, just as elite-driven consociationalism in

Lebanon naturally gives Christians a voice in government in that country.

Nonetheless, these factors of the political environment send mixed signals. For example, demographic weight would seem to mean that Christians should be substantially more involved in the politics of Egypt. By the same token, one would expect them to be extremely marginal to the national movement in Palestine given their small numbers. It is thus important to note that not all Christians are the same. It would be wrong to assume that a sect that favours hierarchical authority over a more democratic form of government, or one which emphasizes traditional kinship community over voluntary association, would behave in the same ways. In these and other ways, there remain profound differences among Christian beliefs that should be considered in assessing their political behaviour. Historical, environmental, and ideational conditions have incubated certain key groups among the Christian populations in the Middle East. This results in the rise to power of dominant or peak groups in various countries, each guided by divergent religious and political philosophies unique to their rendering of the Christian faith. All of this gives pause to the analyst, for the role of religious groups in Middle Eastern states requires a combination of the analysis of religious belief systems and political organization in developing states. It requires, *ipso facto*, the synthesis of studies in various disciplines, including political science, sociology, and comparative theology.

The application of an integrated approach to causation is the subject of Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two focusses upon an approach to religion in politics that emphasizes individual choice and cognitive belief. Chapter Three seeks to place this theory of religion into a larger schema of political analysis, integrating it within more generalized notions of group interaction in developing politics.

As the study moves forward, there will be a consideration of Christian mobilization throughout three countries, highlighting specific groups that have proven durable and important to Christian political action. This study fits into a larger body of work that seeks to analyze societal organization in Middle Eastern states, focussing upon the implications of minority religious groups in the direction and shape of politics at the mass, rather than the elite, level. This project will take the form of a cross-national comparative study, focussing upon specific cases - Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon - nations and states which provide a workable spectrum in terms of religious demographics, from a marginal percentage among the Palestinians to a large and important minority in Lebanon. Chapter Four will consider organizational movements among Egyptian Christians. Chapter Five moves on to organizations among the Christians of Lebanon. Chapter Six addresses Christian organizational activity within the Palestinian national movement. Finally, a concluding chapter considers the impact of the larger study on ways of understanding Christian movements in the region and worldwide.

[1]Milton J. Esman, "Ethnic Politics: How Unique is the Middle East?", in Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, eds., *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), 271-2.

[2]Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993).

[3]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[4]See Lisa Anderson, "Policy-making and Theory-building: American Political Science and the Islamic Middle East", in Hisham Sharabi, ed., *Theory, Politics, and the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[5]Hence the pattern of development of scholarship from the "Orientalist" school represented by traditional scholarship toward the "Neo-Orientalist" school of the 1980s. See Yahya Sadowski, "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate", *Middle East Report* 23(4), July-August, 1993, 14-21, 40.

[6]John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, third edition (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991), Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 1991). See also John Esposito's edited work, Esposito,ed., *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1997).

[7]See Esposito, ed., *Political Islam*, as well as Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

[8]Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

[9]Two articles published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 sounded the clarion call for the debate. See Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril?" and Judith Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, 72(2), Spring 1993, 27-56

[10]See, for example, Guilain Denoeux, "Religious Networks and Urban Unrest: Lessons from Iranian and Egyptian Experiences", in Kay B. Warren, ed., *The Violence Within: Cultural and Political Opposition in Divided Nations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 139-45.

[11]See, for example, John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, revised edition (New York: Oxford UP, 1995).

[12]See for example, Tomas Gerholm, Yngve Georg Lithman, eds., *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe* (London: Mansell, 1988) and Gilles Kepel, *Allah in*

the West, trans. Susan Milner (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) with regard to Muslim groups in the diaspora, and Dale F. Eickelman, "Trans-state Islam and Security", in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997) for the operation of these groups at the global level.

[13] Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand the Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*, (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), 56-7.

[14] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For a regional version, see Yvonne Haddad, "Islamists and the 'Problem of Israel': the 1967 Awakening", *Middle East Journal* 46(2), Spring 1992, 266-85.

[15] This assault on the secularizing assumptions made by modernization has been presaged in various places. For example, Peter Van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann cast doubt upon the validity of secularization in the Introduction to *Nation and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), 1-14.

[16] Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics: the Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977), 33-4.

[17] Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 373-427.

[18] Hudson, "Cultural Pluralism in the Arab World", in *Arab Politics*, 56-81.

[19] Godrun Kramer, "Islam and Pluralism", in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble, eds., *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, vol.1 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995) 113-28.

[20] Gabriel Ben-Dor, "Minorities in the Middle East: Theory and Practice", in Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, eds., *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 1-27.

[21] G.C. Anawati, "The Catholic Church and Churches in Communion with Rome", in A. J. Arberry, ed., *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969, 347-422.

[22] Robert M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970), 72.

[23] Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 159-62

[24]Hamied Ansari, "Sectarian Conflict in Egypt and the Political Expediency of Religion", *Middle East Journal* 38(3), Summer 1984, 397-418.

[25]Ansari, "Sectarian", 417.

[26]For example, the idea came to the fore in one press account preceding the papal visit of 2000. Sandro Contenta, "Egypt's Hidden, Unholy War", *Toronto Star* 20 February, 2000.

[27]Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Random House, 1997), pp.146-7.

[28]Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam*, trans. Miriam Kochan and David Littmn (London: Associated University Presses, 1996).

[29]Habib C. Malik, "Review of *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East*", *Beirut Review* 3, Spring 1993, 112, 116.

[30]Bat Ye'or, *Decline*, 240.

[31]Paul Sedra, "Class Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10(2), 1999, 219-235.

[32]William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East* (New York: Owl Books, 1997), 447-48.

[33]Bat Ye'or, *Decline*, 199-203.

[34]Edward Wakin, *A Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt's Copts* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963), 3-4.

[35]Raymond William Baker's work on Egyptian politics is a quintessential example: his only mention of Copts in Egyptian politics is the implication by Islamists that assertive actions on the part of Copts were a result of foreign influence. See Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990) 257.

[36]Karim el-Gawhary, "Copts in the 'Egyptian Fabric'", *Middle East Report* 26(4), July-September 1996, 21-22.

[37]Young, *Politics*, 402.

[38]Habib C. Malik, "The Future of Christian Arabs", *Mediterranean Quarterly* 2:2, Spring 1991, 78.

Chapter Two – Religion as *Belief*

"[T]he critique of religion is the prerequisite of every critique."[1]
- Karl Marx

Introduction

Before undertaking a political analysis of religious groups *in situ*, it behooves the

scholar to consider what exactly is being studied. While this is an essential part of any

analysis, it is remarkable that few studies of religion and politics are explicit about *what*

is being studied. Texts of political science cite religion as a source of vertical cleavages,

a motivator of action, a cipher for more rudimentary demands for group advantage, or a

phenomenon of social construction or identity, but the word itself is rarely deconstructed.

Religion is widely perceived to be a variable phenomenon, important in some places and

marginal in others. Its labels are well known: Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian,

among others. Nevertheless, a definition of religion remains vague among political

analyses of the concept. As a result, most political scientists rely upon the work of

anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists in conceptualizing the term. Religion

becomes a product of sociological theorizing and lacks a definition of its own. True,

there are anthropological, sociological, and psychological implications of religion, even

as there are political and social implications. True, these implications are interrelated in

many ways. Yet religion exists prior to all of these implications.

It is commonly argued that the comparison of religion and religious beliefs is a

modern, and in many respects, an artificial, study. Some question the very idea that it is a

universal concept.[2] Nonetheless, the operation of religion in most countries and the

generally accepted label of religion used in many languages attests to its continuity as a

human concept. Although there are diverse religions, they are in fact one phenomenon defined by common threads. A basic definition of religion should combine these common threads, providing scholars with a generalized notion of the subject that may be used in comparative analysis.

In this chapter, I will argue that the general tendency to tie definitions of religion to anthropological and social-psychological analysis has led to broad overstatement of the social implications of religion over individual choice. What is more, the insistence upon the use of the term "identity", and the static conception of religion that it implies, has continually impeded our understanding of the subject, and threatened our ability to use it as a flexible conceptual analytic tool. A worthy corrective to this has emerged from a "new paradigm" for the sociological study of religion established by recent scholarship. The adoption of a definition of religion that accepts its importance as an independent variable in any analysis, as well as its ultimate variability on the basis of human beliefs, is key to applying religion as a generalized analytical tool for politics in the developing world. It means that beliefs tailor the operation and goals of groups in competitive polities at local and global levels. The general tendency to emphasize ascriptive beliefs in Middle Eastern religions has by and large led to certain types of societal organization: the segregation and consolidation represented by the former *millet* regime. In such a way, beliefs lead to widely divergent types of groups involved in many different situations, sparking wide variations in terms of group dynamics and reactions to the external environment. Since beliefs are prone to change, such a system is not set in stone, and is also likely to illustrate change over time, given the dynamic relationship between changing beliefs and feedback effects coming from outside sources.

Sociology and the Early Study of Religion

The roots of reflection upon religion and politics can be seen in early sociological studies of religion and society more generally. One cannot begin to treat the social importance of religion in politics without mentioning the important role of early sociologists in defining and shaping the object of study. Most prominent among these pioneers are Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Writing just after the turn of the century, Weber connected the capitalist class and highest order of production to the Protestant elite and suggested that Protestant values were important in promoting the Capitalist system.[3] While religion figured prominently in his study of society and production, it is notable that Weber was never extremely precise about his own definition of religion. Religion was apparently a collection of predispositions toward everyday life, but not important in the most specific nuances. The broad and general swathes of doctrine, and their impact on public life, were his stock in trade. One commentator writes, "[w]hat the Calvinist doctrine *signified* for the devout believer is what interests Weber: the attitude, the 'atmosphere' it created in him, the orientation toward an everyday life-style it instilled in him, not Calvinist doctrine in its dogmatic abstraction."[4] Thus for Weber, religion was, most importantly, the foundation of a social consciousness and a moral direction for the ongoing processes of life in society. Interestingly, Weber took the cognitive process in religion seriously, even if the application of every detail of a religious system did not enter into his assessment. Whereas religion had social implications, it was not a product of social engineering: religion was a causal variable rather than a product of social interaction.

Durkheim presented a somewhat different notion of religion. In Weber's terminology religion was most notably a cognitive process, involving consent of the mind alone. But Durkheim's new sociology of religion presented it first as a broadened concept that also involved physical and symbolic actions, and second as an eminently social thing, breeding a "moral community". So Durkheim arrived at a definition of religion that suggested it was "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which united into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[5] Durkheim's definition had a strong influence upon the future perception of religion in both social and political life, much of which can be seen in the scholarship of today. Most notable about Durkheim's understanding of religion was that it was broadly conceived, including both "beliefs and practices", but also that it was incumbent upon a "moral community" of individuals.

The impetus given by these early sociologists made religion an eminently social and communal concept. Given its importance to a sociological understanding of groups, it is not surprising that the political study of religion has historically been tied to the study of nation and nationalism more generally. No doubt the growth in religious discourse as a subset of national identity in recent years, and its association with nationalist and autonomous reactions to globalization and Westernization, has had an impact.[6] But even prior to the recent surge of interest in religious and religious-nationalist movements,

religion has long been treated as a sort of unsophisticated cousin to national self-awareness. Religion emerges in scholarly and journalistic accounts as a resort for backward or undeveloped peoples (in the case of modernization theory) or a reactionary force when combined with modern secular nationalism.[7] It is a popular notion of collective solidarity, a means of identification between and among groups. Either it is a throwback to an earlier time or a modern search for means to address new challenges.

Conceiving Religion in Political Science

To be certain, modern scholarship takes religion more seriously as an independent cause than it has in the past. But theories of development have had a long history of consigning religious movements into a category of traditional responses to threats of varying sorts. As a result, religion has often been perceived as an effect of self-interest or group demands. Up to the early 1980s, most analysts of nation and religion stressed instrumental uses of ethnicity and "religious identity" in gaining material advantages and staking out territory in a competitive polity. For example, Donald Horowitz is adamant that religion is essentially just another definition of group identity, where ethnicity may be overridden by religious differences or religious differences overridden by ethnicity, depending upon the case.[8] The theology of individual beliefs within these religions was secondary or irrelevant to political activity. Although differences in belief and practice might be significant to the ardently religious, they would not alter the accepted place of a group defined by religion as a contender in the politics of group awareness.

In the same vein is a model of religion as deference. In this case, religion becomes

merely a justification for the rule of a certain group or individual, a useful cipher for patterns of dominance in religious and otherwise secular surroundings. It establishes a recognized hierarchy and source of truth and direction as well as a means by which upward movement occurs within that hierarchy. In this formulation, religion is a matter of "sacred authority", a means by which leaders are chosen through a validation process, but nonetheless perform the role of representative for a group - as defined by the rules of that religion.[9] In these ways, religion is more an appendage than a legitimate variable of analysis; it is helpful for categorization, but little else. The broad instrumentalist rendering of religion, then, suggests that it is a means by which groups organize to press demands upon the larger community, and therefore a basis for the type of relationships that groups will have one with another.

One needs not go much further to agree with Marx and his disciples that religion is no more than an "opiate" – a means by which structures of material dominance are maintained by the upper classes. This idea has its origins in the Enlightenment and concomitant criticism of religion that made it the "predicate" rather than the "subject" of analysis.[10] Religion was thus the natural outflow of relationships between classes or socio-economic groups. On these grounds, Marxist analysis has often suggested that religion is a device of human invention, a way to anesthetize a populace to its own alienation and oppression. This popularly accepted view of religion in historical materialism has seen some recent revision. One modern review of Marx's commentary takes a less cynical approach, arguing that religion was not so much a device in Marx's view but rather a therapy or diversion adopted by those who are naturally oppressed by

material alienation. In essence, then, it was sedation or reconceptualization rather than a

means of collective suffocation foisted upon the lower classes by the upper classes.[11]

Ironically, echoes of this premise come from mainstream theorists such as Robert Dahl,

who writes that religion is a variable that serves to attenuate the level of dissatisfaction

resulting from inequalities in society, since "[a] deprived group may well believe that its

present inferior condition is an inherent part of the order of things, justified by religion

and cosmology".[12]

Other structural materialists have tried to make claim to religion as a source of

transformative ideology akin to class-consciousness. For example, Liberation Theology

turned the Marxist view of religion on its ear, by applying a religious critique to structures

of material dominance within and among countries in the world economy. Where

religion was once perceived as a means to stultify class subordination, Liberation

Theologians attempted to make a religious (and specifically Christian) case against the

structures of material domination.[13] Yet throughout, there are certain assumptions implicit

about religion and its meaning. For both instrumentalists and Marxists alike, religion is

an institutional and communal phenomenon, based mostly upon social pressures that use

it for certain ends.

Later arguments placed religion in the realm of a primordial desire for belonging,

stressing the social benefit of ethnic and religious claims in producing strong group

cohesion and reinforcing group demands. The primordialist, governed by his roots in the

study of anthropology, suggested that religion is innate to human nature, that it is a part of

a larger conception of the "human condition", as it were. In this way, religion was viewed

as part and parcel of a larger ethnic or "cultural" set of beliefs and intuitions - the

"symbolic dimensions of social action" – granted to the human being born into any given

society. Religion became derivative of the individual's cognitive place in a society; it was

an innate norm of the society in which an individual was placed. Clifford Geertz gave it a

rather verbose definition:

> ...a religion is: a system of symbols which acts to establish
> powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and
> motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general
> order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such
> an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem
> uniquely realistic.[14]

But the placement of religion into Geertz's "thick definition" of culture – or, in other

cases, into a biologistic determinism – runs the risk of reducing religion into a basic

human communal need and avoiding the issues that its content raises.[15] It is thus

insufficient to place religion among the socio-biological means by which human beings

mark community through "recognition markers" and "affective intensity", as is the habit

of some.[16] By doing so, the unique contributions of specific religious groups to human

society in creating individual norms and values, in forming the basis of individual

decisions within the community, is often lost. This is particularly true in cases of

pluralism, where the religious contribution is not pervasive throughout the whole culture,

but rather is found among many differing religious conceptions of life.

Figure 2.1

Conceiving Religion as a Political Variable: Common Versions

Instrumentalist Version

| Group Demands | → | Intercommunal Relationships |

Marxist Version

| Material Deprivation and Class Alienation | → | "Opiates", Sedation of Class Conflict |

Primordialist Version

| Innate Norms and Symbols of Social Cohesion | → | Communal Images and Intercommunal Relationships |
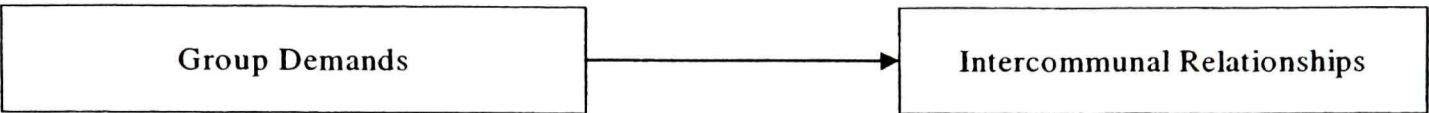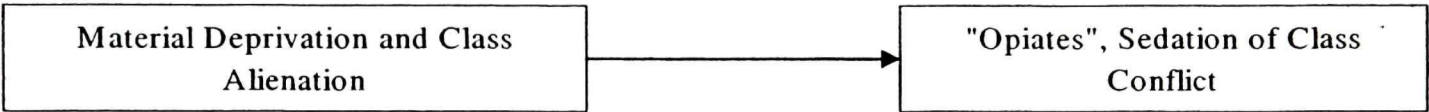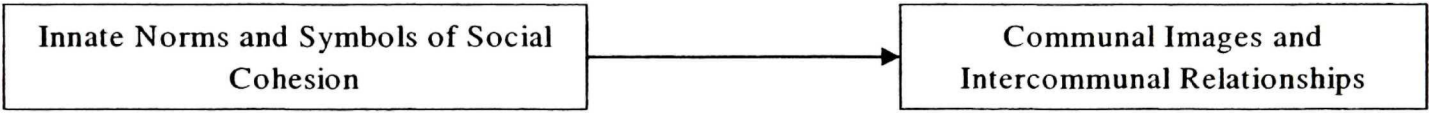
Constructivist Version

| Idea Structures of "Identity" | → | Social Desires and Demands, Intercommunal Relationships |
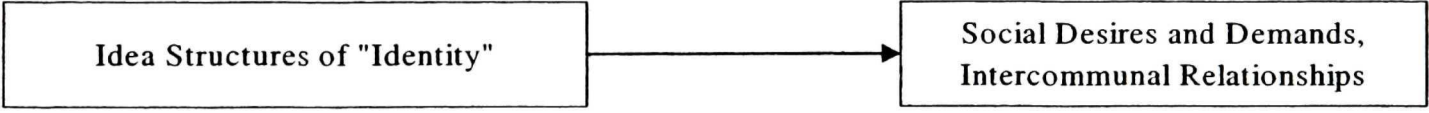
Constructivists and Others: Religion and *Identity*

The heritage of instrumentalist, Marxist, and primordialist analysis has left the concept

of religion as an independent variable or motivator an elusive category for analysis. The

strength of religious mobilization *per se* in recent times has led scholars to reconsider the

independent importance of religion in modifying demands (at the least) or in creating

those demands in the first place (at the most). The larger term *constructivism*, used for

those who emphasize the role of symbols, values, and orientations in varying ways, seems

the most logical label to use for these scholars. It has spurred an intense interest in an "area study" of religion, motivating edited volumes, entire editions of journals, and a growing cooperative study among sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists alike. Of special interest to these people are the causes of self-appellation, the symbols, the images, and the appeals to authority that lie behind religion and politics. Constructivism goes beyond the basic notions of what religion provides in general to the specific consequences of particular belief systems. It links the creation of these ideas of identity to the nature of social desires and demands in any given society, and then to the relationships that each religious group has with the larger community.

In this line of reasoning, religion is a part of *identity* formation, a force synonymous or analogous to ethnicity. Identity formation is described in many works in many ways, so it is difficult to pin this down in terms of a larger pattern. Even so, the ubiquity of the term "identity" strikes at the heart of a pitfall when it comes to religion. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "identity" as "the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing, and "the state of being the same in substance, nature, qualities, etc.". Both imply unchanging – or static – qualities. By insisting that religion is key to "identity formation", one imputes static and essentialist meaning to religion. This is unfortunate, for it is clear that this is not usually an intentional objective of the constructivist. By insisting on the term "identity" or even "identity-construction", constructivists tend to run the risk of turning religion into a *structural* variable, an otherwise fixed contributor to political behaviour, albeit dependent upon the case. Once again, the analysis of identity as structure is not always the intent of the modern constructivist, who usually stresses

contingency of place and time in understanding religion. Yet the insistence that religion is effectively synonymous with the ethnic and social bonds that are introduced to individuals at birth only serves to push constructivists toward analysis that brings them closer and closer to the deterministic variants of primordialism.

Various versions of this "identity" conception emerge. At one extreme, some would describe religion as *ascription*: an acceptance of belonging to a certain group on the basis of birth into a specific physical or psychological environment. In this sense, it is possible to be "born into" a religion. This suggests that religions are static entities unlikely to change and develop or to differ on an individual basis. Here a religion becomes little more than an ethnicity, an attribute given to a person by virtue of the community into which they are born. Deriving from the assumption that religions are essentially ethnic groups in another guise, viewing religion as *ethnicity* has thus strengthened comparisons between nationalistic and religious movements. The simple definition of religion on the basis of ascription may be declaimed by constructivist theory but its influence remains implicit in the continued portrayal of religious groups as hardened social identities, synonymous with ethnicity.

What is more, the association of religion with ethnicity remains problematic. For although religious communities do exist, and many maintain their numbers through familial and community adherence and inheritance, this does not help to describe either new religions or religious innovation and change. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph comments,

> Sociological theories of ascription offer nonbiologistic
> ways of perpetuating biological determinism – inheritance
> is destiny...But religious identities are different. They are
> subject to individual, collective, and institutional

> construction and reconstruction. Persons by themselves or in a variety of contexts can and do reshape the religions into which they were born by acts of interpretation and praxis. In that sense religious formations are, like other organized forms of social life in civil society, intentional.[17]

In fact, similar observations are made about ethnicity. This gives more credence to the ideal formation of these identities, placing them in historical perspective as terms of understanding the larger world in "time and space".[18] It leads many authors to see the similarity between religion and nationalism as a popular acceptance of certain perceived "truths". Groups become what Benedict Anderson famously calls "imagined communities", a specifically modern acceptance of broad-based ideas of who these collectivities *are*.[19] Mark Juergensmeyer stresses the similarity of nation and religion on the basis that "both serve the ethical function of providing an overarching framework of moral order"—that is, both are akin to an ideology of moral order.[20] The lesson that both ethnicity and religion each have ideological implications or pretensions is important. It leads many modern scholars to suggest that the similarities between religion and ethnicity make them two manifestations of the same external phenomenon - communities built by activities of the mind.

Dividing Nation and Religion

But are religion and ethnicity two separate phenomena, or one? Even among constructivists, who prefer to emphasize their similarity, ethnicity and religion remain two separate concepts in a vague and undefined sense. It is my contention that the continued confusion between the two terms has to do with the way we assume the

significance of the group to their very nature. Put simply, "Ethnicity" requires a group.

"Religion" does not. The confusion between religion and ethnicity is rooted in the

insistence that their role in community forms the core of understanding what they are and

dates back at least to Durkheim. It goes a long way toward explaining why ideas of social

homogeneity prevail in analysis of religion and politics, and further, why ascription

remains so central to our view of religion. When one assumes that religion implies a

social group, one is then no longer able to address religion in politics apart from a group-

consciousness. Religion and ethnicity become communal motifs; collective beliefs about

how to characterize members of the community and about the destiny of the community

as a whole.

Hence modern communitarians move beyond simple ethnicity to regard communities

of religion as collectivities with similar notions of identity formation, in the Durkheimian

tradition. Their liberal critics do not depart from the insistence, either. For example, Will

Kymlicka argues that group identity is central to a religious movement, fostering

imperative "internal restrictions" so as to maintain group practices.[21] Crawford Young

posits that "religion offers not only a comprehensive world view, but also an all-

embracing social identity" and stresses the role that religion plays in constructing the

"sense of membership in a community", common symbols, and recognized authority over

that community. He goes on to argue that apart from the "great world religions" of Islam,

Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity, religion is not significant enough to

provide strong channels for political mobilization.[22] "Religion" is thus effectively boxed

into "organized religion", and furthermore, must constitute one of a number of specific

religions that assumedly give specific political prescriptions in order to be politically significant. That there are many and various sectarian divisions among these "religions" characterized by strong ideological and theological divisions apparently makes little difference, nor does the fact that some sects may be much smaller in number than those who support animistic, atheistic, or even agnostic, tenets. That religion is a product of individual minds and thoughts is thus lost in the rush to close it into larger communities of purpose. However, a label and a community attached to it do not a religion make. One must keep in mind that a religion *in its organized form* is rather a collection of believers, a group uniting on basic accepted presuppositions about the universe, humanity and moral values. But a religion can exist without organization and without community.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of assuming religion as a social variable, the sociological and communalist observations remain pertinent. By virtue of their importance to social space and to the articulation of societies, religions *do* have a role to play in community. However, by continuing to conflate religion and ethnicity, one loses the unique quality of religion in forging basic beliefs or presuppositions. So it is important to differentiate the two, even as it is apparent that there are close relationships between them in the modern world. Ethnicity is the *collective* belief – or, perhaps, the belief *in* a collective – of a larger group of people, each with his or her own set of innate assumptions and presuppositions about the world and the people in it. It may be connected to certain inherited physical or phenotypical distinctions that identify that group, but clearly it is always a phenomenon of the mind. Ethnicity is the collective result of, or the core principles of, a set of beliefs about reality (that *might* be defined by

what we call religion). By contrast, while some religions establish communities of ethnicity, some do not. Ethnicity is different from religion in that it derives from a set of assumptions that may be informed by religion or may not, but it is always belief about belonging to a collective. Religion, on the other hand, is belief itself. This suggests that religion is *prior* to ethnicity. What is more, the innately social character of ethnic sentiment is not necessary for religious belief to appear. Religions in general do not *necessitate* community. Ethnicity does. So we find that although ethnicity, and its derivative, nationalism, may be as simple as belief (and thus, may be considered analogous to "religions"), religion may be confined to belief alone. As a result, ethnicity is more likely to be a dependent variable – based at least in part upon religion.

The turn in political theorizing toward constructivist emphasis upon norms and structures of belief was important in delineating these factors as independent variables in political analysis. Yet it would be wrong to assume that ideas are all that count. Without consigning the variable of ideas back to the realm of the "epiphenomenal", it is important to realize that they remain part of a larger causal realm in which they may be *both* the independent and dependent variable of analysis.[23] As we begin to understand the real variability and contingency of religious beliefs, over both space and time, we will begin to understand how religion operates as a cause of political activity even as it is in turn affected by quite different variables in the realms of the physical and social environment.

Religion as *Belief*

Having considered what religion is often supposed to be, where must one turn in order

to conceive of religion as it is? In hopes of identifying religion as an independent cause of political action, this work will proceed on the basis of a specific assumption about religion. For at its heart, religion is a matter of *belief*. Religious beliefs have the potential to tailor every part of one's life and act as a primary lens through which all decisions are made. Beliefs of a religious sort are foundational presuppositions that shape the actions of believers, the ways they view the outside world, perceptions of authority, and, perhaps most importantly, the values which govern how they evaluate what is important to them. In this sense, religion moves beyond its institutional form and into the territory of foundational philosophy.

A brief return to the Oxford English Dictionary provides a definition of religion firstly as "the belief in a superhuman controlling power, esp. in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship" and secondly, "the expression of this in worship". The centrality of the term "worship" to this definition begs a consideration of this term as well, for while worship may take on institutional significance – acts, rites, or formal reverence – it more generally pertains to "adoration or devotion comparable to religious homage shown towards a person or principle...honour and respect". Religion as *belief* pertains to the central object or principle of devotion in the life of an individual or in the lives of those individuals in a collectivity.[49] Taken to its furthest extent, all loyalties, actions, and values are likely to flow out of this devotion.

This concern for perceiving religion as *belief* fits into a larger postmodern and existentialist challenge to the essentialist bases for the definition of religion used in the past. It stresses the importance of individual choice in defining and prescribing religion.

Here I see clear connections to the "new paradigm" for the study of religion introduced in recent work by Sociologist R. Stephen Warner. Warner's new paradigm stands as a challenge to traditional "secularization theory", championed for some time in the scholarship of social scientists such as Weber, Durkheim, and Talcott Parsons, and having largely become received wisdom in the social sciences. Where earlier coverage of religion perceived it to be indispensable to proto-group identity and prone to differentiation and degradation, new paradigm theorists view religion in an innate state of competition, a matter of individual choice strengthened by individual priorities, the alternation of centrifugal and centripetal tendencies within institutions of religion, and the innate personal desire for a journey toward self-actualization and self-fulfillment.[50] It suggests, among other things, that the social meaning given to religion by analysts such as Weber and Durkheim is not integral to the concept itself, only to certain cases, as I have already argued. Whereas the paradigm comes directly from Warner, it relies (among other influences) upon the "new voluntarism" of Roof and McKinney.[51]

It is true that Warner uses the paradigm to discuss American religion in particular. He makes the point that the United States is a specific case in which disestablishmentarianism has become both popular and constitutional[52]. Many would choose to make the point that religious affiliations in developing states are far more likely to be related to ascriptive or kinship ties than upon matters of personal choice used by the average American citizen, and in fact this is an observation that will be borne out in our findings in the chapters that follow. Nonetheless, the argument that American religion is distinctive in its voluntarism is not persuasive. There are a clear indications that the new

paradigm fits into other cases, that in fact it has universal significance. For example, Anthony Gill finds in a recent article that "spiritual retrenchment" among Roman Catholics, "participation" over "nominalism" among Protestants, and general detachment from earlier ascriptive ties in South America is becoming the norm.[53] One might dismiss such findings as an anomalous transmission of peculiarly American (or, at most, "Western") concepts within its cultural sphere of influence. However, popular notions of religion as ascription or deference communicated by many in non-Western societies are no less beliefs on their own. When a Muslim or Hindu professes that he or she is a member of a certain religion by birth or by respect for traditional leadership, it is no less a case of belief than the statement that he or she is an orthodox adherent of the dogma of that religion. In this way, ascription assumes less importance in defining religion in general than it does in defining a *type* of religion, one that assumes the value of loyalty to established beliefs within a confessional community. Religions may form institutions – churches, charitable organizations, fraternal networks, study groups, and the list goes on – but institutionalized religion should not be confused with religion in itself. Religion as *belief* is not an institution, although it may have institutional implications, and hence we find many religious groupings that are in fact institutional.

When religion is packaged and understood as individual and collective *belief*, as a primary means by which the larger political world is transformed and interpreted, the content of religious belief becomes significant. If new paradigm theorists are correct and religious groups are products of the union of like groups of believers rather than merely ascriptive groups defined by their identification, beliefs will shape the existence and

maintenance of groups founded in this way. Content of group opinion and the reason for

their existence will be derived from the cumulative belief content of all those involved.

The source of this content is what H. Richard Niebuhr called the "value-centre", the

ultimate authority - the object of worship, as it were - against which behaviour, mores,

and regulations of social life are gauged.[29] Assessment of the content and nature of

value-centre beliefs will help to define the nature and conduct of relations between groups

and to consider whether there is a direct link between conflicts over the value-centre and

intra-societal relations.

Content as a Guide to Religious Group Behaviour

Religious groups are not simply another set of organizations operating with the same

set of rules, ambitions, or values. They differ from one to another on the basis of their

belief systems. They approach legitimacy in alternate ways; they accept or reject

solutions to (or seek compromise over) domestic and international problems based upon

their values; they include or exclude certain people based upon these values; and they

encourage certain types of behaviour among their membership and with outsiders. A sufi

order will encourage behaviour that is quite likely to offend a secularized Muslim, as

would an Islamic resistance movement. Christians who support sacred authority within

their churches are more likely to favour the dictums of their leadership than those who

uphold democratic forms of church governance. For this reason, it is not surprising that

mainline denominations with historically stronger hierarchies form the core of

institutionalized elite organizations like the World Council of Churches, whereas

evangelicals with a lower level of hierarchical control favour *ad hoc* organizations such as the World Evangelical Fellowship.

New paradigm theory would link the choices of believers to the relative size and success of each of the religious groups we consider. New paradigm theory has informed some important recent contributions to the study of religion and politics. In their edited volume *Religion and Politics in Comparative Politics*, Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox welcome the innovations of the new paradigm, attaching it to a free choice perspective that sees significance in competition between religions in a marketplace of ideas. New religious institutions are formed over time with the need to differentiate and to cater to new ideas and new requirements of the "religious consumer".[30] Whereas an institutionalist might suggest that groups will continue to function even after their original function has ceased to be addressed, new paradigm theory would add that if the institution no longer satisfies the longings of believers, it would (perhaps gradually) fade into memory.

Since beliefs are not static and vary significantly over time and place, political action among religious groups is fluid and subject to the ebb and flow of belief and choice constructed by its members over time. Variations among beliefs, particularly within traditional religious groupings, lead to their division into parties or sects. Increasing heterodoxy in this form leads either to a high degree of syncretism within the group, contributing to lower internal cohesion, or to sectarianism, the division of the group into smaller, more dogmatic, groups. Thus, large heterodox organizations have trouble mobilizing as a unit while more tightly knit and orthodox organizations are more

likely to claim the strong support of their members. Hence small organizations based

upon specific application of the beliefs of traditional groups emerge which, given time

and continued relevance, become stronger forces than the leadership of the original group.

For example, out of the Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine emerged the *Hamas*

organization, and in turn the mid-1990s saw the ascension within *Hamas* of specific

groups motivated less by Muslim orthodoxy than by militant Muslim-nationalist

sentiment, organizations such as the Izz-ed-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Similarly, within

the Roman Catholic Church there has been a history of strong splinter organizations

challenging reigning heterodoxy within the church, from various monastic orders in the

Middle Ages to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the sixteenth century, to the Opus Dei

organization of the present day.

This variation of orthodoxy within religious groups might appear to suggest that

beliefs are so malleable and transitory as to be beyond all relevance. In fact, official

doctrine is so often spurned by adherents of various religions that it is usually held in

disrepute in treatments of religion and politics. If church teaching is so important, why

are there prominent Roman Catholics among the strongest proponents of abortion rights

in various countries? If Islam proscribes alcohol, what of Muslims who occasionally

partake? Thus, in one example, the popular critique of Orientalist contentions that Islam

is a monolithic force suggests that one cannot talk about the official doctrines of Islam as

a worldview affecting the majority. In the words of Martin Kramer,

> Within every society, [Islam] takes multiple forms, from
> the high Islam of the great theological academies to the low
> Islam of the backroom mosques...Islam resists possession.
> It is impossible to monopolize, and its survival and spread

> attest to its flexibility....'Revivalist' becomes 'extremist' (and
> vice versa) with such rapidity and frequency that the actual
> classification of any movement or leader has little
> predictive power.[31]

These and other observations provide a clear indication of the irrelevance of official

doctrine to the larger community, but they are also evidence of the importance of belief in

weakening religious authority. Beliefs are usually a syncretic mix, and it should not be

surprising that the larger the religious group is, the more syncretism affects it. Syncretism

modifies group action, it constrains group values and it leads to arguments and (at worst)

dissolution, but syncretism is a matter of belief just as is orthodoxy. In short, belief

predicts and modifies action, but it is neither monolithic nor ahistorical. Contrary to

Kramer, all of this makes categorization difficult - but not impossible. It simply stresses

the need to consider historical contingency and individual choice in the analysis. That

religious groups alter their course of action over time and within varying situations is true

- but their continuing devotion to the (albeit fluid) beliefs of their members is also clear.

Religious Groups and Political Mobilization

What does the definition of religion as a belief in central principles mean for the

relative positions of religious groups within and among states? It implies potential for

both enduring ties of devotion to religious beliefs and a fluidity that may occur with

innovation. It also stresses religious differentiation - suggesting that religious groupings

will tend toward smaller groups based upon more particularized tenets. Larger groups

will be permeated by a higher degree of syncretism and a less rigid doctrinal orthodoxy.

At times, they will struggle for purpose and cohesion. Nonetheless, the leadership of

larger groups is also likely to seek the homogenization of orthodoxy, forcing minority groups into a status affected by their *level of deviance* from the "norm" and by their own *orientation to pluralism* (or attitude to contact with other groups). Plural societies are thus driven by both centrifugal and centripetal attitudes to orthodoxy: there will be movements that stress fragmentation on the basis of anti-systemic or non-conformist principles, but also groups which stress common or foundational beliefs that strengthen ecumenism, unity of all people, or the essential needs of national or community survival. Groups will find common cause within states on the basis of common beliefs, but also increasingly among states, as ideas travel over distances as a result of human interaction and through printed and transmitted words and images.

Religious groups operate in a wide field of various types throughout the world. In the developing world, they are forced into specific types of circumstances, which recommend a concern for material deprivation and marginalization. In many places, the stunted development of democratic and other state institutions leads all groups into pathological relationships based upon negotiation and competition. In this light, Migdal's *Strong Societies and Weak States* and Migdal, Kohli and Shue's *State Power and Social Forces* present a model of Third World politics in which the fragmentation of social control forces the state to seek to build coalitions with various actors in society.[32] Instead of stressing the institutional features of the state in the developing world, one must broaden the notion of the state to consider connections between state institutions and the social forces within society, such that the state apparatus can not be understood apart from the social forces to which it was linked. The power of these social forces is especially

significant in developing countries, where the state is weak in its penetration of society

and in its claim to legitimacy.

I have already argued that legitimacy is in large part a perception based upon

individual belief, and hence there is an inescapable connection between religion and

legitimacy, but there are also obvious connections between beliefs and approaches to

partnerships, aims, and measures of success in a competitive polity. Coalitions and

constellations of power are thus bound up with beliefs and create competitions over belief

and value that lead to the general philosophic and normative trends in a society. Thus

societies are driven by the nature and content of group belief systems, and the types of

demands these imply tend to shape intra-societal and state-society relationships. So Joel

Migdal suggests that

> [v]arious social forces endeavor to impose themselves in an
> arena, to prescribe to others their goals and their
> answers...[S]ome use social forces to extract as much
> surplus or revenue as possible; others look for deference
> and respect or doing God's will or simply power to rule
> other people's behavior as an end in itself. Whatever the
> motivation and aims, attempts at domination are invariably
> met with opposition by others also seeking to dominate or
> by those trying to avoid domination. Rarely can any social
> force achieve its goals without finding allies, creating
> coalitions, and accepting accommodations. Landlord and
> priest, entrepreneur and sheikh, have forged such social
> coalitions with power enough to dictate wide-ranging
> patterns of belief and practice.[33]

Thus there is a clear link between "belief and practice" and the mobilization of domestic

and international societal forces, most especially religious ones.

At the international - or "global" - level, the equivalent of belief, practice, and

legitimacy issues can be perceived as part of an ideational framework that has achieved

some centrality in recent constructivist scholarship. Unfortunately, much of the recent

constructivist turn in international relations has stressed culture and nationality, rather

than their philosophic underpinning in beliefs. These somewhat vaguely defined

concepts of culture and nationality form the core of the international system and

prevailing sociological norms in constraining "state behaviour", meaning the behaviour of

individual leaders and elites.[34] "Culture" here reduces belief to basic social practice and

conditioning. In fact, there are deeper motivations of belief that guide human behaviour,

motivations requiring consent rather than cultural conditioning. Despite the growing

importance of transnational linkages to the development of international civil society and

the significance of mass politics at the international level, there has been only nascent

consideration of the impact of constructivist ideas at the level of an international civil

society.

In order to integrate a transnational level of analysis to understanding sub-state groups

in developing societies, one must consider transnational political mobilization, placing

substate elements as primary actors into a larger ideational struggle at the global level.

Here one might draw upon the Gramscian critique of international politics popularized by

Robert W. Cox, but with one significant deviation.[35] Following the lead of constructivist

theorizing, material resources are in fact secondary or contributing factors in creating

international order. What is important is how we as human beings perceive and shape the

material order. This would not be altogether inappropo to Cox himself, who conceded

that the material order of the present is one of a set of possible orders that might be

conceptualized through ideational metatheory.[36] To state it flatly, domestic philosophic

and ideological struggles are but a smaller part of a phenomenon that is increasingly

global in scope. At the global level, struggles over presuppositions and value-centres are

an aggregation of sets of similar struggles at the local, domestic, and regional levels.

At first glance, one might point out evident similarities to Samuel Huntington's "Clash

of Civilizations" thesis in this conception of global order.[37] However, there are at least

two bases of disagreement. The first is with Huntington's reliance on "civilization" or

"culture" as a defining feature of world order. I have already argued that there is

something deeper than cultural (or "civilizational") practices at play in defining political

order. It rather relates to the basic issues on which we all agree - or disagree in forms of

belief. A second way in which this deviates is with Huntington's ardent statism which

contradicts much of what he argues. Since states are not the only, or even the most

important, repositories of belief, they should not retain paramount importance as actor.

The rise of non-state actors and the growing transnationalization of issues in international

politics reveals a strong need to integrate a notion of how globalization provides new

levels at which political mobilization at the level of the traditional state is transformed.

Among the many ways that new fora of politics have been opened up are international

organizations and international communications media.

Although the impact of the development of an international or transnational civil

society has been significant in most modern assessments of international and

developmental politics, it is still embryonic. This is no less the case when one turns to

the analysis of religion in a global system. Nonetheless, some important work has been

published in the last few years which seeks to integrate these various notions. Peter

Beyer and Jeff Haynes have looked at the impact of globalization at the domestic level.[38]

Perhaps more salient is the work by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori which

has illuminated the transnational and international dimensions of the topic. Rudolph's

conclusions were that religion had a major impact upon the understanding of global and

international security, and since "a plurality of transnational spaces entails difference as

well as commonality with respect to epistemes, identities, and expectations, transnational

civil society can be the site of conflict as well as cooperation."[39] Considerations of

multifarious types of Christian approaches to majority Muslim cultures would clearly fit

into the diversity indicated by Rudolph. The diversification and complication of religious

groups both locally and globally implied by the understanding of religion as *belief*

necessitates more and more dedicated and developed analysis along the lines of particular

types of belief and group action.

Religion and Pluralism in the Middle East

We have seen that it is possible to come to some conclusions about religion and

politics more generally, but how does this approach relate to religious groups in the

Middle East? Much modern theoretical scholarship and anecdotal evidence suggests that

religion is even more important in the Middle East than it is in other regions of the world.

Traditional scholarship gave Islam a central place in the politics of Arab states. Many

argue that the singular emphasis upon the maintenance of the *umma* ("community of

believers") and the absence of a tradition of separation between church and state in Islam

makes Islam uniquely political in its implications.[40] Another vein that emphasizes the

singular importance of religion recognizes the intensity of contention in the region over

religious legitimacy and authority. The strength of religious contention has been

underlined by the rise of popular Islamist movements throughout the region, sectarian

conflict in various places, and continuing state flirtation with official religion.

What I have suggested above exposes some cracks in the former argument. It suggests

that all religions have a set of beliefs that will in some way affect the way in which

adherents conduct politics. So all religions are eminently political, whether or not they

prescribe certain types of political systems or make direct demands upon the state. As

regards the intensity of religious conflict, it would be best to leave aside the particularity

of Middle Eastern contexts for a moment and reflect that passionate convictions of

various sorts tend to lead to intense debates and conflicts in all contexts. National

resistance movements based upon religious or other sorts of belief exist throughout the

world, from Northern Ireland to Yugoslavia to Burma. Liberationist movements inspired

by various claims to truth have littered Latin America for much of the last two centuries.

Intense debate and lobbying takes place in Western societies on the basis of foundational

philosophy, occasionally leading to demonstrations and violent rancor. All of these are

premised upon belief just as is religious division in the Middle East. The difference is the

type and nature of convictions. Religious movements are all inspired by belief. But not

all beliefs are the same. What is more, not all environments accommodate the same type

of religious movements.

Religion in the Middle East has long tended toward a certain type of basic philosophy.

More than in most regions, there is a prevalent notion of inheritance and community

involved with religion. Sect and religion are generally perceived to be much more than

the acceptance of doctrine and practice: they are rather communal identities and labels.

To a great extent, religions in this region tend toward ethnic awareness and away from

personal reflection and pursuit. Certainly, there have always been exceptions to this rule:

the emphasis upon personal experience in Sufi movements stands as an important case in

point. Yet the association of religion with kinship networks, tribes, and nationalities, has

been prevalent. Kamal Salibi addresses the notion by labeling such religious groups

"clects" – half clan and half sect. He further argues that "[w]hat gives such communities

their solidarity...is non-volitional group identification, or *'asabiyya*. What they flourish

on is tribal paranoia."[41] The point that Salibi makes is important: the ascent of non-

volitional thinking has circumscribed religious movements in the Middle East to a serious

extent. The outcome of this is that religious movements have generally been based upon

a static notion of religion as national identity or deference.

The traditional policy reaction to the importance of religious communities defined by

national identity and deference has been segregation and consolidation of religious groups

into territorial and administrative units. This process had its culmination in the

development of the *millet* system used by the Porte to administer religious minority

groups in the Ottoman Empire in the centuries from 1500 to 1919. Under the *millet*

system, religious groupings were given the right to run their own internal affairs and to

operate family and personal status law with autonomy from the central imperial authority.

Religious groupings immediately became political in that they implied loyalty to a

hierarchy in addition to a sort of label of citizenship. To change religious convictions in

effect meant changing jurisdictions, thereby reinforcing a religion of inheritance and birthright. Reflecting upon the significance of the *millet* system, Will Kymlicka suggests that

> This system was generally humane, tolerant of group differences, and remarkably stable...But it was not a liberal society, for it did not recognize any principle of *individual* freedom of conscience...The Ottomans accepted the principle of religious tolerance, where that is "understood to indicate the willingness of a dominant religion to coexist with others", but did not accept the quite separate principle of individual freedom of conscience.[42]

So the *millet* system was premised on a very specific version of religion, that of community based upon deference or identity. Challenges to this philosophy are, in effect, challenges to the system as a whole.

The challenge came with the advent of the modern nation-state and mass religious sensibility. Although the *millet* system officially came to an end as such with the advent of the modern nation-state in the Middle East, its operation has continued in many ways under the laws of the modern republics. Yet in recent times, modernism has begun to challenge the acceptance of notions of identity and deference, and a new panoply of religious movements have arisen in the region in recent times. Recent scholarship has addressed this development in Muslim and Islamist movements. But not surprisingly, the same development has begun to affect minority religious groups as well. Christian groups in the Middle East have long emphasized a similar type of religion, if not similar beliefs, to their Muslim counterparts.

Dominant Muslim culture and beliefs in the Middle East lead to a situation that Godrun Kramer describes as "'plural' but not 'pluralist'". The implication is that various

viewpoints are tolerated in and of themselves but do not necessarily enjoy full

participation in the political institutions of states in the region. Nevertheless, she goes on

to add that the integration of various religious viewpoints in these societies could be

found anywhere along a continuum from "equilibrium" to a less tolerant "obsession with

unity".[43] All Arab states in the Middle East boast Muslim majorities of various sorts, yet

minority groups display varying levels of activity based upon the opportunities afforded

them by their political environment and upon their own internally defined *raisons d'etre*.

The larger structures that control and attenuate popular movement in Middle Eastern

societies and a typology of Christian movements are necessary to gain a deeper

understanding of their approach to political action. This is the matter to which we will

turn in the next chapter.

[1]Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 131.

[2]Peter Van der Veer and Harmut Lehmann draw such a parallel between nation and religion in their introduction to Van der Veer and Lehmann, *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), 4.

[3]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

[4]Franco Ferraroti, *Toward the Social Production of the Sacred*, trans. Salvatore Attanasio (La Jolla, California: Essay Press, 1977), 57-8.

[5]Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 44.

[6]See, for example, Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[7]Van der Veer and Lehmann, "Introduction", 3-14.

[8]Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 50-51.

[9]Constructivists use the term "sacred authority" in a different sense - although often to the same effect. See Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), 46-79.

[10]So we hear that "religion...is the opium of the people", Marx, Introduction, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, 131.

[11]G.A. Cohen, *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000), 79-100.

[12]Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971), 100.

[13]For a concise summary of Liberation Theology, see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987). For its original formulation, see Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, revised edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

[14]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 30, 90.

[15]Here Crawford Young points to the work of Pierre Van den Berghe and Paul Shaw and Yuwa Wong. See Crawford Young, *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 23.

[16]Paul Shaw and Yuwa Wong, *Genetic Seeds of Warfare: Evolution, Nationalism, and Patriotism* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

[17]Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Dehomogenizing Religious Formations", in Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 246-7.

[18]This typology comes from Crawford Young in *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism*, 21-25.

[19]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1985), 36.

[20] Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War*, 15-16.

[21]Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1995), 40-3.

[22]Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 51-2.

[23]Sheri Berman, "Ideas, Norms, and Culture in Political Analysis", *Comparative Politics* 33(2), January 2001, 233-4.

[24]A counterpoint to this understanding of religion comes from theologians Stanley Hauerwas and Michael Baxter, who prefer to stress the significance of practices as integral to religious life. See Stanley Hauerwas, "The Kingship of Christ: Why Freedom of Belief is not Enough", in Hauerwas, *In Good Company: the Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 199-216.

[25]R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States", *American Journal of Sociology* 98(5), March 1993, 1044-1085.

[26]Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987), 40-71.

[27]This point is stressed in Warner's response to Lechner, R. Stephen Warner, "A Paradigm is not a Theory: Reply to Lechner", *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1),

July 1997, 195-6.

[28]Anthony Gill, "Religion and Democracy in South America: Challenges and Opportunities", Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: the One, the Few, and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 195-224.

[29]H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), 26-7ff.

[30] Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, "Religion: the One, the Few, and the Many", in Jelen and Wilcox, eds., *Religion and Politics*, 13.

[31]Martin Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

[32]Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

[33]Migdal, "The State in Society: an Approach to Struggles for Domination", in Migdal, Kohli, and Shue, *State Power*, 21.

[34]An example of the former would be Peter Katzenstein ed., *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), and of the later, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), 1999.

[35]Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and International Relations: an Essay in Method", in Robert W. Cox with Timothy Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 124-143.

[36]Cox, "Toward a Posthegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun", in *Approaches*, 144-173.

[37]Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[38]Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization,* (London: Routledge, 1994), also Jeff Haynes, ed., *Religion, Globalization and Political Culture in the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[39]Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Introduction", in Rudolph and Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion*, 2.

[40]See, for example, Gabriel Ben-Dor, "The Uniqueness of Islamic

Fundamentalism", in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Efraim Inbar, eds., *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 239-52.

[41]Kamal Salibi, "Community, State and Nation in the Arab Mashriq", *Beirut Review* 3 Spring 1992, 45.

[42]Kymlicka, *Multicultural*, 157-8.

[43]Godrun Kramer, "Islam and Pluralism", in Brynen et al, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner), 1995, 116-8.

Chapter Three – Theoretical Approaches

"The magical and religious forces, and the ethical ideas of duty based upon them, have in the past always been among the most important formative influences on conduct."
- Max Weber[1]

In Chapter Two, I presented a case for applying new paradigm theory to religion and politics, introducing the importance of a definition of religion as belief, susceptible to innovation and differentiation over time and place. How might such a conception of religion as belief be applied to a schema for political analysis of religious groups? How should one begin to assess the importance of beliefs in shaping political action? In this chapter, I assess the importance of incorporating belief as agency with other structural variables to understand the activity of religious groups. I apply a traditional approach to a typology of belief taken from studies in Christian ethics to understand Christian groups in their political environment. This is integrated into a broadly neo-institutional framework for the study of politics in the developing world to form a core strategy for understanding Christian minority groups in Middle Eastern societies. So we will begin with general observations about the interplay of two important sets of variables, and follow up by considering them in operation in various organizations at work in three case studies: Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine.

## A Complete Approach: The Integration of Structure and Agency

An historical preoccupation in political science is the combination of structure and agency in any analysis of political activity. It is important to combine these two levels of analysis in order to understand group action toward the larger society and toward other

groups within that society: first, one must consider the basis of the organizations in collective beliefs and second, one must understand the dynamic structure of the environment in which groups develop and exist. In this vein, Max Kaase and Alan Marsh develop a schema for understanding political action in general. In order to understand outcomes of political involvement, action, and participation, they privilege both inherited and contingent factors, defined respectively as "socio-structural location" of participants and the sum total of the values, motivational and cognitive conditions, and perceptions of deprivation of the participants.[2] Here Kaase and Marsh set out a basic direction for research that could be boiled down to environment and belief. Their differentiation between inherent (or environmental) factors and those shaped by individual belief is helpful, as is their contention that these two sets of causal variables operate to define and shape political participation among individuals. This pattern of causality is a common basis for explaining political behaviour and consequently forms the core of various arguments.

Various scholars, using variations in the same schema have studied in some detail the creation and operation of religions. In particular, the multi-volume "fundamentalisms project" edited by Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby includes several chapters dedicated to "explaining fundamentalisms". In concluding chapters of volume five, entitled *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Gabriel Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, and R. Scott Appleby set out to explain the phenomenon of fundamentalist movements. Their analysis privileges three levels of explanation: "structural factors", "contingent, chance factors", and "'human' factors of choice and leadership".[3] True, the stated object of analysis is that of "fundamentalisms". But there is legitimate reason to consider their explanation of

fundamentalisms as exemplary of various sorts of religious movements since the factors they consider are not limited to fundamentalist movements. Their understanding of causes reflects the division between structure and agency, highlighting both internal and external choice in creating these social movements. Yet their practice of confining religious tenets to what they call "structural" factors is questionable in light of the existential emphasis on belief that I sketched out in Chapter Two. I have already argued that religion cannot be understood properly as merely a "structural" tenet. When we understand religion as belief, a matter of individual choice, it is a more complicated and contingent factor. Furthermore, their refinement of contingencies and choice are rather cursory and require clarification, which would be provided by a consideration of religion as belief.

Rather than divide causal variables into three categories, I would return to Kaase and Marsh's schema in order to point to two ways to approach causality. First come contingent variables, which are dependent upon the choices and preferences of individuals in groups – supplied by a proper understanding of belief. Second are constraints and permissive causes based upon the structure of societal relations and demographics. The first set of causes then privileges belief. The second set privileges political environment, including demographic realities.[4] Figure 1 illustrates that these three broader sets of questions operate to bring about religious groups and help to explain what sort of intra-societal and state-society relations exist within a given polity with respect to religious groups.

Figure 3.1: Causal Variables

BELIEFS	→	
POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT	→	TYPES OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS, INTRA-SOCIETAL AND STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONSHIPS
RELATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS	→	
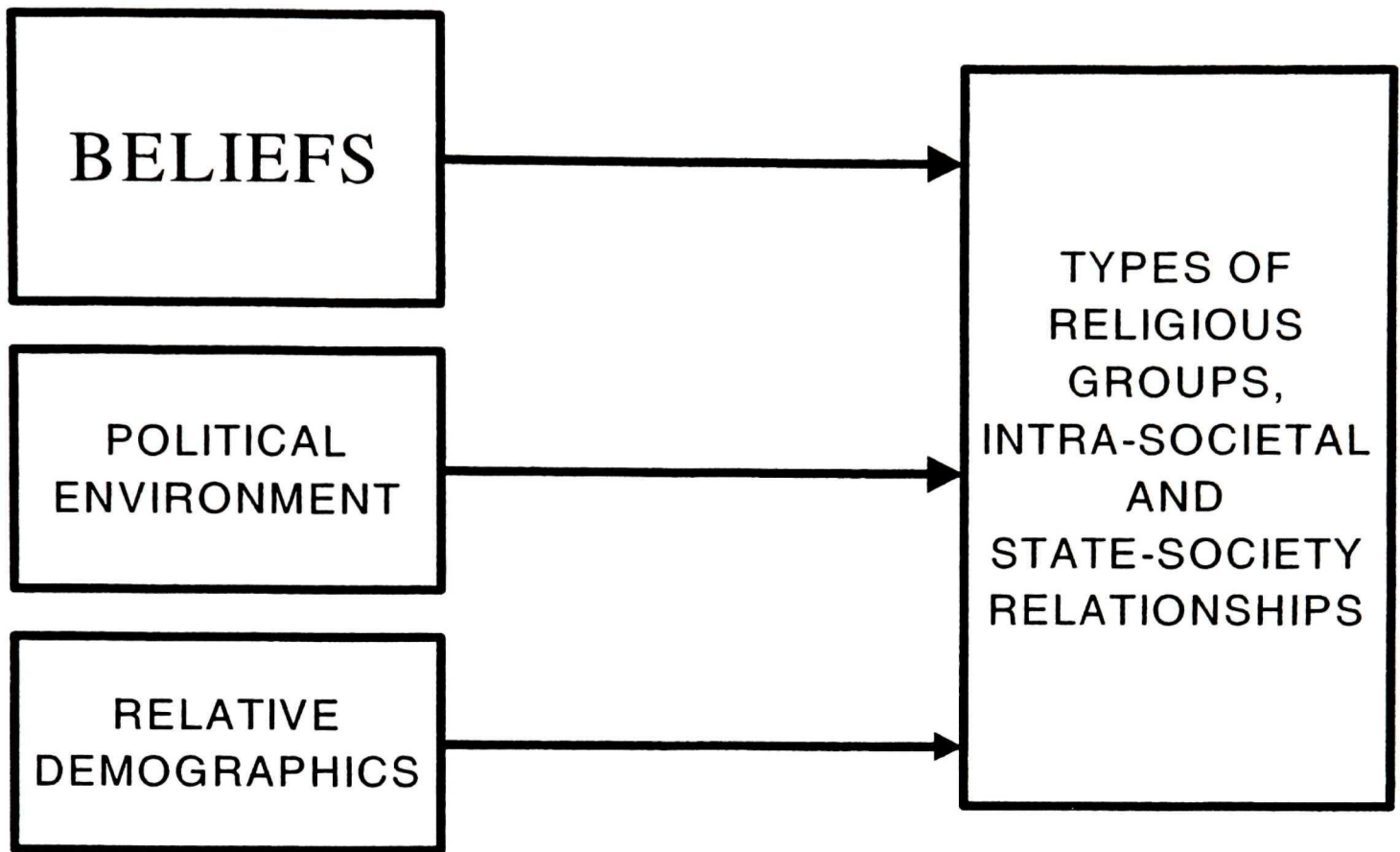
The definition of "religious" groups, for my purposes, remains broad. Religious groups

are diverse in nature: they may include political parties based upon certain types of

belief, self-help organizations, community service organizations, nationalist-style

resistance movements, or simple organizations serving communities of worship.

Obviously, religion is diverse and is manifested in diverse types of organizations.

Muslims revere the *umma*, or community of Islam, and tend to worship in mosques but

also form sectarian and non-governmental organizations from sufi orders to charitable

trusts. Christians tend to believe in a worldwide church, universal or catholic, and

worship in what they call local churches, yet have also been known to form political

parties, parachurch organizations, and monastic orders, for example. Relationships

between the state and these movements, and between Christian and other Christian or non-Christian groups, are also diverse. They include out-and-out violence or competition, as well as periodic and/or systematic cooperation.

Although beliefs form the core of an explanation for the direction of religious group activity, it is important to deal with the larger political environment and demographic realities to come to grips with the limitations of the movement *in situ* and to understand how groups develop specific organizational structures and relationships with both the state and the external society. The same organization rooted in two very different countries with very different governing regimes will be forced to operate in divergent ways. It is clearly not enough to understand the organization on the basis of its beliefs, for this only modifies the behaviour of the group – it does not set the rules by which the group must operate, nor does it identify the other forces within society with which each group must interact.

BELIEFS

Classifying Belief

The existential premise of **belief** forms the core of how a religious group behaves within a given polity. This variable takes account of the concern for agency, as it should be considered an attribute varying among individuals involved in a larger political system, the result of choice and developed bias. The question is often asked, "Where do beliefs come from?" This question is not unanswerable, but the study of the foundations of our presuppositions is the property of studies in philosophy and religion rather than that of social science *per se*. Psychologists and sociologists take great pains to develop

schematic and systemic explanations but a consistent explanation for the content of

belief remains unattainable. While beliefs may be in some way conditioned and

confirmed or challenged by our larger environment, their basic source is superhuman and

is a question best posed to those whose goal is the explanation of "the human condition".

I do not wish to embark upon such an explanation in this project, although I do not find

such questions either irrelevant or uninteresting. Suffice it to say at this point that beliefs

are both dependent and independent variables in any science.[5] Beliefs both create and are

created by our human environment. Here, their significance as an independent variable is

at issue.

I have made a strong case for understanding belief as a variable dependent upon the

individual. However, the use of beliefs as an independent variable in political analysis is

only effective when one considers the prevalence of beliefs over a larger population.

Beliefs thus must in effect depart from being a psychological variable to a sociological

one. The movement from individual to collective beliefs implies a need to refine beliefs

into a narrower set of foundational tenets which are less reliable (given their reification

into "group beliefs") but more useful. Core beliefs of groups can thus be approximated.

This does not imply that beliefs are the built-in and inherent impulses of those within the

group. They are rather core beliefs to which the individual members choose to adhere.

The existence of basic and intractable divisions over beliefs within a group will mean

that, in effect, there are two or more groups in evidence, or that such beliefs do not form

the core of a confessing group's presuppositions. In other words, a church or sect

strongly divided over basic ideas is not a single group, but a set of groups. In this way,

many groupings united in official policy are very much divided over individual beliefs

and cease to function as a whole. Such divisions are the building blocks of pluralism. Plural viewpoints lead to plural religious groupings. The acceptance of this in institutional form is the manifestation of pluralism. This means that content does matter, and that beliefs will be important in understanding the direction of group activity.[6] It also implies that a truly plural society must have some sort of plurality of belief – even if the society is united on basic principles.

Christian Groups in Plural Societies: Classifying Orientation toward Pluralism

I have suggested that all religious views are matters of belief, but that not all religious views are the same in terms of the content of that belief. Particular groups are distinguished by the prevalence of certain unifying beliefs among their memberships. How does one seek to understand the complexities of belief that operate within religious groups in general, and Christian groups in particular? Here, there are various starting-points, and by no means is it possible to be exhaustive. The "new" discovery of beliefs and choices in analysis of religion implied by new paradigm theory sets out a panoply of questions about specific beliefs that differ throughout and among major (and not-so-major!) religions. The ensuing research possibilities are endless. Nonetheless, the orientation of the group toward the larger plural society seems a logical place to start, particularly when dealing with the operation of minority Christian groups among majority Muslim societies.

The operation of Christian groups in larger secular and non-Christian societies has long been the preoccupation of various scholars of ecclesiology, sociology, and comparative theology. For the purposes of this study, I will cut into a voluminous history

and highlight some specific observations. Liberal and Neo-orthodox controversies within Christendom set the stage for the modern deconstruction of Christian belief. Liberalism was a label used in theology for a broad array of studies that stressed a more critical, less traditional, and typically more naturalist approach that came into vogue beginning with the turn of the past century. Neo-orthodoxy was a mainstream response to liberalism that stressed *inter alia* some of the more orthodox teachings of Christianity while accepting the need to contextualize and subdivide beliefs into types. The controversy between these two types of theology that took place in the early part of the twentieth century established early deconstruction of beliefs. The spark came with a new and popular global movement within the churches to address the social challenges of industrialization and modernity. This led to the ecumenical movement, the social gospel movement, and a global community of pacifists. At the same time, scholars began to assess the impact of beliefs upon societal organization. The most prominent of these was Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* But Weber's study had repercussions throughout the academic world, not least among scholars of theology proper. Of these, an early and important contribution was Ernst Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* originally published in 1912. Troeltsch sought to address the question of Christian social involvement by assessing the organizational structure and internal logic of Christian groups. In the process, he developed a typology of Christian organizations, differentiating among Churches, sects, and mysticism.[7] The assessment of belief as a motivator for action was given an established form in political theology and led to a serious study of Christian ethics that explained the connections between Christian beliefs and political and social action. This attempt to deconstruct belief has had its

effects throughout modern and postmodern religious criticism, and there are echoes of it in new paradigm social theory. The field of Christian ethics has continually been dominated by the development of typologies of belief that seek to classify Christian believers on the basis of their orientation to the exterior culture.

The standing classic in the field, H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture,* contributes models of interaction between Christian groups and the larger society, and provides a starting point for the consideration of various minority perspectives. Niebuhr begins with an acceptance of plural religious viewpoints within the Christian tradition, even at times when Christianity was nominally unified and monolithic. He moves beyond sectarian pluralism to theological distinctions in the worldviews of leaders and groups through the centuries. He further classifies the variation in Christian traditions with respect to their attitude toward the larger culture of which they are a part. "Culture" as he puts it, is not explicitly defined, but one modern commentator describes it variously as "everything people do, every realm of human creative behavior", an autonomous human invention, but also, "the *majority* position of a given society", in which "the state is prototypical, if not pre-eminent".[8] Implicit is the idea of Christianity as a state perspective enjoining other perspectives within society.

This formulation of culture varies from state to state and may have various religious bases, but its application has typically been to the majoritarian religious impulses of Christian societies. Be that as it may, Niebuhr was writing with the perspective of Christendom in a society in which Christianity had ceased to be the established religion but remained the primary mode of communication of cultural values. In fact, his observations are just as relevant to minority communities of Christian faith, as in fact

many of the views that he types in *Christ and Culture* were minority and unestablished

positions in history. Therefore, his approach pertains just as significantly to the minority

perspectives as it does to the effect of majoritarian consensus in Christian societies.

Niebuhr argues that there are five general types of Christian ethics in this respect,

characterized as "Christ Against Culture" (held by "Radicals"), "Christ of Culture" (held

by "Accommodationists"), "Christ Above Culture" (held by "Synthesists"), "Christ and

Culture in Paradox" (held by "Dualists"), and "Christ the Transformer of Culture" (held

by "Conversionists"). What distinguishes these viewpoints is their attitude toward the

general acceptability of a human system as judged by their own Christianity. The **radical**

employs a belief that emphasizes the otherness of a Christian society and its superiority

over the innately corrupt system at work in the temporal earthly realm. He accepts "the

sole authority of Jesus Christ and the common rejection of the prevailing culture.

Whether the culture calls itself Christian or not is of no importance, for to these men it is

always pagan and corrupt."[9] The **accommodationist**, on the other hand, sees no clash

between the culture and his or her faith. He stresses Jesus Christ's role as a teacher or

philosopher of human goodness, "the restorer of right knowledge about the abyss of

being and about the ascent as well as the descent of man."[10] The **synthesist** accepts that

culture has been bastardized by human nature but holds that since God created nature to

be good, there must be elements of divine inspiration in the culture. He believes thus that

"the God who is to rule now rules and has ruled, that His rule is established in the nature

of things, and that man must build on the established foundations" of human thought and

inspiration.[11] The **dualist** on the other hand is struck by a continuing paradox between

eschewing culture for its innate corruption while following the duty of dedication to

human improvement that is enjoined upon them. He seeks a union between a Christian theology which holds that "[h]uman nature is corrupt; and it includes all human work, not simply the achievements of men outside the church but also those in it", but also accepts that "[t]he function of law is to restrain and expose sin", so justifying the existence of (limited) earthly authority.[12] This fosters contending injunctions upon the dualist to obey earthly authority while condemning its vices. Finally, the **conversionist** stresses the idea that Christ is at work in redeeming a fallen culture through work in the lives of individual Christians. The conversionist sees culture as object rather than subject, seeking to be a part of God's "dramatic interaction" with creation.[13] These renditions of Christian attitude toward the larger culture could be arranged on a spectrum where Radicals are most critical (or negative) toward that culture and Accommodationists are the least critical (or positive).

Figure 3.2

Niebuhr's Models and Orientations to Pluralism

Negative Orientation to Pluralism			Positive Orientation to Plurallism	
"radical"	"dualist"	"conversionist"	"synthesist"	"accommodationist"
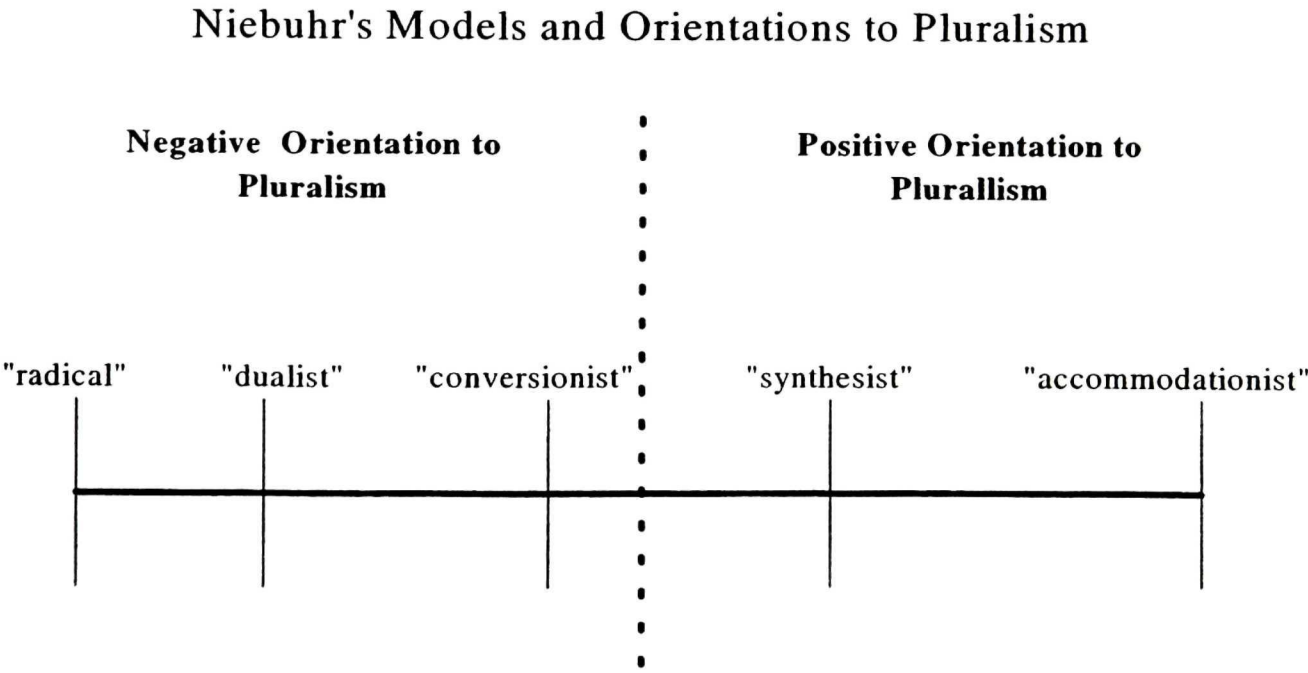
So far as their judgment of the status of a larger plural culture, these views can be simplified. This simplification provides a template for our further analysis of Christian approaches to plural societies. Radicals and dualists are united by their vision of a plural culture corrupted by the fallenness of humanity presented by their understanding of Christian teaching. They are immediately critical of the potential for human institutions and orders in achieving the ends of Christianity. Likewise, they do not typically trust the idea of establishmentarianism and so it is important to note here that their criticism extends to the traditional institutionalized leadership of both Church and State. This criticism of human institutions has historically been tied to the nonconformist churches of the reformation and counterreformation, but it is also implicit in anchorite (monastic) movements in the mainstream traditions and among the more militant and radical movements that have challenged mainstream churches from the inside. On the converse, synthesists and accommodationists are united by a trust in human institutions and a friendly attitude to plural cultural institutions. They seek to create institutions that will integrate the highest notions of their religion with the imperatives of social control. Rather than criticize institutions for their inherent fallenness, they prefer to work within existing structures and culture, thereby ensuring the rule of God on earth.

On the basis of this distinction, it is possible to divide beliefs between those that approach an exterior pluralistic culture with a **positive** attitude, and those who approach it with a **negative** attitude. The case of the conversionists presents a special challenge. Niebuhr himself suggests that this view begins with a critical understanding of the culture, but moves ahead on the basis that proper faith can effect a transformation within human institutions. Therefore, conversionists have, in general, a negative attitude toward

the larger culture that sets them apart from established forms found among those with a positive orientation.

Attitudes to pluralism are important inroads to the inner thinking of all religious groups. Groups with a positive attitude to pluralism are given to compromise, to negotiated solutions, and to integrative appreciation of the outside culture. Societal change comes about through developing co-operative solutions to the problems of the day. These communities are likely to remain optimistic about united solutions to common problems with non-believers, but are just as likely to be **perfectionistic** in their outlook, requiring a certain convergence between their views and those of outside partners. By contrast, groups with a negative attitude to pluralism are given to viewing compromise with external partners as a sort of surrender or denial of the most important of their foundational precepts. They are more likely to accentuate the differences that apply between their group and other groups. To these groups, societal change comes through confrontation to the existing order or its transformation through revolutionary or (more likely) eschatological changes. As a result, those who are negative about cultural pluralism are also likely to be **pessimistic** about the friendliness of this-worldly institutions to their foundational beliefs, and about the potential for unified solutions to common problems.

Crostabulating Orientation toward Pluralism by Level of Voluntary Commitment: A Typology of Christian Organizations

In the prior chapter I have already highlighted divisions in conceptions of religion over identity and belief. This has led to a continuing tension in religion between a notion of inheritance – or, on occasion, identity – and a notion that religion is voluntary matter of free will. This dichotomy is important in dividing all religious groups, between holiness or charismatic movements (who stress the voluntaristic attachment to doctrinal tenets and practice) and traditional organizations of kin and community (who stress religious communality). The division between voluntaristic and communalistic religion is common throughout all religious groups and divides the consciously religious from those who prefer association as against total ideational commitment. Among most religious believers, there are those for whom identity is the focus and those for whom the voluntarist dedication to church teaching is the focus. So we begin by classifying Christian groups by two measures: *orientation toward the outside culture* (or pluralism more generally) and *emphasis on voluntary commitment.*[14]

Figure 3.3: Classifying Emphasis on Voluntary Commitment by Orientation to Pluralism

ORIENTATION TO PLURALISM

	Positive Attitude	Negative View
Voluntaristic	Establishment Groups	Evangelical Groups
Identity-Focussed	Deferential Groups	Identity-Nationalist Groups

(Vertical label: EMPHASIS ON VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT)
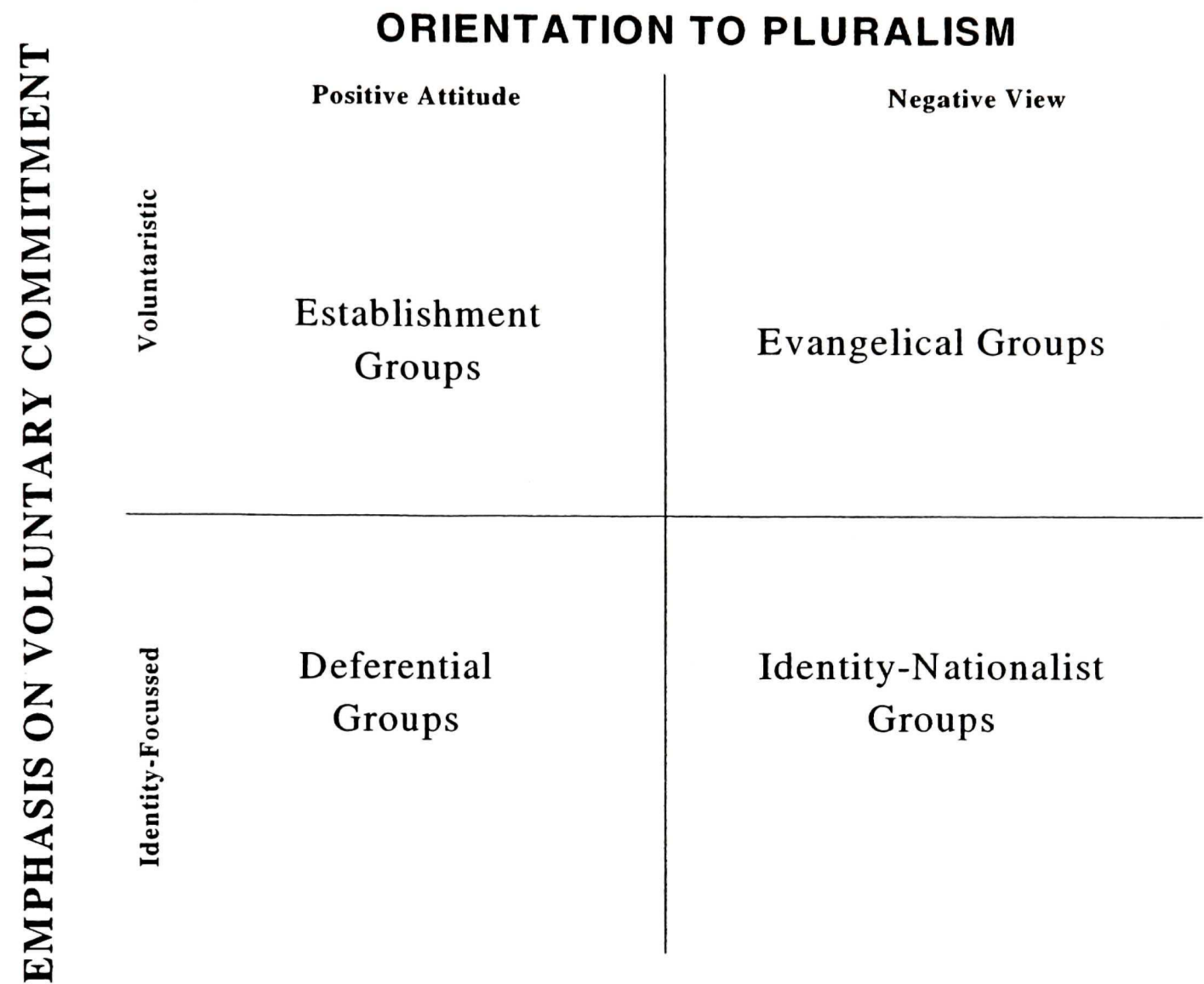
An organization that is positive toward the larger pluralistic culture but also

emphasizes a voluntarism of beliefs will value the progress of the larger community

over dogmatic adherence to particular doctrines. Its goals will be to seek to mobilize

all people toward co-operation with established norms and procedures of the given

culture and state, norms and procedures which match the highest standards of their

own religious beliefs. The organization may seek change in societal order, but it will

do so in concert with state and the activity of established forces. For this reason, I will label these groups **establishment** groups.

Establishment groups value **progress over dogma**. Their goals are to work within established institutions and processes to effect progressive humanitarian change. Groups of this sort typically work within the established hierarchies and functions of the establishment, but go further to bring about societal change along the lines envisioned by the ideals of the religion. Establishment groups typically include corporatist religious organizations, such as officially recognized churches in western European countries. They may also be observed among charitable organizations that pursue development projects and community services both as independent associations, such as the large scale development organization World Vision, the Unitarian Service Committee, or the Mennonite Central Committee, and under the umbrella of religious hierarchies, such as the Roman Catholic Caritas charity. Establishment organizations also include ecumenical organizations that seek to bring multiple discourses together in favour of moral convergence, such as the World Council of Churches.

An organization that is positive toward the plural culture but accepts an inherited (identity) conception of belief accepts the importance of maintaining both the authority of inherited religious community standards and boundaries and acquiescence with ruling institutions. Thus it will seek to participate within the culture while keeping a separate organizational structure that serves to perpetuate the authority of the community. So it will develop lines of authority friendly to the

established community and seek to maintain community solidarity through deal

making at the elite level of the authority structure. These are **deferential** groups.

Deferential groups **value acquiescence and authority**. Their goal is to preserve

their own community and its position within established parameters and institutions.

Deferential groups thrive on the simple nominal commitment of their members

without making innate and intimate demands upon the voluntaristic attachment of the

members to the key defining rules of the community. Members may well be attached

to the images and heritage of the organization, as their membership implies, but they

do not seek to radically transform the society to an image of perfection presented by

the ideals of the organization. Their goals are typically less ambitious. They are

satisfied to work within the society to ensure the perpetuation of their own subculture.

Deferential organizations among Christians include the hierarchical and universal

churches that provide the heritage of Christianity since the early schisms of the early

patrician age: the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental

Orthodox Churches with their venerated traditions and authorities. Whereas the

adherents of these organizations often differ with the positions of their leadership,

they remain committed to the traditions, practices, and sacred authority of the

organizations, granting the deference on which they thrive.

An organization that is negative toward the plural culture but also believes in a

voluntarism of action values the literal and fundamental application of religious

beliefs on an individual basis. It seeks to change hearts before changing institutions,

for it holds that the soul is the repository of sacred authority. Although it may hold

that institutional change is important, because of its focus on voluntarism, individuals

become more important than communities or their institutions. This is an **evangelical**

group.

Evangelical groups **value literal and complete application of religious beliefs**

on an individual basis. Their goal is to change hearts, and thereby to change society,

typically through attempts at proselytization and persuasion. The two common

criticisms of these groups are their intense fervour to accomplish that which they hold

sacred to the extent of defiance of societal norms (sometimes labeled fanaticism) and

their assumption that a "true" Christian (for example) is one that takes traditional

tenets and doctrines most seriously. Such groups are typically critical of the

traditional ("mainstream") groups for their reliance upon tradition and community.

Typically found among these are the conservative branches of modern Protestantism,

having emerged from the late Reformation or the holiness movements of the late

nineteenth centuries: non-conformists such as Baptists and Pentecostals, and modern

non-denominational movements that may be found throughout the world, even within

the traditional churches that both contend and survive on their fervour.

Finally, an organization that accepts identity as a core tenet of belief but equally

views the larger culture in a negative way will set itself against received hierarchies

and institutions in an attempt to maximize change in favour of its own group. With a

strong notion of group coherence and self-interest, it will seek to accomplish the

highest degree of freedom for group autonomy and authority. Although it may share

some evidence of deference, the immediate result of its countercultural message

means it is most likely to be disaffected with hierarchies and motivated to effect

change for the community with little regard to received traditions. This is an **identity-based or nationalist** group.

Identity-nationalist groups **value group solidarity over hierarchical obedience** to the traditions of the religion or to the society of which it is a part. Their goal is to enhance governmental recognition of their own ethnicity. Christian nationalist movements of this sort have been observed in varying locales, but it is the development of the Christian nationalist movements in resistance to pan-Arabism in Lebanon that will be considered in Chapter Five that I feel best epitomizes this sort of group.

Of course, religious groupings can be characterized by far more than their emphasis on volition and orientation toward a plural culture. At issue here are **core beliefs**, the foundational tenets of religious conviction. Committed pacifists will not form a group intent on violent action. A group of people committed to following a given set of rules aimed at spiritual fulfillment will seek to apply these rules emphatically, whether that means institutionalized fasting, prayer times, or water baptism. Beliefs which emphasize social justice or humanitarian concern will lead groups to outward community service as opposed to those that stress the maintenance of individual and community institutions of religion. These factors of core belief alter the value of organizational factors and help to set goals within the organization for contact with the outer society. They set the standard for deviation within the general type of group and help to provide explanation for differences that cannot be explained without reference to "contingency and chance".

STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Political Environment

Given such a typology of group consciousness, how might one integrate it into the analysis of politics more generally, and into the milieu of developing societies and Middle Eastern societies more specifically? How do these groups participate in the larger polity, given the nature of civil society and state-society relationships within the developing world? A second category of analysis is the set of opportunities and constraints set up by the larger **political environment**. Here we are most concerned with the question, what is possible under the present circumstances? To an extent, what is possible is just as much a matter of perception as it is one of empirical fact, and thus it also relates to belief. Nonetheless, factors external to the beliefs of individuals in a society place limits upon what is actually possible in terms of controlling the political culture of a larger society. Equally, factors of material deprivation and institutional breadth and depth place physical limits upon what these groups may accomplish. Among the more important of these constraints are the nature of state-society relations, in other words, what is the accepted (and legal?) form of societal organization? Are groupings of civil society, with their own institutions, budgets, publications, etc., condoned, accepted, or banned? Is the state able to act without direct resort to societal actors or is it beholden to classes, groups, or kinship networks within the society? At another level, one might ask, what is the state of transnational interaction? To what extent are there external means by which the confines of state-society relations might be bypassed? To what extent might

indigenous beliefs be bolstered or conditioned by the prevailing international environment?

Politics in developing states are guided by several pathologies that must be considered. Among these are hindrances to the **level of democratic and institutional development**, along with the level of **regime (state) autonomy**. As Lisa Anderson and others have pointed out, the establishment of political institutions in developing societies of the Middle East is still incomplete, a legacy of the artificial boundaries and institutions imposed during the formative phase of state creation.[15] In the absence of fully formed democratic institutions and mechanisms of governance, organizations and groups in civil society achieve prominence within the political system. Regimes are often more vulnerable to societal action and seek to negotiate terms of survival with various groupings within that society. The nature of these arrangements often set the stage for the participation of each of the groups within that society. Various levels of state-society relations with regard to state autonomy are observed - Joel Migdal points to multifarious outcomes from "integrated domination" - where "the state as a whole (or possibly even other social forces) establishes broad power and... acts in a coherent fashion"; to "dispersed domination" - where "neither the state (nor any social force) manages to achieve countrywide domination and in which parts of the state may be pulled in very different directions."[16] In a similar way, institutional development within developing states runs anywhere along a continuum of fully democratic to less democratic. Robert Dahl suggests that the level of public contestation in government and level of inclusiveness of the public in decision-making may define the level of overall democratization, and thus that the

measure of democratization may be considered ordinal.[17] Most developing countries

fall short of full democratization on both counts. Nonetheless, many adopt

democratic forms at varying levels of effectiveness.

In the cases that ensue, we find varying levels of institutional and democratic

development and state autonomy. In Lebanon, state institutions have been created

and have operated for years in an atmosphere of low public legitimacy and

confidence. The result has been a weak state, often unable to counter aggressive and

often violent social forces that seek to ensure their own influence. In Palestine, the

controversial establishment of a Jewish state without the concomitant creation of an

Arab Palestinian homeland left a people without a state or institutions and little in the

way of a pattern of democratic governance but a nascent national resistance

movement. In Egypt where representative institutions exist but state decisions are

made to ensure the perpetuation of the regime without strong contestation from social

actors. In each case, challenges to state consolidation favour the emergence of certain

types of groups and systems of engagement.

The markedly low level of democratic norms at play in Middle Eastern societies

has sparked a vigorous and continuing debate over the influences of various

phenomena that militate against further democratization. Explanations include the

political effects of rentierism,[18] peculiar institutional resilience[19], and the continuation

of interstate conflict and regional ideology.[20] In addition, the singular influence of

Islamic norms has arisen time and again as a core of the explanation for more stunted

democratic development in this region. Illiberalism demonstrated by Islamist groups

and their demands for *shari'a* remain a key plank in an argument that links

intolerance with illiberalism.[21] Each of these influences may have an effect upon the lack of democracy, although no one of them on its own adequately explains the region's resilience to democratization and liberalization. Yet non-democratic and illiberal norms do not in themselves circumscribe the work of various social forces, and though civil society may not take the form that it does in developed societies, these actors remain a force to be reckoned with.[22] Where social forces exist with a high degree of maneuverability and freedom due to legal permission and status within a society, non-state actors achieve a high level of prominence. So among Lebanese, the state has remained an actor of relatively secondary importance until the last decade, and its resurgence following the civil strife of the 1970s and 1980s, as we shall see, is bound up with what is popularly perceived to be a less democratic regime. More democratic states are more likely to bequeath status upon non-state actors, but in non-democratic states, dispersal of power and less stable autonomy also gives them higher status. The nature of **public opinion** and the prevailing religious-philosophical climate also acts to attenuate the actions of groups in society, leading to public silencing, contention, or vociferous support, depending upon the extent of control maintained over media, speech, and movement. While each of the cases we will consider remain relatively free with regard to these measures, periodic constraints on freedom of speech and assembly are clearly used to maintain the pre-eminence of the state in the competitive political realm.

Obviously, developing states also suffer from pathologies of **economic underdevelopment**, chronic unemployment, and technological and financial dependence on the developed world. Financial challenges contribute to desperation,

low levels of education, and a lack of resources to contact and confront dominant

elites. Minority religious groups are motivated in large measure to maintain their

material position or to improve their lot, causing them to base demands upon basic

material necessities. These imperatives of material inequality allow some to increase

the tone of kin and community within religious groups and contribute to venality,

corruption, and deal making between religious leaders and regimes. They also

motivate transnational organization and alliances with wealthy elements in Western

countries and regional heavyweights.

Since the 1960s the reality of underdevelopment in non-Western societies has led

many analysts of the international political economy to stress the place of developing

countries in the **international political and economic order**. With the advent of a

growing scholarship recognizing the importance of international trade and investment

links, new military and information technologies all associated with the phenomenon

of globalization, this factor has become central to most coverage of politics in the

developing world. The level of integration into the international economy, and the

marginalization of developing states, constrain and affect both international and

domestic policy. This in turn relates to other issues of state autonomy and sensitivity

to domestic organizations with ideological, financial, or ethnic ties to other players in

the international economic order.

Unions of belief with like-minded groups contribute to a growing

internationalization of religion. Examples run from Iranian funding for Hezballah in

Lebanon, to Christian mission organizations entering into strategic partnerships with

national and seed organizations throughout the developing world, to Muslim World

League publicization and promotion of the plight of coreligionists in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Although access to a larger international economic order facilitates and in some respects directs focus upon these groups, global interest feeds their continued salience both in the region and globally. Crystallization of these alliances through friendships and shared beliefs magnifies the effect of beliefs at every level: domestic, regional, and international. It also serves to mold and shape the continuing influence of beliefs upon these groups, as feedback effects flow from source to outside interests and from outside interests back to the source. In this respect, the sensitivity of **international public opinion**, particularly among powerful international players, is important to the development of these groups.

Finally, one must consider the weight of relative **demographics** in providing belief-groups with political potency. As we shall see, Christians are a marginal constituency in many Middle Eastern countries, with the obvious exception of Lebanon. It would stand to reason that the larger a confessing group, the more likely its notions will reach the mainstream ideology of the larger polity. Nonetheless, the political environment may provide opportunities for the strengthening of certain groups of the coalescing of smaller groups so as to provide important alliances. Thus it is important to take note that demographics must be understood in relation to the existence of other groups of like status. We will see that Lebanon, a country of minorities, has previously provided ample opportunities for the assertion of minority claims among the Christian population. Not so Egypt, where the majoritarian religious impulse has lowered the goalposts for the Christian minority. Nevertheless, even relative demographics are insufficient to understand the potency of a religious

group that has a more concentrated orthodoxy that encourages political action of one sort or another, as we shall see.

RESULTS: SYSTEMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Each of the variables we have considered has a role to play in determining the interaction of key Christian groups in the cases that we are to consider, what I will term **systems of engagement**. Groups are largely determined first by their set of core beliefs, including their orientation to pluralism and their emphasis on voluntary commitment. However, such groups must work within a given society. Their impact will have some relationship to their relative proportion of the population. Furthermore, their role is likely to be either encouraged or circumscribed by the level of state autonomy or their own resources determined by the state of the economy and domestic division of labour. Finally, either they will be strengthened or weakened, or even ignored by an international order that increasingly affects the developing world. The interplay of individual and group beliefs and permissive and motivational influences from the domestic and international political environment act to steer religious groups toward various systems of engagement, ranging from aggressive national or ethno-religious claims, to less aggressive claims, to accommodations with the larger society, to pluralist social concern.

1) Competitive Nationalistic, Patrimonial, or Kinship Systems

Countries with a low level of institutional development and unconsolidated democratic norms provide natural shelters for the incubation of identity-based

religious groups. The absence of democratic norms feeds into the natural inclination of these groups to seek communal mobilization and to extract their demands from the larger political system. The combination of a high degree of communalist commitment and a low level of voluntary or reformist spirit with institutional stasis and poverty is a crucible for identity-based groups no longer satisfied with the operation of governance. Hence it is not surprising that developing countries are often subject to strongly nationalistic religious groups that use identity as a platform for their demands.

In this system of engagement, groups compete for material advantage on the basis of strong internal cohesion. Claims are made on the basis of group identity and exclusivity. Interreligious relationships are undertaken with a view to the equality of group demands, but in-group need for superiority does not allow for compromise in the form of secular or non-sectarian government. The vision of religious relationships does not value interreligious proselytism so much as the maintenance of a religious "status quo". Hence, a focus upon identity over voluntarism is likely to lead to this type of system. Claims to national privileges among religious groups may be **aggressive**, matching religious identity to territory and divine inheritance, and backing up these claims through armed force, irrespective of the doctrinaire application of other religious tenets. Equally, in countries with relatively stronger state institutions these claims may be supported within competitive institutions, usually meaning **lobbying or contestation** at the elite level. What is perhaps most remarkable about this type of system is the association of religious claims with

material assets, as these become the symbols and tangible outliers of religious identity.

The existence of religious groups in a competitive nationalistic system of engagement is common in developing countries. Not surprisingly, the high level of non-volitional commitment to religion and the presence of multiple grievances among religious minorities in the Middle East also contribute to the large number of identity-nationalist religious groups and encourages the spread of these competitive nationalistic systems of engagement. Among the cases that we will examine, Christian groups in Lebanon have tended most clearly toward this pattern during the period from independence in 1943 up to the escalation of the civil war of 1975-6 into the prolonged crisis of the 1980s, as we shall observe in chapter five.

2) Neo-Millet Systems

Not all Middle Eastern states suffer the same lack of provision in the case of institutional development. Furthermore, not all Middle Eastern Christians, in spite of their emphasis on identity rather than voluntaristic commitment in defining their Christianity, are satisfied with membership in nationalistic Christian movements. Those who are friendly toward the institutions of governance and more or less satisfied with the institutional apparatus of power that govern them, are likely to form organizations that plug them into the political system without directly challenging it. In European countries, governments tend toward establishing corporatist organizations out of these groups. In the Middle East, a slightly distinctive form

obtains, resting on the traditional establishment of religious communities, known as *millets*.

The heritage of the Ottoman-era *millet* system, in which Christian and other non-Muslim groups were granted autonomy within their insular communities, is implicit in modern attempts to co-opt and secure the support of Christian groups and organizations. This system requires high internal cohesion, a leadership recognized both by the official (secular) authorities and by the group membership. Hence, deferential groups encourage such a system. High focus upon identity minimizes dogmatism and the higher tolerance for sacred authority engendered by identity-based movements facilitates the continued dominance of specific elites. The operation of such a system in modern republican states is what I will call a *neo-millet* system.

The neo-millet system generally takes the form of an elite accommodation between a regime and the group. The leadership of the Christian group co-operates to uphold the regime while the regime agrees to give leaders of the group special privileges to represent the Christian community. This system is most stable in areas where Christian communities are united doctrinally and philosophically yet form a modest minority of the population. Greater sectarianism allows secular regimes to play one group against another, increasing the potential for competitive relations between and among religious groups. Within the groups themselves, this can be manifested in two distinct ways: one is complete **separatism**, the isolation of the group from the larger culture in cloistered, self-constituted communities, and the other is a more integrated **elite accommodation approach** where the community

remains mixed with the larger society but maintains internal legal autonomy from others in specific social concerns.

Non-volitional and deferential acceptance of the status quo characterizes many groups in the Middle East, and has for some time given the longevity of *millet* communities in the majority Muslim environment. The neo-millet system is the most common and the most important system of engagement among Middle Eastern Christians, as we shall see. Its application can be seen among all of the largest traditional denominations in most Middle Eastern countries, from the Orthodox Churches to the Roman Catholic and Uniate Churches. The larger churches tend to take the approach that favours elite accommodation whereas subsidiary units, most importantly monastic movements, tend to favour complete separatism. In countries where these organizations form the peak groups among Christians, the overall system of engagement can be said to be a neo-millet style. We will observe such systems in Egypt, post-Ta'if Lebanon, and by and large among the Palestinians.

3) Secular and Non-sectarian Systems

Countries with strongly developed institutional and democratic norms are most likely to encourage the participation of voluntaristic groups. While voluntaristic groups may be found in any sort of polity, they thrive and develop within a system that recognizes diversity and encourages self-organized groups that blossom out of the individual and collective spiritual quests of their members. Restrictive controls on civil society activity strangle their development and evolution. Corporatist controls tend to centralize and codify their development so as to restrict its ebb and

flow. In pluralist environments with stable central power, voluntaristic religious movements of the evangelical and establishment varieties are able to grow in number and complexity. These typically involve the burgeoning "low" religious movements of small-scale charitable organizations, urban self-help networks, larger-scale lobby networks, and mission and development organizations.

Religious groups may also favour a system in which the government has been stripped of any official role in arbitrating between them or in imposing any sort of notion of religious identity. In this case, the authorities are encouraged to employ secularist visions of nationhood and religious groups avoid such claims in favour of working within the system to shape popular philosophy and policy. Those who claim an identity of concern for nation-wide and interreligious dialogue and co-ordination are especially likely to favour a secular framework. These groups may attempt to make contact with the secular state through **seeking involvement in the secular institutions** on an individual basis or by appealing to non-sectarian institutional solutions and arrangements. On another level, groups may remain uneasy about direct involvement with the secular nation-state and instead seek to focus upon civil society organization with little or no direct contact with governing bodies, contacting the secular political culture through **pluralist social concern**. In this direction, the group retains their autonomy from the secular discourse of the government but does not typically turn this autonomy into a vehicle for direct confrontation with the authorities.

One of the single most important observations to make about the politics of Middle Eastern Christian groups is the paucity of secularist and non-sectarian

systems. In the cases that follow we will find small and relatively less influential groups in search of these systems of engagement. However, neither independent and individually inspired religious organization nor pluralist social concern have thrived in Middle Eastern societies for a variety of reasons, most importantly the restrictive associational regimes and the stunted level of democratic development. One must also consider the limited level of religious renewal, strong traditions of deference, and the stunted development of a voluntaristic approach to religion. It will be noted that there is a growing voluntaristic element in many of the Middle Eastern churches and among Middle Eastern Christians more generally. Much of this is related to native renewal movements within the churches and to the transnational associations that are transforming and changing the popular beliefs of Christians in Middle Eastern milieus.

The Impact of Systems of Engagement

As I have suggested, all other things being equal, identity-nationalist groups are most likely to seek national and ethno-religious independence of action through aggressive national claims or separatism. Deferential groups are most likely to seek pacific national claims, accommodations, or (perhaps) separation in order to preserve the religious establishment and community. Evangelical groups will seek separatism to preserve belief or pluralist social concern in a secularized society in order to spread beliefs. Finally, co-operative groups will bend toward either secular national claims or pluralist social concern that coincides with their core beliefs. To these tendencies, influences in the political environment act to mold and empower (or weaken) these

groups and further shape the climate of religious activity in plural societies. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the impact that specific turns of doctrine have upon these tendencies.

Such is the approach of the following case studies. Following an assessment of the background, relative demographics and political environment of each case, there are some assessments of prominent patterns of belief. This provides an explanatory introduction to the operation of Chrstian groups in three Middle Eastern societies: Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine. Finally, a concluding chapter will assess the findings and consider the future of Christian political activity and implications for politics in the cases and within the region.

1. BELIEFS

Emphasis on Voluntary Commitment
- Voluntaristic
- Identity-Focused

Orientation toward Pluralism
- Positive
- Negative

Nature of Core Beliefs
- Focus on Self (Self-Centred or Self-Sacrificial)
- Pacifism
- Level of Legalism

2. STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Political Environment:

A) Domestic Environment
- Level of democratic and institutional development, autonomy of state action
- Response of public opinion
- Level of relative economic development, distribution of wealth

B) Global Environment
- Role and significance to international economic order
- Importance and interest of key international actors
- Response of international public opinion

Relative Demographics
- Size and concentration of religious groups

1. DEFERENTIAL GROUPS
- High focus on identity, positive view of pluralism

2. IDENTITY GROUPS
- High focus on identity, negative view of pluralism

3. EVANGELICAL GROUPS
- High focus on voluntarism, negative view of pluralism

4. ESTABLISHMENT GROUPS
- High focus on voluntarism, positive view of pluralism

1. COMPETITIVE NATIONALISTIC, PATRIMONIAL, OR KINSHIP SYSTEMS

A. Aggressive National Claims
- Direct, "moral" claims to territory
- Exclusionary and kinship networks

B. Pacific National Claims
- Elite lobbying and pressure for influence and territory

2. NEO-MILLET SYSTEMS

A. Separatism
- Escape from national institutions
- Establishment of sanctuaries and refuges
-

B. Accommodationism
- Elite compromise and minimization of conflict with other groups

3. SECULAR AND NON-SECTARIAN SYSTEMS

A. Secular National Claims
- Appeal to secular ideas of nation
- Pressure for non-sectarian institutions and arrangements

B. Pluralist Social Concern
- No overt claims to institutional order
- Focus upon civil society action and transformation

[1] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribners, 1958), 27.

[2] Max Kaase and Alan Marsh, "Political Action: A Theoretical Perspective", in Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (London: Sage Publications, 1979), 41-9.

[3] Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, and R. Scott Appleby, "Explaining Fundamentalisms", Martin E. Marty, and R. Scott Appleby, ed., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 429-443.

[4] Here I echo the approach taken by David Little, who is interested in studying the connections between belief and intolerance. He equally emphasizes belief while arguing that this need not imply an indifference to material and other factors. See David Little, *Ukraine: the Legacy of Intolerance*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Peace Press, 1991).

[5] See Footnote 17, Chapter Two.

[6] A similar argument is made by E.D. Batzell in *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New York: Free Press, 1979), and followed up by Howard G. Schneiderman, "Religious Regimes and Elite Cultures in Colonial New England", Mart Bax, Peter Kloos, and Adrianuz Koster, eds., *Faith and Polity*, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

[7] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, volume 2, trans. Olive Wyon, (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 993.

[8] John Howard Yoder, "How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned: A Critique of *Christ and Culture*" in Glenn H. Stassen, D.M. Yeager, and J.H. Yoder, *Authentic Transformation*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996),31-89.

[9] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951), 64-5.

[10] Niebuhr, *Christ*, 87.

[11] Niebuhr, *Christ*, 143.

[12] Niebuhr, *Christ*, 153,166.

[13] Niebuhr, *Christ*, 194.

[14] Interestingly, Liah Greenfeld spends some time developing a very similar typology of nationalisms, classifying them on what she terms "the principle of

popular sovereignty" (analogous to attitude toward voluntarism) and "the principle of equality of membership" (analogous to attitude toward pluralism). Her resulting typology is reflective of a similar approach to religious discourses. See Liah Greenfeld, "The Political Significance of Culture", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 4(1), Winter/Spring 1997, 187-95.

[15]See Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986).

[16]Joel Migdal, "The State in Society: An Approach to Struggles for Domination", in Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Elisabeth Shue, *State Power and Social Forces*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 9.

[17]Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971), 6-7.

[18]For coverage of Rentierism, see Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: a Theoretical Framework", and Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World", in Luciani, ed., *The Arab State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 65-98, and Giacomo Luciani and Hazem Beblawi, *The Rentier State* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987). A later reassessment of rentierism is Terry Lynn Karl, *Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[19]Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East", *Political Science Quarterly* 106(1), 1991, 1-15.

[20]F. Gregory Gause, "Regional Influences on Experiments in Political Liberalization in the Arab World", in Brynen, Korany, and Noble, eds., *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, vol. 1 (Boulder, Lynne Riener, 1995), 283-306.

[21]Judith Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam", *Foreign Affairs* 71(2) (Spring 1993), 43-56, also Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, "Religious Minorities under Islamic Law and the Limits of Cultural Relativism", *Human Rights Quarterly* 9 (February 1987), 1-18.

[22]Mustafa Kamel el-Sayyid, "Civil Society in the Arab World", in Brynen, Korany, and Noble, *Political Liberalization*, 134-47, as well as Augustus Richard Norton, "The Future of Civil Society in the Middle East", *Middle East Journal* 47(2) (Spring 1993), 205-16.

Chapter Four – Egypt: the Church as Mother

"My church, my church, my church. It is my home, it is my mother..."
-from a Coptic children's song

Running along the eastern edge of the city of Cairo is a brown and dry ridge known as

the Moqattam Hills. The ridge runs nearly parallel to the Nile River to a point in central

Cairo. On a spur of the ridge at this point stands the medieval Citadel of Salah ed-Din,

dominating the skyline of the city. Behind the Citadel to the northeast are the sprawling

villages of Cairo's garbage collectors, the *zabellin*. These people are something of an

Egyptian institution, well-known for years of collecting the garbage of the city by donkey-

drawn carriage and recycling the waste - and doing so long before the idea of recycling

had occurred to authorities in Western societies. What is more, the vast majority of these

people are Christians of the Coptic Orthodox faith, migrants from Upper Egypt and the

underclass of the city. In the past decades, their numbers have swelled and they now

exceed 30 000.

Subject to continuing marginalization with the changing vicissitudes of civic policies,

the *zabellin* were moved to the ridge from the suburb of Imbaba in 1969. In more recent

times, the *zabellin* have been threatened by contractual garbage collection sponsored by

the government and by regulations eliminating their carts from the centre of the city.

Unaffected by Islamic strictures against raising swine, the *zabellin* live among their

livestock, including pigs and donkeys. Their shabby homes, known as *zarayib*

("pigsties") and the state of disrepair of the roads leading to their village, keep most of the

residents of Cairo away from the area and thus give the *zabellin* a sort of societal

autonomy from the majority population of the city.

Among the *zabellin*, a network of Christian charities and non-governmental organizations has developed initiatives that encourage craftmanship and social service among the local population. International movements have taken a special interest in the *zabellin* - a prime example is the orphanage established by the Sisters of Charity, the Roman Catholic order made famous by Mother Teresa of Calcutta. But the "garbage village" is best known for the complex of churches carved out of the cliff face, known locally as *deir anba samaan* - the monastery of St. Samaan. The complex of churches was first established as a means for the Coptic Orthodox Church to minister to the *zabellin*, whose prior migrations had brought them to an area that was devoid of churches. Despite high levels of migration from Upper Egypt to the area of Cairo and a burgeoning population, Egyptian law remains extremely restrictive with respect to church building, and there was no conventional way to establish new churches in the district. Working in relative secrecy, a priest and his followers had a series of chapels carved from the rock of the Moqattam hills adjacent to the village. Each proved too small for the growing number of *zabellin* who used them, until a massive open-air theatre was constructed in 1993-1994, capable of seating up to twenty thousand congregants. The "grotto church" was dedicated to the memory of St. Samaan, a medieval saint said to have inspired the Coptic Church in the tenth century of this era.

The story of St. Samaan is instructive. It has become a popular story and a metaphor for the survival of Christianity in the midst of a non-Christian society. Samaan was a holy man who was so mortified by his sin of gazing upon a woman with lust in his heart

that he literally obeyed the injunction of Jesus to remove his eye if it caused an offence.

He lived during the reign of the Fatimid Caliph Muizz l-id-Din Illah. One day, a Jewish

courtier challenged the Copts before the caliph to prove the truth of their scriptures,

which read that if one had the faith of a mustard seed, he could tell a mountain to move,

and it would (found in Matthew 17:20). The caliph told the Coptic patriarch that if he

could not prove the truth of his scripture, the Copts would be exiled, forced to convert, or

killed. The patriarch and his bishops spent the next three days in prayer and fasting, later

to be led to St. Samaan, who accompanied them back to the caliph. In the presence of the

royal court, the Coptic leadership prayed three times, and three times the Moqattam hills

moved backward. The community was saved from extermination.[1]

The "monastery" and the story associated with it are in many ways symbolic of the

relationship between Egyptian Christians and the state. Despite inordinate demands on

the part of the majoritarian state, Copts have sought to acquiesce to the demands and meet

up to the inherent challenges as a means of ensuring their survival. Throughout past ages,

Christian leaders have been a central part of this process, acting as intermediaries

between the community and the various rulers of the state, and lending a high degree of

internal unity and authority to the Coptic Orthodox Church. Relative organizational unity

backed up by high levels of community consciousness have allowed the church to remain

a "mother" to its adherents and so create an essentially stable neo-millet system.

Although the modern evolution of religious faith among Egyptian Christians has begun to

erode and alter this state of affairs, to a significant extent it remains the core of Christian

political action in Egypt.

BACKGROUND

Christians in Egypt are generally considered to be the largest non-Muslim religious

minority by numbers in the Middle East. A Christian presence in Egypt dates back to the

earliest development of Christianity, from the third to the seventh centuries of this era,

when Christians formed the vast majority of the Egyptian population. It is said that Saint

Mark, author of the gospel of Mark, brought Christianity to Egypt soon after the death of

Jesus Christ. Churches in Egypt grew to be very numerous during the later Roman era.

Many of the early church fathers and leaders came from Egypt.

By the fifth century, Egypt had become a nominally Christian country. Nevertheless,

this majority Christian population espoused an amalgam of differing beliefs over the

centuries, making Egypt the centre of various controversies. In the third century, a

schism emerged that divided the followers of Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus

Christ, from the disciples of Athanasius, who defended the view. Athanasius won the day

among the larger worldwide leadership of Christianity at the Ecumenical Council of

Nicea in 325, but doctrinal and popular divisions remained. Later doctrinal debates

flowed out of the Athanasian theology of Nicea and divided "miaphysite" Egyptian

theology from the diophysite theology that gained ground worldwide. The Ecumenical

Council of Chalcedon in 451 brought about the division of the larger body of

Christendom, and the Christian leaders of Egypt, led by Patriarchs Kyrillos I and

Dioscorus I, severed their links with outside coreligionists. The newly emergent and

independent (or, more properly, "autocephalus") church of Egypt became known as the

Coptic Orthodox Church, holding to a monophysite definition of Christ's nature. The

bishop of Alexandria, historically the most prominent among the Christian leaders of

Egypt, became the head of a national hierarchy, and was henceforth known as the

"patriarch" or "pope". The schism came without concomitant political division from the

Roman (and later Byzantine) Empire, and monophysite Copts became a persecuted

minority in the empire, alienated from the rule of the Emperor and from Greek and

Roman culture alike. Economic and bureaucratic decline in the later Byzantine period

caused widespread discontent in Egypt. The association of this decline with dynastic and

imperialistic quarrels between Byzantine and Sassanid overlords only served to further

divide Egyptians. Some accepted popular agreement with the continued rule of Eastern

Orthodox Byzantium, while others were influenced by a growing plethora of newer cults

of foreign origin. When the Muslim conquest came in 639-42, the majority of Coptic

Orthodox Christians were happy to welcome the Arabs as their liberators.[2] Even so,

many remained dissatisfied with the new regulations established by the Muslim conquest,

such as the *jizya* tax levied against non-Muslims, sparking major uprisings in 725, 739,

and 832 - all of which were put down with lethal force.[3] The later history of the Coptic

Orthodox Church is one of gradual decline in numbers and fortunes. Divided from the

rest of Christendom by choice and by fortune, the Church developed as an independent

national force working within the confines of a majority Muslim country.

Emerging from the Middle Ages with special connections to foreign colonial powers

solidified by the decrees of the Ottoman Porte in the middle of the nineteenth century,

Copts were among the first in Egypt to enjoy the fruits of industrialization and

modernization. The empowerment of Egyptian citizens through improved health care and mass education, as well as industrialization, served to improve the lot of the average Copt, as did their involvement with the British presence in Egypt. Copts became prominent under the colonial administration, and one - Boutros Ghali - rose to the level of Prime Minister in 1908, only to be assassinated in 1910. An unprecedented intersectarian crisis ensued, but the development of the Egyptian nationalist movement during and after the First World War met the political needs of both Copts and Muslims by tapping into high levels of nominalism and providing a non-sectarian national movement aimed at Egyptian independence. The nationalist movement provided a venue for Copts to find inclusion into the political mainstream, leading to increasing involvement in the governments of the 1920s and 1930s.[4] However, the increased politicization of Western missionary movements and a sense that the ruling Wafd Party was becoming dominated by Copts fed into a growing anti-Copt sentiment among the majority population.[5] As such, opposition to the establishment of the colonial administration and the monarchy was associated with opposition to wider participation among Copts in the administration.

Under the new nationalist regime established by Mohamed Naguib and Gamal Abd el-Nasser in 1952, the disenfranchisement of the greater part of the financial establishment had an important impact upon wealthier Copts, many of whose businesses were nationalized or otherwise confiscated. The new regime sought to redistribute wealth while concentrating power within the revolutionary council and (later) the executive of the Egyptian state. This meant an end to the parliamentary politics that had accommodated a moderate and secularist national movement and encouraged the

participation of Copts in the government. The discontinuation of democratic institutions

and suspension of rights to civil society association under the republican administration

have proceeded to further marginalize both Christian and non-Christian substate actors

alike.

Relative Demographics

The exact number of Egyptian Christians is a matter of significant controversy. The

government has historically posted the percentage of Copts in the Egyptian population at

around five or six percent, while the Coptic Orthodox Church estimates it at closer to 20

percent.[6] Both sides have plausibly argued that the other's estimate is doctored to suit

certain purposes.[7] Popular and press reports take various tacks in approaching the

subject. In his recent book chronicling the history of the city of Cairo, Max Rodenbeck

says that there are approximately a million Copts in the city today.[8] Assumedly this is

based upon the official government estimate. Yet the presence of a very significant

community of Copts in the middle class suburb of Shoubra alone (with a total population

of approximately three to four million people) would suggest a somewhat higher number.

The international press has increasingly been persuaded of a number around ten to fifteen

percent.[9] The practice fits into a general tendency to accept the unreliability of the

official numbers. Unofficially, most Copts will allow that they comprise somewhere

between ten and twenty percent of the population, and the lower figure seems as likely a

number as any. Accepting the figure of ten percent, the Copts would number around six

to seven million throughout the state of Egypt. Significantly, Egyptian Christians remain

the largest non-Muslim religious group in the Middle East and while their number has dwindled as a result of emigration to Western settler societies, the decline in relative numbers of the Christian population has not been as marked as it has been in Palestine or Lebanon.

Modern Egyptian Christians reflect the strong heritage of the Coptic Orthodox Church but nevertheless are mixed by sect. Over time, the Coptic Orthodox Church has remained dominant in Egypt, but Western evangelistic movements have won over several thousand adherents over the past few centuries. The Evangelical (*ingili*), Roman Catholic, and Anglican communities lead important social and political movements but remain small in number. The heritage of proselytism from the Coptic Orthodox and a continuing admixture that occurs between the Coptic Orthodox and other groups leads to the common practice of calling all Egyptian Christians by the word "Copt" (*qibt*, plual *aqbat*).[10] The practice is not especially confusing, as the vast majority of Egyptian Christians (around 95 percent) would consider themselves devotees of the Coptic Orthodox Church.[11] This doctrinal and organizational dominance communicates immense importance to the greater structure of the Church itself and bequeaths upon the patriarch (or pope) the status of spokesman for Christianity in Egypt.

Although there is some notion of racial homogeneity among the Copts, there is no racial or other moniker to distinguish them from other Egyptians. Copts are socially, economically, and professionally differentiated. While the ancient Egyptian Coptic language has some importance in their church liturgy, its popular usage is long since obsolete, and Copts use Egyptian colloquial Arabic in both sacred meetings and everyday

conversation. They are represented at all socio-economic levels. Many may be found among the upper middle class, especially in medical and pharmacological occupations and in private enterprise. However, they are also heavily represented among the urban poor, as in the case of the *zabellin* of Cairo.

There remain some areas of Egypt where the Copts are numerically dominant. In the governorates of Upper Egypt, such as Sohag, Asyut, and Minya, they remain a large proportion of the population. They do not form the majority in any one region or governorate, but in many towns and villages they make up close to 100 percent of the population. In more remote areas of Egypt - the governorates of Aswan, Luxor, the Sinai and the desert, Copts are far less numerous. Nonetheless, the intermixing of Copt and majoritarian Muslim groups in society at large leads most commentators to observe that everyday interaction eases religious distinctions in Egypt to a significant extent. Writing in the early 1960s Edward Wakin allowed, "the Copts are so thoroughly interwoven into the fabric of Egyptian society – geographically, sociologically, and physically – that they escape outside notice."[12] The metaphor of Egypt as an intricately interwoven society is a mantra of Coptic apologists. Whatever the nature of the religious mix in Egypt, it is not clearly associated with typical vertical or horizontal cleavages such as race, language, or class.

FACTORS OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND PATTERNS OF BELIEF

Political Environment

The Arab Republic of Egypt is an authoritarian presidential state with a praetorian government strengthened by a prolonged official state of emergency with a tendency to encourage societal freedoms while denying more than token access to government outside the governing party. The government is itself composed of civilians, but there remain close relations between the regime and the military and security services established with the revolution led by the Free Officers in 1952. The overall fragmentation of the state's control over potential threats to the regime has led to a system of government embodied by what Joel Migdal calls the "politics of survival": the suffocation of opposition elements and the configuration of alliances with other societal rivals.[13] The government maintains a hold over democratic institutions through single-party dominance and a strong technocratic civil service located in the central bureaucracy. Robert Springborg identifies the bases of the government's strength in the support of the military and the emergent economic elite that has benefited from open market policies since the 1970s.[14]

Overwhelming executive power resides with the President and his appointed cabinet. Although elections for the People's Assembly are held once every five years, significant voting irregularities and institutionalized constraints on the formation of new parties ensure the continued success of the ruling party. These severe limitations on party activism and civil society movements coupled with a low level of democratic and educational development limit the capacity of organized opposition to the government.

Thus all potential opposition to the regime, whether democratic or non-democratic in its orientation, is stymied by systemic controls and harassment.

The governing National Democratic Party thus dominates Egyptian politics, but not without providing some opportunity for opposition parties to form and contest elections. Among the opposition are the traditional liberal New Wafd Party and the leftist Tagammu. Islamist critics of the government, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, occasionally gain representation in the People's Assembly through running as independents or within the existing parties. Also, more fairly contested elections to professional organizations have provided opportunities for broader representation of Egyptian voices. They also provide opportunities for critics of the regime, especially the Islamists, to gain representation and to bring attention to their political projects.

Relatively liberal rules governing media freedom, coupled with unsystematic application of otherwise draconian laws governing associations, have assured a fairly vibrant set of civil society organizations in the form of media and small-scale development initiatives. In addition, the government extends legitimacy to larger non-governmental organizations to exist so long as they remain agreeable to the maintenance of the regime and subject to a high degree of regulation. These organizations include government-sponsored mosques and Muslim institutions such as al-Azhar University and the organized Christian churches. In turn, many of these actors seek to achieve alliance status with the regime in order to achieve their ends or to avoid official persecution or proscription. Others have found no quarter with the government and have established an organized opposition in the form of secretive Islamist networks and militant

organizations. Islamists have sought control of professional associations as the only

bastion of contested space, and militants have attempted to spread their message through

armed resistance and clandestine subversive activities.

In a climate where radical Islamist movements present the chief threat to the regime,

the government has alternately sought to set a secularist tone to its activity or a more

conservative "Islamist" one. With the continuation of strong Islamist and militant

operations against the government, the secular view has become preeminent. The

government has bolstered its credentials by concentrating upon economic development

through gradual reform and structural adjustment. This began in the early 1990s with the

repeal of subsidies and loosening of currency controls and moved on to privatization of

the larger government assets. The increasingly secular and neoconservative policies

favoured by the regime have led to dislocations that fuel the armed opposition groups, in

turn feeding a cycle of harsh authoritarian clampdowns and continued clientelism. The

beneficiaries of this are established Westernized elites and moderate and conservative

elements in partnership with the regime. Christian organizations also benefit to the extent

that they represent the established classes and agree to uphold this arrangement.

However, the Egyptian legal framework presents specific challenges for religious

groups, and for Christians in particular. The constitutional framework handed down

from the 1923 and 1970 constitutions established full equality and freedom of religion for

Egyptians. Nonetheless, there has been a consistent disjuncture between the ideal of

religious freedom and the exigencies of maintaining homogeneous religious institutions

in support of the regime. For example, Meir Hattina observes that while the 1923

constitution established freedom of religion, clause 13 stated that it will be protected "in

conformity with the usages established in Egypt" and clause 149 boldly stated, "Islam is

the official religion of Egypt."[15]

The laws governing non-governmental organizations require that non-governmental

organizations acquire official permission and registration. The registration provision

often becomes a significant barrier for organizations seeking legitimacy, as bureaucratic

delays and official suspicion force groups to remain in legal limbo for extended periods.

The application of draconian laws concerning the financing and activity of substate

groups has been highlighted through a few high-profile cases. Perhaps the most notable

recent episode involved the trial and imprisonment of famed sociologist Saad Eddin

Ibrahim, founder of the Cairo Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies. His arrest

on charges of defaming Egypt and accepting funds from foreign organizations illegally in

2000 was an obvious missive fired to cow dissenting political organizations, even though

he was eventually exonerated just over two years later.

For non-Muslim and secular organizations there are usually requirements that the

organization provide equal treatment irrespective of religion, meaning that the activities

of these groups are to benefit Muslims and Christians on an equal basis. Associational

laws were rescripted in June 1999 (Law 153) but remained equally restrictive, stipulating

that non-governmental organizations must not be political and may not receive funds

from foreign sources.[16] Nonetheless, a judicial decision the June 2000 declared the laws

unconstitutional and restored the old law. In practice, there were few general

ramifications resulting from this legal impasse, yet in June 2002 an equally harsh law

came into place to replace the 2000 law.[17] The legal framework has meant the

establishment of a clientelist network of NGO registrants and a bias toward moderate

Muslim and secularist groups. Whereas Muslim groups may operate charitable

organizations catering almost entirely to Muslims, Christian groups are obliged to go

beyond their own community to serve the majority population.

Although churches are meant to be sanctuaries for Christians and to serve as centres

of social services and networking, the Egyptian legal code hamstrings the progress of

church building and repair. The centuries-old *Humayun* Decrees and a Ministerial

Rescript drafted in the 1930s have severely limited the expansion of Christian

organizational presence. The original decrees were a part of the "capitulations" adopted

by the Ottoman government over its domains. They slap a series of restrictions on church

building that force churches to go through several levels of bureaucratic red tape before

either building or repair may take place. Although recent changes to the law and a change

in the attitude of the regime have accelerated the pace of approval, it remains common for

Christians to have to wait over ten years for a final decision on their application for a

permit.

Beliefs

The Christian churches in Egypt are the inheritors of traditional politics of ascription

and identity-based religion stretching back to the apogee of Christendom in the East. The

imposition of the *jizya* tax levied on non-Muslims under the successors of the prophet

made it necessary to identify Christians as against Muslims, and this practice of labeling

evolved into inherited divisions between adherents of both religions. Before long,

religion had become an appelation acquired at birth. Egypt was divided into Muslims,

Jews, and Christians. Communities were based upon the mass acceptance of the

authority of the community as exemplified in the organization, the hierarchy, and the

practices of the Church.

None of this was unique to Egypt, but some singular practices did emerge there so as

to further solidify the grip of mass identity consciousness. Stress on the communal

identity was illustrated by sacramental baptism, the eucharist, and the practice of tattooing

a cross on the inside of an infant Copt's wrist. All of these practices remain today. In

addition, the government requires all citizens to carry an identity card that lists the

religion of their birth, a detail that cannot be removed. The continued association of birth

and identity with religion is often further assured by the choice of a common Christian

name that labels the individual - some common choices include George (or the Arabic

Girgis), Boulos, Boutros, Shenouda, Ramsis, Milad, and Matta. By and large, individual

Copts accept this inevitability of religion. No matter their personal acceptance of the core

doctrines of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Christians accept their status in religion as a

simple fact of life. A question of religion is easily answered by a gesture to the wrist.

This comes in addition with a strong identification with the history of Egypt. This,

and the retention of the Coptic dialect of Greek encouraged identification with the

governance of Egypt, no matter their disenfranchisement. For a Copt, both the Western

and Eastern Churches were foreign, as was the Muslim regime installed with the

conquest. Loyalty to an historic Egypt and to the Coptic brand of Christianity guided

popular thought about the establishment. Today, Copts will pass by ancient monuments of the pharaonic period and sigh for the glory that was Egypt.

An established church hierarchy, acting autonomously from other Orthodox churches since before the Muslim conquest, allowed the Egyptian Church to thrive despite its disestablishment. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church (or even the Chalcedonian Orthodox churches dominant elsewhere in the Middle East), the Egyptian church had a short history of association with state institutions. The separation of church and state among Christians in Egypt was never an issue, for the church and the state had been disconnected since the foundation of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Nonetheless, the tradition of sacramental leadership goes as far back as the early foundation of the church in Egypt. The *millet* system employed by the Ottomans cemented this through giving the Coptic Church hierarchy specific rights as the representatives of Christianity in Egypt. The system continues to thrive under popular theology that stresses the importance of established authority and the unity of Egypt. Copts demonstrate consistent day-to-day veneration of the clergy and hierarchy of the church through their actions. Most Copts bow and kiss the hand of a priest, monk, or bishop upon greeting him. The priest becomes closely involved with the leadership of communities in both rural and urban environments. Priests relate how they are often called upon to arbitrate simple disputes between coreligionists. Even more significantly, they often accompany the mayor or local judicial officials in order to give an air of religious credence to official business.[18] This acceptance of the dual role of sacred and temporal authority in concert serves as a platform for Christian reaction to the larger society.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that the Coptic Orthodox Church is simply

a nominal entity. Church attendance, for example, has not declined among the adherents

of the Church to the extent observed in various Orthodox denominations elsewhere in the

Middle East. High levels of church attendance have been maintained B and even

strengthened -- through an activist reform movement that can largely be attributed to the

"Sunday School movement" that was established in the early 1900s. The development of

the lay council and various reforms aimed at including laypeople in the leadership of the

Coptic Orthodox Church prompted a rethinking of the forms of Christian doctrinal

authority. Conscious of the growing popularity of the Presbyterian evangelical movement

among educated and upper class Copts, a prominent lay leader, Archdeacon Habib Girgis,

director of the Coptic Seminary, launched a programme designed to link elementary

educational instruction with formal training in church teaching and theology. The

programme was implemented in many large centres and grew to become the most active

venture of the Church. A group of young refomists graduated from the Sunday Schools

eager to awaken a Coptic renaissance and to bolster the clergy of the Church, long

criticized for perceptions of venality and apathy. The publication of the Sunday School

Magazine established in 1946 increased the profile of the leaders of the movement even

as it spurred a strong revitalization of Coptic spirituality. This movement and the larger

revivalist spirit that its leaders have infused into the church, is commonly known as the

Coptic revival or renewal.[19] It stands as marked evidence that while on the surface,

Coptic organizations appear unchanged since time immemorial, there is an internal

evolution at play within the key minds of the Church leadership and laity.

Chief among the leaders of the Sunday School movement and the Coptic revival was a

group of reformist-minded clergy, themselves the product of the early Sunday School

movement. One leader was Nazir Gayed, a young educated activist and former military

officer, who graduated from the theological college in 1949 and took to the life of an

anchorite monk in the Wadi Natrun. Another, Matta al-Meskeen (Matthew the Poor), led

a group of hermetic monks in the Wadi Rayan area southwest of Fayoum. These two,

alongside a collection of new leaders taking active roles in developing church spirituality,

led a major revivalist movement that was supported by the patriarch Kyrillos VI.

Associated with the revival was the appointment of several of these leaders, mostly

anchorite monks, into the key central bishoprics. Nazir Gayed was persuaded to give up

his monastic life and appointed Bishop of Education in 1962, and took the name

Shenouda. Matta el-Meskeen was elevated to the rank of Abbot and given charge of the

dilapidated monastery of St. Macarius in Wadi Natrun in 1969.[20] Shenouda developed

the habit of holding weekly audiences for young people and discussing individual needs

and day-to-day concerns in light of Christian teaching. Matta el-Meskeen became a

prolific author, writing scores of mongraphs on various issues of interest to Coptic life

and theology. In October 1971, Shenouda crowned his growing popularity by being

chosen to lead the entire church as the patriarchal heir of Kyrillos VI. Now Pope

Shenouda III aimed to increase the profile of the church and spread more activist and

voluntarist involvement through spreading social services and vocational education

opportunities through clinics and community centres.[21] At the same time, his educational

and consciousness-raising initiatives were associated with the emergence of public

activism through conferences held in January 1977. The conferences focused on the

status of copts and their grievances with church building controls and the growing

Islamist sentiment that threatened to reduce them to second-class citizens and flowed into

the larger storm of dissent against Sadat=s policies of *infitah* and flirtation with Islamist

political philosophy.

Many have pointed to the distinctions between the politicized activism of Shenouda

and the more spiritualized reformist spirit followed by his predecessor Kyrillos VI and by

prominent church leaders such as Matta al-Meskeen.[22] However, it would be unwise to

overdraw their differences. Father Matta's writings emphasize the distinction between the

temporal realm of politics and the spiritual realm of Christian faith, but they do not

challenge the claim of the Church to being "salt and light", or an influence upon the

society and culture of which they are a part. Father Matta's emphasis on spiritual rather

than temporal liberation influences the monastic voice of self-sacrifice that forms the

background of the Coptic Orthodox Church's cooperation with the Egyptian government.

In one of his monographs, Father Matta likens the place of the church to the crucifixion

of Christ: "[t]he church which has temporal power cannot taste a crucifixion which is

forced upon her; for man cannot be crucified except through weakness, like the Master of

all, who 'was crucified through weakness.'"[23] The voluntarist spirit that drives Father

Matta's work does, however, challenge the power of the community and emphasizes the

importance of the individual in relationship with God. These ideas champion a nascent

evangelical or cooperative vision within Egyptian monasticism. The movement of the

monastic spirit toward a more evangelical vision is a hallmark of Coptic spirituality and

forges ideational links with the less-established Churches. In the words of one reformist bishop, "We have driven people from the cross. Now we must bring them back."[24] Pope Shenouda III remains a part of this movement toward voluntarism, even as his authority derives from the deferential spirit that characterizes the larger Church. The strategy employed by Shenouda prior to the events of 1980, to which we will return, was driven by a strong attachment to the ideal of a Coptic community and his role as the central deferential authority. But his drive to renew the faith and dedication of parishioners throughout the 1980s and 1990s are much more appropo to the pope's beginnings in the monastic movement and relate to the voluntarist revival of which he is a part.

Thus, while Copts remain likely to concentrate upon their identity as Christians descending from the original population of Egypt, a voluntarist and evangelical mode has driven reforms within the church and provided impetus for an occasionally active anti-regime stance. Traditional deference has come under fire in recent times with the advent of mass education and the intermingling of various modernist denominations with the Coptic Orthodox Church. The reformist movement of the 1940s has seen its fruition in a hierarchy that is accepted more for its wisdom than from its inherited position. Modern Copts are more likely to associate their beliefs with an evangelical awareness of the Bible and its application for living. This contributes to an awakening sense of voluntarism that is the vanguard, if not the norm, of Christianity in Egypt.

THE OPERATION OF THE NEO-MILLET SYSTEM IN EGYPT

The Patriarchate of the Coptic Orthodox Church

The Coptic Orthodox Church and its related and interconnected agencies form the largest single bloc of Christian organization in Egypt. What is more, it represents the peak agency of a relatively unified Christian consciousness. This venerable church has a presence in every corner of Egypt and mobilizes thousands at weekly masses and other services in established churches located in virtually every major centre. What is more, it is represented in monasteries and convents spread throughout the country. These churches and monasteries form the core of Christian associational life. A trip to a church on an average day will treat the visitor to a busy cacophany of events: weddings, funerals, masses, eucharist, or various social services, from community clinics to food banks. The church provides a safe community meeting place for individual Copts, a location for social networking and discussion. With a huge membership and the strongest established set of hierarchical and infrastructural institutions, the Coptic Orthodox Church has an immediate organizational advantage over other Christian groups in Egypt. Nonetheless, within the organization, varieties of orthodoxy stemming from the heterogeneity of core beliefs leads to a diversity of structure within a general theme. Under the auspices of the Coptic Orthodox Church, one may observe a plethora of subsidiary organizations and branches that shape Christian approaches to the political order in Egypt.

At the heart of the Coptic Orthodox Church is the Patriarchate, led by the pope and his staff, surrounded in turn by the Holy Synod and central organs of the Church. The

hierarchy and the Patriarchate's power over administering the affairs and properties of the church since the Islamic conquest has given them sole responsibility for personal status laws and the endowments of the church known as *awqaf*. But the special position of the Patriarchate remains dependent upon two foundations: the continued patronage of the state in a neo-millet system of administration and the continued acquiescence of the larger church, ensured by the loyalty of various organizations and personalities under the authority of the Patriarchate, not to mention the ongoing cooperation of minority Christian communities. The neo-millet activity of the Patriarchate is the natural outcome of its leadership of a relatively unified deferential Christian community.

Relations between the Patriarchate and the state have remained cordial and reciprocal over time. However, there have been occasional exceptions when the community is judged to be under severe attack, at which point the Patriarchate acts as a conduit for the criticism of the larger Christian community. What is more, it seeks to position itself as a moderate intermediate between the government and the Islamist opposition, affirming points of convergence with both while shoring up its position as the peak organized voice of Christians in Egypt. This strategy provides ideological alliances with both sides in an attempt to avoid being the target of government clampdowns or of opposition violence. Its success has been fairly remarkable since the dislocations that marked the later period of President Anwar al-Sadat.

The Patriarchate and the Sadat Regime

Under the republican regime established by Nasser and the Free Officers, the assets of

the Coptic Orthodox Church were frozen and the Patriarchate was severely limited in its

activity. The Patriarchate was further weakened by internal intrigue under Pope Joseph II

during the 1950s.[25] Nonetheless, the seeds of a more activist Patriarchate were sown

during this period with the advent of the Sunday School movement and the ascension of

the modernizing reform movement led by popular bishops, including the future Pope

Shenouda III. New attempts at liberalization under Anwar es-Sadat promised to alter the

direction of government policy toward the church and increased hopes that *awqaf*

properties might someday be restored and nationalization reversed so as to benefit the

average Copt.

But the resort to highly restrictive policies in the later years of the Sadat regime,

associated with a general economic malaise, gave fuel to grievances and led to violent

confrontations between militants, the government, and, eventually, the Coptic Orthodox

leadership. Sadat came to power amidst the fallout of the defeat of Egypt in the 1967

Middle East War and the concomitant disavowal of pan-Arabism and embrace of

conservative Islamist rhetoric at the mass level. In order to address the failures of the

prior regime, Sadat set out to redress the military defeat of 1967 and to reorient the

Egyptian economy and strategic choices so as to strengthen its regional position.[26] A

passable showing against Israel in the 1973 Middle East War and the decision to come to

separate terms with Israel served both to placate and to infuriate opponents of the regime.

Likewise, economic and social policies both weakened and ameliorated the position of

the regime. Sadat's *infitah* policies aimed at reversing the nationalist programme of his

predecessor. Associated with the reforms were structural adjustments that meant extreme

economic dislocations that led to a drastic decline in living standards and increases in the

price of basic commodities as subsidies were repealed. In hopes of marginalizing and

preempting the demands of Islamist opponents of the regime, Sadat increasingly spoke of

the need to bolster the Muslim credentials of the Egyptian government, presenting

himself as the true believer-president. This culminated with the introduction of *shari'a* as

the major source of constitutional law under revisions planned for 1980. The

encouragement of radical Islamist leaders spurred on by government friendliness and the

natural outcome of defeat in the 1967 Middle East War led to identity-based clashes

between Muslims and Christians, and there remain suspicions that Sadat condoned the

escalation of violence between religious groups as a means to deflect criticism of

government policy. Islamist militant groups grew in number and audacity, leading to the

attempted takeover of the military college in 1974 and the kidnapping and killing of a

former Minister of Awqaf by the *takfir w'al hijra* group in 1977.

Thus the accession of Shenouda III to the papacy was associated with a period of

extreme intercommunal and domestic turmoil in Egypt. The attempted arson of a

building being converted into a church in Khanqa, just north of Cairo, on Nov. 6, 1972,

led the new pope to despatch several representatives to pray and protest official policy

and the enmity of the local population. In response, local militants led riots and store-

burnings against local Copts.[27] Tensions arising from a constitutional document calling

for enshrinement of *shari'a* as the source of law in Egypt beginning in 1971 led Shenouda

to call for a conference of Christian leaders to assert the role of Copts in Egypt and to

condemn the integration of Islamic and state law. The event coincided with the repeal of

food subsidies and the eruption of massive "bread riots" in various locations, Christian-

Muslim clashes throughout Upper Egypt, and a church burning in Cairo, in January to

March 1977. The pope announced special fasts to focus Copts on the political situation

in September 1977. In March 1979, the Kasrayat al-Rihan church in Cairo was burned to

the ground.[28] In January 1980, several bombs were set off at churches in Alexandria and

public denunciations of Coptic disloyalty to Egypt came from a conference convened at

al-Azhar University.

In response, the pope decided to cancel Easter celebrations and retreat to the

monasteries in the Western desert, issuing a statement that expressed his concern about

the threats to Christians in Egypt implicit under the enshrinement of *shari'a* in the

constitution. President Sadat contributed to furthering tensions by announcing that the

pope was acting against national unity and seeking to establish a Coptic state in Egypt in

a speech on 14 May 1980. Continuing communal violence among Copts and Muslims in

various centres, and the tendency of the government to side with the militants, frightened

many Copts and led the Patriarchate to participate in mass demonstrations against the

regime.

Increasing suspicion of the Coptic minority among militant Islamists in the wake of

the President=s allegations were bolstered with the eruption of intersectarian clashes.

Copts were targeted by nationalistic Islamist militants who sought to undermine the

religious neutrality of the state, and by party representatives of the regime, which sought

to coopt popular support for the militants. The worst clashes of the period came in a

northeastern suburb of Cairo, *Zawiya al-Hamra*. The process of expropriation and

resettlement of predominantly lower class Muslims into the neighbourhood northeast of

the city centre set the stage for worsened relationships between the uprooted urban poor

and a few of the established population who happened to be Copts. When a local council

of the ruling party intervened to overturn the restoration of property to a local Copt, his

family responded by opening fire on Muslims using the land for evening prayers.[29] The

clash escalated and became a running skirmish that continued for three days. In the event,

17 people (including 9 Copts and 7 Muslims, as well as one unidentified) were killed and

over one hundred were injured.[30] This erupted into a wider crisis in mid-1981, with

large-scale demonstrations sponsored by opposition militants, moderate critics of the

regime, and the Coptic clergy alike. In August 1981, a bomb blast at the Masara Church

in Shoubra indicated the continuing strain that had emerged between the Coptic Orthodox

Church, the Islamists, and the increasingly Islamist-oriented government.

In the midst of the firestorm of dissent and widespread dissatisfaction with the regime

that erupted in mid-1981, Sadat's final actions served to eliminate all but the last vestiges

of support for his regime. Sadat's order for a massive clampdown on all associational

groups was associated with the arrest and detention of any and all critics of the

government. In addition to prominent intellectuals, opposition politicians, militants and

others, Sadat decided to decertify Pope Shenouda III and place him under house arrest in

a monastery in the Western Desert in September 1981. President Sadat was assassinated

the next month by an Islamist militant claiming to represent the Islamic *Jihad*

organization.

The actions of the patriarchate during the crisis became more combative as a defensive

reaction for protecting its neo-millet status. Nevertheless, the demonstrations did not take

the form of demands for territorial autonomy or substantial change within the established

system, despite claims to the contrary evoked by President Sadat. Rather, the demands

made by the Patriarchate throughout the continuing crisis related less to the proximate

material divisions between Copts and Muslims and more to the equal protection of

Christians under the law, especially the constitution. Other issues of importance were the

revision of the ministerial rescript of the *humayun* ordinances, inclusion of Copts in high

positions, and the toleration of publication of Coptic history and cultural literature and

media.[31] While the tone of the demands softened in response to Sadat's crackdown and

assassination, they remain the stated goals of the Patriarchate of the Coptic Orthodox

Church.

The Patriarchate and the Mubarak Regime

Under President Hosni Mubarak, the government has followed a policy of gradually

restoring the powers of the Patriarchate, just as the Patriarchate has set a course allying

itself with the regime and lowering the intensity of its criticism. The continuing

reciprocity reveals the strength of the Patriarchate derived from the deferential devotion

of the average Copt, as well as the tacit approval of the regime in acquiescing to Coptic

demands and protecting Copts from radical Islamist militants. There remain tensions

between the regime and the Patriarchate over the pace of reforms, but the neo-millet

system has largely remained intact.

Pope Shenouda was reinstated by the regime in 1985. The vocal criticism of the late

1970s has given way to more traditional avowals of partnership with the Egyptian

government and solidarity with the greater population of Egypt and the Arab world in

general. This follows a time-honoured practice of identifying the lot of the Coptic

Orthodox Church with the state of Egypt. In the 1940s, Coptic politician and journalist

Salama Musa elicited the memorable dictum "I am a Copt by religion and a Muslim by

fatherland."[32] Similar sentiment emerges from established Copts, such as prominent

author and philanthropist Milad Hanna, most famous for his book *Yes Copts, but*

Egyptians. The Patriarchate has followed through on the solidarity movement by rather

consistently allying itself with moderate voices in the regime.

At the same time, the regime has positioned itself more clearly as a neutral force

operating to control both Islamist and Coptic opposition. Legal and military crackdowns

against Islamist parties and militants throughout the late 1980s and 1990s gave it

common cause with Copts who were the usual targets of militant activity in Upper Egypt

and Cairo. Militants increasingly sought to extort *jizya* from hapless Coptic shopowners

in various Upper Egyptian centers. Furthermore, such financing activities were meant to

bolster efforts to destabilize the regime and to depose the government.

In March 1987 the burning of a mosque in Sohag became the impetus for growing

intersectarian feuds. Over the following decade, violent incidents increased in number

and scope, pitting militants against the government, often including Copts as targets of

Islamist fury. In Sept. 1988, arson at a church in Rod al-Farag, Cairo, was followed by a bomb attack on the Masara church. In January1989, the Islamist militant *gama'a al-islamiya* (Islamic Group) group attacked Copts in Minya. In March 1990, 48 Copt-owned shops were burnt in Abu Qirqas, Minya Governorate. Other attacks ensued in April 1991 in Minya and on the 4 May 1992, when 13 Copts were killed in the village of Sanabo, Asyut Governorate.[33] In January 1993, Isaac Ibrahim Hanna, the mayor of a small Upper Egyptian village, was gunned down in front of his home.[34] Increasing terrorism directed at Christian villagers in Upper Egypt and elsewhere fit into a broader series of attacks on government and security service targets perpetrated by militants, mostly members of the *gama'a al-islamiya* organization.

The government responded with security crackdowns on militants and their supporters, arresting and executing many, and killing several others in police raids and shoot-outs. The movement was effectively driven underground and exiled to foreign sanctuaries, from which it became involved in newly emergent international networks and managed to make an attempt on the life of President Mubarak in June 1995. Over the course of the 1990s, over a thousand Egyptians were killed in the conflict between the *gama'a* and the regime - the victims were divided mostly between security forces, Islamist militants, and Copts targeted by the militants. Far from challenging the militarization of the conflict, the Coptic leadership and individual Copts welcomed the involvement of central authorities in rooting out the *gama'a al-islamiya* and other militants while committing themselves to non-resistance, as Pope Shenouda remarked that "Christianity without the Cross isn't Christianity".[35] The Coptic Orthodox

Patriarchate accepted the general crackdown on the militants as a means of addressing the concerns of Coptic parishioners and supported the actions of the regime.

The government has reciprocated by bolstering the authority of the Patriarchate through legal sanctions and through improvements in the lot of the Church and protection of its holdings. Changes in the personal status law enacted in 2000 were drafted in consultation with the Patriarchate and served to consolidate the Church's authority in the matter of divorce, establishing binding rules that followed the Coptic Orthodox teaching on divorce.[36] Although leaders of the Coptic Orthodox Church occasionally complain about the unequal treatment the government affords to Evangelical and Orthodox Churches, a new acceleration of church building permits toward the end of the 1990s has benefitted the Church, allowing government and private sector sponsored renovation in locations such as the *al-Moallaqa* (or "hanging") Church in Old Cairo and the St. Bishoy Monastery in Wadi Natrun. In addition, the *awqaf* properties absconded by the regime in the time of the revolution have been in large measure restored.[37] Churches in urban areas are well defended by security forces. Official displays of the reciprocal arrangement are clearly in evidence as the Orthodox Patriarch is accorded a prominent place in most national and interreligious events, and generally recognized as the spokesperson for Christians by the national press. In early 2003, the reciprocal arrangement was further cemented with the declaration that from henceforth, Coptic Orthodox Christmas was to be a national holiday.

Although the alliance between the Patriarchate and the regime is clearly more positive when the government pursues a more secularist line, it does not necessarily flow out of a

phobia of conservative Islamist elements. Here it is important to distinguish between the establishment and conservative leaders of Muslim groups and those of the radical militants. Examples of the former range from the officially sanctioned Mufti and scholars of al-Azhar University to the conservative and sometimes radical leaders engaged at private and government-sponsored mosques, to the leaders of the officically banned Muslim Brotherhood. Examples of the latter are clandestine movements of modernist Islam that do not rely upon the traditional authority of individual ulema: these are the militant movements of the *gama'a* and Islamic Jihad, non-conformist groups submitting to a radicalized version of Islam involving armed force.[38] In a nod to points of convergence with Islamist opposition groups and conservative elements of the establishment, the Patriarchate has sought to forge relationships with Islamist elements on topics of public morality and dress.[39] These convergences show a studious compartmentalization of the Islamist groups themselves. Pope Shenouda III has frequently spoken out about important issues with the Grand Mufti of al-Azhar University and consistently offers a special *iftar* feast for Muslims at the close of Ramadan. The Patriarch is fastidious about fostering ties with the established voices among Islamic leaders, most importantly the scholars of al-Azhar. In addition, he has remained assiduously opposed to normalizing relations with the state of Israel. Furthermore, this has translated into an official ban on travel to Israel. This bolsters state suspicion and judicial limitation of contacts with the Jewish state.[40] It has also led to occasional defence of the actions of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement *Hamas*.[41] All in all, the Patriarchate seeks solutions negotiated between itself and the regime, with special

interest in fostering interreligious ties, as a means to maintaining its position within the

state.

Other Central Organs of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Operating parallel to the Patriarchate are the central organs of the Coptic Church: the

bishops and functionaries that compose the core of the Holy Synod and the *maglis al-

milli* (lay council). Among the bishops of the central offices are the closer associates of

the Patriarch and his own staff. The creation of general bishoprics in the central offices

of the Coptic Church has been a major vehicle for the advancement of specific bishops

(and official Church directions) over the last half-century. The most prominent of these

was the present Pope Shenouda III, who was called to the episcopate in September 1962

after a successful career in parish teaching and as a monk in the Monastery of the Syrian.

His experience with the Sunday School movement through the 1940s and 1950s gave him

a national reputation and his obvious talents recommended him for advancement. In the

last two decades, Bishop Musa has taken a similar lead position as Bishop of Youth. The

closer associates of the Patriarch form a cadre that stand as the chief members of the Holy

Synod (the collection of bishops and metropolitans of the Coptic Orthodox Church).

They uphold the traditions of deference for the central and Patriarchal offices of the

Church while forming the group from which heir-apparents to the Patriarch are likely to

emerge.

The *Maglis al-Milli* stands as the one essential institution of the Coptic Orthodox

Church that displays the effects of the modernist impact of lay education and involvement

in Church governance. Established in 1872, the *Maglis* manages the properties of the

Church on behalf of the membership. Ideally, it is meant to work in concert with the

hierarchy as custodian and steward of Church assets, but there have been occasional rows

between the two levels of adminstration. In the 1930s and 1940s, the involvement of a

prominent Copt and layperson, Habib Girgis, and the advent of the Sunday School reform

movement, gave new impetus to the *Maglis*. However, it also challenged the continuing

balance of power between the hierarchy and the lay leaders of the Coptic Church. For

former Patriarch Kyrillos VI, the solution to this impasse was the incorporation of the

strongest member of the laity, the prominent monks, into the upper echelons of the

Church leadership. As a result, the key leadership posts in the hierarchy have been

"clericalized", in the opinion of many scholars.[42]

Yet the "clericalization" observed within the church as a result of the movement of

reformist and conservative ministers into key leadership positions under Kyrillos VI and

Shenouda III has also tended to drive a wedge between lay leaders and the church.

Overall, establishment sentiment championed by secular Copts and the intelligentsia has

directed the Lay Council. This was most glaring when the lay council accepted the exile

of Shenouda to the western desert and endorsed the emergency measures enacted by

President Sadat in defiance of church clerics.[43] As of late, the lay council has returned to

a more deferential role in favour of the Patriarch, perhaps in response to the more

cooperative line taken by the pope and the higher clergy. Equally important is the

movement of reformers to key leadership roles among the laity, which has lent a

continuing stability to the relationship between the *Maglis* and the Synod and

Patriarchate.

Coptic Monastic Orders

Monastic orders have long been the established sanctuaries of education, spirituality,

and leadership for the Coptic Orthodox Church. Since all bishops in the Church are

former monks, there is a consistency of purpose that runs from the monastic orders

through the Synod to the Patriarchate itself. In this way, it is important to see the

monastic orders in their role as supplier and supporter of the established Church

hierarchy, in spite of their distinct development and separation from the society of Egypt.

Although parish priests and bishops run the everyday work of the Church in cities and

towns, monks are the established spiritual aristocracy of the Church. Monasteries are

symbols of the traditions of Christianity in Egypt and provide refuges for parishioners

seeking spiritual refreshment, meaning, and safe communities for rest away from the

majority culture. Monks are known for their search for solitude and self-denial, but

Egyptian monasteries are surprisingly full of life and one may typically find a burgeoning

mass of visiting urban Copts at a monastery. This continual interaction between average

Copts and monks gives them a social significance and pride of place that are not

immediately evident in the urban church setting. Thus there is an element of deference in

play in the monasteries of Egypt. But it is tempered by the heart of monasticism: the

retreat from a culture dominated by materialism and sensuality to places of solitude where

the soul might seek enlightenment and communion with God. Forsaking the culture of

the majority of both Christians and non-Christians, monks effectively dissociate from

their social roots in search of individual moral change. Their message is thus both deferential and evangelical in its content.

As a result, Monasteries provide a resource for the establishment of the Coptic Orthodox Church even as they exist as rivals to the spiritual authority of the establishment. Monks do not seek to address demands toward the larger community - this is left to the Patriarchate and the Synod - but they do occasionally emerge as rivals to the Patriarchate's direction within the Church. Occasional feuds between prominent monks and the Patriarchate break out. These are usually solved by internal mediation. Yet the rivalry often continues in the form of reform movements and discipleship within the Church. Perhaps the most prominent monk in recent times was Father Matta al-Meskeen (Matthew the Poor), already mentioned earlier in relation to his voluminous writings on spirituality and temporal authority. Even so, the general direction of the monastic orders is in clear tandem with the central hierarchy of the church, and matches the overall deferential atmosphere that characterizes popular theology.

Variations: Responding to Crises and Challenges

In spite of a general trend toward sharing a cooperative neo-millet style of authority over Christian citizens, the Patriarchate has not been above moving toward a role in opposition to the regime when it is pressed. Periodic crises continue to lead to more activist positions on the part of the patriarchate to defend the place of the Christian community as it did in the crises preceding the assassination of President Sadat. These more activist episodes come out of popular agitation in the church and among certain of

the hierarchy to do more to defend Coptic rights. Yet the more active positions taken by the Church leadership over the last few years of the 1990s clearly mark a new and more fluid approach to intercommunal tensions and to relations with the government. It is important to observe that the increasingly active role the Church has played has come at a time when violent Islamist activity appears to have decreased. In one sense, the more vocal activity of the Church leadership in recent years relates to the relatively quieter relationship that has developed between the government and the Islamist opposition. However, it is also important to see the more activist turn as a reaction to internal and external movements in favour of more direct activity that have emerged among Copts in Egypt and (more importantly) in the diaspora, especially the United States. This movement has occasionally threatened the Mubarak regime's relations with its western sponsors, thereby complicating the relationship between the regime and the Patriarchate. In this sense, developments in the small town of al-Kosheh in Upper Egypt in the late 1990s, coupled with an international movement for the recognition of full Coptic rights, have spurred the Patriarchate into a more active role.

"Al-Kosheh I and II"

The events that led to the first intercommunal crisis in a small town in Upper Egypt known as al-Kosheh were the murder of a Coptic man and the subsequent police investigation into the crime in August 1998. Police investigators detained several hundred defendants and sought to elicit a confession through various means of physical torture. The diocesan bishop of the region, Bishop Wissa, publicized the case by calling

foreign media outlets and soon various groups, including the Egyptian Organization for

Human Rights and the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, were undertaking investigations of

the proceedings. Further intercommunal strife occurred on New Years Day in 2000,

when 24 Copts were killed following an altercation at a market stall. The two incidents

in clear succession became known as "al-Kosheh I and II", highlighting the fact that

nothing had been done to deal effectively with the tensions. Another Patriarchal

investigation was dispatched, and the legate was actually detained for several hours by

some of the participants. El-Kosheh went from an ignored rural village in Upper Egypt to

the catchphrase for intercommunal tensions and conflict.

In the midst of the ongoing crises in the Upper Egyptian hamlet, pressure began to

mount within the Church in Egypt and abroad for the Pope and the synod to do something

to publicize the increasing violence. Although the original case led to the typical

philosophical statements about the brotherhood of Copts and Muslims in Egypt, by the

time a verdict was reached in early February 2001 against the instigators of the January

2000 riot, various representatives of the hierarchy issued increasingly incensed statements

about the government's policy toward justice and Coptic rights. In the event of the

verdict, only four of 96 defendants involved in the New Year's Eve riots were convicted,

and the judge chided three Coptic priests for failing to prevent the outbreak of violence.

In response, the pope, speaking at the high-profile annual Book Fair in Cairo, condemned

the verdict, calling it "unacceptable", and proposed taking up an organized case against

the rioters on behalf of the church.[44]

The case was reviewed by the courts in the wake of widespread Coptic dissatisfaction.

But in late February 2003, the Egyptian Court of Cassation handed down the same verdicts, one for murder against a man accused of killing "the sole Muslim victim" and three for setting alight a truck. Bishop Wissa once again complained publicly, saying, "If those accused are really innocent, where are the real killers? The 21 Christians who were so brutally murdered in January 2000 did not kill themselves...If the perpetrators of the murders are allowed to walk free, it will be seen as a green light to kill Christians."[45] The delay of the verdict by one month and previous announcement by the administration that Christmas was to be declared a national holiday seemed likely to be coincidental, and the eruption of the Iraq crisis at the same time served to minimize the impact of the verdicts.

The *Al-Naba'a* Incident

In mid-June 2001, the Egyptian weekly newspaper *al-naba'a* published a story purporting to be an exposé of life within a Coptic Orthodox monastery in Upper Egypt. It featured blurry photographs of a former monk named Barsoum el-Muharraqi, an anchorite at the Deir el-Moharraq monastery near Asyut, in sexual positions with women. The attached story reported that the monk had engaged in sexual relationships with parishioners at the monastery, abusing both his power and his vow of celibacy. The monk in question, Adel Saadallah Gabriel, had in fact been defrocked five years earlier and had apparently been using his former position as a ruse to entice women in Asyut. However, the story ran as a condemnation of the Coptic Orthodox Church itself. Editor Mamdouh Mahran argued that he had published the story in order to "make the Church take stricter measures". The article neglected to mention the fact that the Church was not

actually implicated in the matter.[46] Not surprisingly, the article created a furor in Egypt, where the media, the government, and the Coptic clergy alike roundly condemned it.

What was remarkable, however, was the public reaction to the article on the part of Copts. Known for their typical quiescence on matters of major national concern, average Copts began to demonstrate in large numbers in Asyut, where approximately 1000 Copts took to the streets in protest, and in the Cathedral of St. Mark in the Abbasiya suburb of Cairo. At the latter, several thousand staged a three-day occupation of the cathedral in defiance of government security forces, beginning on Sunday 17 June 2001. Initial protests at the church caught security forces off-guard and as many as six policemen and some protestors were injured in scuffles.[47] The massive demonstrations conjured memories of mass demonstrations that took place one year previously in May 2000 sparked by the Labour newspaper *al-Shaab*'s report concerning publication of a book said to be critical of Islam. That the small and presumably content Coptic community could mount such a demonstration of popular anger was astonishing. The demonstrations were eventually dispersed after the third day following impassioned pleas by Coptic bishops and official pronouncements from the Patriarchate against the newspaper.

Since the publication of the *al-kosheh* verdicts, the government has promised continued investigation of the matter, including new trials.[48] Furthermore, it responded quickly and actively after the protests over publications in the *al-naba'a* newspaper by arresting and convicting the publisher of the newspaper in a highly publicized trial.[49] Yet in the case of persistent and more entrenched requests for equitable treatment for church building permissions and progress in welcoming more Copts into high-level positions in

various branches of the government bureaucracy and security services, inaction has

remained the norm. Nonetheless, such demands have regained significance in light of the

public protests and as news of the Cairo incidents spread to the international media and

over the Internet. Overseas Coptic observers praised the heroism of the demonstrators

and the sudden outflow of Coptic anger as a final reaction to years of abuse and neglect at

the hands of the majority population and the government.

Activists at Home and Abroad

The more assertive tone taken in recent years by the Patriarchate appears in response to

at least three internal and external sets of challenges to promote the stronger participation

of Copts in the Egyptian system. First, its change in tone relates to a latent rivalry

between the Patriarchate and the regional bishops, who are concerned that the

intercommunal tensions are eroding the position of the Coptic Acommunity@. A key

figure in the publicization of the al-Kosheh incidents was the diocesan bishop of the area,

Bishop Wissa, who managed to create a larger international reputation within the global

Church and conservative human rights community by reporting direct from the site in the

midst of the conflict. His motivation consistently summoned up the need to protect the

communal identity of his parishioners, sharing his anguished concern to protect his

"children".[50] Wissa represented a more activist position taken by others of the hierarchy

within Egypt, which remains under the strict control of the Patriarchate, but at times

appear to goad it from within.

A second challenge to which the Patriarchate is responding is the growing hierarchy in

the West. Typically, overseas bishops report to the central authority of the patriarchates

located in the region but also remain ensconced in Western societies where their

independent action is encouraged. Associations with evangelical and modernist groups in

the new environment, in addition to open competition with other groups for the support of

parishioners, has contributed to new directions in liturgy and worship styles. It has also

challenged some of the prevailing wisdom of church hierarchies. Although committed to

deferential relations with the central authorities involved, the leadership of the Egyptian

churches abroad often takes a more aggressive posture against established norms among

Copts still residing in Egypt. For example, Coptic bishops sent letters of condemnation

to the Egyptian government for its inactivity in dealing with issues of Christian freedom

after the al-kosheh verdicts. Absent the traditional intercommunal niceties of Copts

forming a part of the "fabric of Egypt", the letter called upon secular conceptions of

justice and equal treatment before the law, the petition suggested that the verdict was

> nothing other than a death sentence on our Egyptian
> legislature, which we are appealing before it is carried out.
> It is a blunt challenge to the charter of human rights, against
> which our Egyptian nature rebels; a desperate attempt to
> protect this charter before the reputation and honor of our
> country are hindered and diminished before the eyes of the
> international community."[51]

Similar statements emerged from the Australian clergy, who argued that the verdict "hurt

every human conscience".[52] In the wake of the al-Kosheh verdicts and the el-Nabaa

newspaper scandal, Australian Coptic Clergy were at the forefront of calls for public

demonstration and protest, contributing to high impact demonstrations and media

coverage of Coptic concerns. On 28 June 2001, Bishop Suryal of Melbourne led a large-

scale demonstration in the streets of Sydney and delivered messages of protest over the el-Nabaa articles to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, the Australian government, and the Egyptian Consulate.[53] Clear appeals to wider secularist notions of human rights in addition to historical claims of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt revealed the evangelicalizing of the clergy's notion of Christian activity in Egypt and a departure from the neo-millet strategy adopted in previous years.

Finally, the Patriarchate is responding to more and more politically active Coptic elements in settler societies of the West. Important Coptic movements, particularly in the United States, have arisen to challenge the Church leadership to take a stronger stand for the defence of Coptic interests. There has been a Coptic movement in the United States since the early 1980s, beginning with the American Coptic Association founded by Shawki Karas and based in New Jersey. In August 1981, this group staged large demonstrations against President Sadat on his visits to Washington and New York. However, it was not until the 1990s that the Coptic lobby managed to gain a significant amount of headway. These challenges come from both identity-based and voluntarist outlooks. The efforts of the Coptic lobby came to fruition in the wake of the el-kosheh incidents with the establishment of a large network of political lobbies throughout Western countries. The International Coptic Federation is a formally connected group of Coptic lobbies in the United Kingdom,Canada, the United States, and Australia. In congress 20 June 1999, a group of Coptic activists representing each of these member movements agreed to work for "democratization...so that the congtradictions which lead to discimination of Copts are removed", and to "eliminate all forms of discrimination

within Egyptian society and protect property and life of the Coptic minority." Aiming to address Coptic concerns in a more equal and secular environment, these Coptic activists de-emphasize the work of the Church hierarchy in accomplishing political change while encouraging a "comprehensive strategy" of individual Copts in effecting more general change.[54] Their work centres upon the Washington-based organizations of US Copts and the American Coptic Organization and mobilizes through physical demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns, and personal lobbying.

Whereas traditional hierarchies and groups inside Middle Eastern countries are often hampered by lack of resources and connections, the external Coptic lobby has used its place in the diaspora to great advantage. They have proven adept at the use of Internet and other information technology to mobilize their efforts throughout the world. Furthermore, their activities have garnered enough support in the United States and other regions that the Egyptian government has seen fit to deal with them in official refutations and counter-lobbying.[55] Even so, these *ad hoc* diaspora organizations have gained an important entry into legislative activity in the United States, where they were crucial to the passage of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act that threatens sanctions against countries deemed to be restrictive of religious freedom. What is more, the groups mobilize significant numbers at public demonstrations denouncing various restrictive activities of the Egyptian government, most notably during official visits by President Mubarak to Washington in April 1999 and April 2001 and in response to the el-Kosheh verdicts handed down in February 2001.

There is a dissonance between the typical *sotto voce* criticisms that emerge from the

Coptic establishment and Church leadership in Egypt versus those that come from their somewhat more radicalized brethren in the West. In March 1997 while Copts overseas were planning to demonstrate against the Mubarak regime, Pope Shenouda instructed them to instead give a "warm welcome" to the President, arguing that "President Mubarak makes great efforts to combat terrorism and he should be supported."[56] Observing from abroad, Copts in the diaspora heralded the demonstrations over the el-Naba'a article as a success for a burgeoning externally based movement in favour of Coptic rights. In the Copts Digest electronic listserv, the voice of the best-organized external Coptic lobby, Copts variously described the reaction as "a welcome change in the attitude of the Coptic masses against their tormentors", an alarming development, a "day of shame" and a "day of glory".[57] One wrote, "I would like to congratulate every Copt in the diaspora that their work is not in vain...I've seen the anger in Coptic eyes and witnessed the 'revival of the Coptic nation'."[58] At the same time, Copts within Egypt were cautioning against further demonstration and protest. Prominent Copt Milad Hanna was quoted minimizing the sectarian nature of the dispute, suggesting that "Copts shouldn't be so angry" over the issue.[59] Similarly, although voicing strong displeasure over the publication of the article, Pope Shenouda III chided Copts against overreaction, stating, "there is no justification for dealing with this situation in an agitated way."[60] The incidents, and the reaction they evoked in various parts of the world, spoke to the very real division of Christian versions of political activism and interaction. They revealed a community divided on the means to promote their own interests in the region, but a community being prodded by external factors and reined in by internal forces.

Criticisms stemming from the grass roots aimed at the hierarchy occasionally point out that the Patriarch is too close to the Mubarak regime. The response of the patriarchate has been to respond more systematically and immediately to crises but to avoid strong language in its dealings with the government and popular media. For its part, both the external lobby and subaltern bishoprics have maintained consistent support for the hierarchy even as they engage in more specific protest against the regime for uneven dealings with Egyptian Christians.

Political Parties, Autonomous Charities, and Other Organizations

External Coptic lobby groups are examples of the sort of non-ecclesial organizations that are not typical of Egyptian Christianity. International connections have broadened and inspired Coptic movements within Egypt even as they spread their influence abroad. Emigration and the spread of new technologies have added new impetus to laic movements of individual Copts led by a network of diaspora organizations of Copts. In the past, the most notable of these were the movement led by Shawki Karas in the United States organized in the late 1970s and 1980s. Today they are represented by the modern spread of Coptic agitation through international links of emigrant Copts led by groups such the International Coptic Federation and member organizations such as US Copts and the Australian Coptic Organization. The spread of news and information on the plight of individuals and communities of Copts has bolstered the presence of these diaspora groups within Egypt while maintaining a notional subordination to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate and hierarchy.

These multinational connections have brought various types of groups in the diaspora in contact with the Coptic Orthodox Church. Contacts with evangelical and establishment organizations abroad providing basic supports to poor Christians have had an effect upon the Church. The evolution of the *zabellin* garbage village of Cairo from a forgotten and depressed quarter to the centrepiece of Coptic social activation is but one example of the influence of international sponsorship. Over the past decade, the development of the *deir anba samaan* complex has been enhanced through the participation of various international sculptors and patrons. Additionally, international parachurch organizations have begun to address the welfare of Christians in urban settings. Of these, orphans have become some of the more typical recipients, left in precarious predicaments since the tradition of family responsibility has rendered government supports ineffective. One of the more prominent of these is the US-based Coptic Orphans organization, which has been providing support to church-based charitable initiatives since its inception in 1989. Other small-scale community initiatives attached to churches and run by *ad hoc* community initiatives have emerged, but their cooperation with the local church has been a hallmark.

Outside the traditional hierarchy and institutions of the Coptic Orthodox Church are unofficial groups of Copts united on the basis of various purposes. Some of these operate in parallel with the Church and others seek to channel dissent from the mainstream tone of deference. Most of them deviate from the otherwise strong tendency toward an ecclesiocentric model of activity. Many of them depend upon external patronage. For example, within Egypt, Copts have an established organ for communication and

transmission of information in the popular media, the newspaper *Watani*. Possessing a

sizeable number of subscribers and following through on issues of interest to Copts and

to the general public with some professionalism, *Watani* is one of the stronger voices for

the rights of Copts in Egypt. Although independent of church control, *Watani* is closely

associated with the Patriarchate and the hierarchy of the Coptic Orthodox church,

providing a forum for the transmission of Church news, spiritual writings, and editorials.

Occasional rivals to the authority of the Coptic Church hierarchy emerge from

identity-nationalist and other types of groups both within and without the Coptic

Orthodox Church. Among these are attempts by established Copts to create political

parties based upon the Coptic identity and social service organizations (including

universities and self-help networks) geared toward providing for the needs of groups of

Copts. Moves for a Coptic party date back as far as 1908, when upper class Copts, led by

activist Akhnoukh Fanus, created the short-lived Independent Egyptian Party out of the

organization of the Coptic Reform Society. Even at this time, the Patriarchate and

established Coptic groups opposed the move, and without strong support within the

community, the idea died.[61] There remain periodic attempts to reinvigorate Coptic

activity in a political party, but continued opposition from the hierarchy and most Copts

(not to mention an official government ban on religious parties) militate against such a

development. The increased drive of expatriate Copts in overseas lobbies, especially in

the United States, has sparked increasingly vocal debates among Coptic Orthodox

adherents as to the proper direction of Christian political involvement, occasionally

pushing the idea of a Coptic independence based on Coptic cantons. Notably, however,

these ideas remain marginal to Coptic political movements, clear evidence of the desire to

work within established parameters to effect change. Even dedicated critics of the regime

in the diaspora remain committed to secular change within the Egyptian system.[62] This

stands in stark contrast to occasional territorial or irredentist movements among

Maronites in Lebanon, or in the past among Assyrians in Iraq.

The Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Non-Orthodox Churches

In comparison to the Coptic Orthodox Church, Chalcedonian Churches maintain a

small presence and a low profile in Egyptian society. The Roman Catholic Church has

had a toehold in Egypt since the establishment of a Coptic Uniate Church in 1905, headed

by a Catholic patriarch of Alexandria. Today Roman Catholics in Egypt number

approximately 200 000.[63] Their involvement in organizational life is generally confined

to church life and the promotion of small-scale development projects and educational

institutions, including a seminary. However, the prominence of the Church in world

affairs and its involvement in ecumenical dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church

(among others), as well as its activity in support of the Palestinian national movement, all

give the Church a certain level of gravity.

The papal visit of March 2000 was a national event, gathering crowds in the

thousands, including devotees of all Christian and Muslim stripes. Both Muslim and

Christian dignitaries warmly received Pope John Paul II, and his message was one of

"peace and reconciliation". Apart from the official purpose of the visit, a religious

pilgrimage, there were clear pronouncements from the Church in favour of furthering

ecumenical dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church. Catholic church auxiliar Bishop

Golta took the opportunity to stress the common faith of the two groups, arguing that the

two were divided by culture, not by creed. Similarly, Bishop Moussa of the Coptic

Church, was quoted upholding the "excellent foundation for the dialogue on

unification."[64] In clear distinction was the cold reception given to the pontiff at Saint

Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, the most important foothold of the Greek Orthodox

Church in Egypt. The pope was grudgingly permitted entry to the monastery without the

accompaniment of his entourage, and no statements of interreligious accord were

forthcoming. Yet relative numbers of Greek Orthodox are even smaller than those of the

Roman Catholic Church in Egypt, and the division did not lead to any major impasse in

the travels of the pope. The visit was widely considered important for raising the profile

of the whole Christian presence in Egypt.

The Evangelical Church of Egypt, known in Arabic as the *Ingili* (evangelical) church,

was founded in the late nineteenth century by Presbyterian missionaries who came to

work among Orthodox Copts in the late Colonial period. The success of the missionaries

was limited, but they managed to establish a small group of churches united by Protestant

doctrines. Membership was almost entirely composed of converts from the Coptic

Orthodox Church and in recent years, growth in the established Evangelical Church has

dropped off. The modern Evangelical Church is remarkable for its friendliness to

Western Protestant music, preaching style, and methods of evangelism. It boasts a

wealthy membership with strong familial and organizational ties to Protestant churches in

North America and Europe. The Evangelical Church suffers from a low profile within

the Egyptian populace and confusion over its nature and goals. A common confusion on

the street and in the media comes between the Anglican (*ingelican*) and Evangelical

(*ingili*) churches, only reinforcing a perception that the Evangelical Churches are of

foreign extraction and irrelevant to the Egyptian state.

Yet the Evangelical Churches have established a presence in Egypt that exceeds their

proportion of the Egyptian population and grants them a place among the more important

Christian groups. Cultivating their financial and organizational advantages and their

connections to foreign agencies, the Evangelical Churches are able to present a strong

front for community involvement and political action. Publication and media work

officially and unofficially associated with the Evangelical and other Protestant Churches

are of the highest quality and present an effective means of communicating the

evangelical vision. The development of high-quality education and rehabilitation

programmes for drug addicts in the city of Cairo is another hallmark of the association.

These initiatives often work in concert with community services offered by the Coptic

Orthodox Church.

A centrepiece of community action among evangelicals is the organization known as

the "Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services", or CEOSS. The Organization

operates as the development arm of the *Ingili* Church, with an informal link between the

Church and the administration. CEOSS was founded in 1950 when a sociologist and

seminarian, Samuel Habib, began literacy and community development projects in Upper

Egypt. The literacy department evolved into a publications branch known as *Dar al-*

Thaqafa, presently responsible for publishing around 60 titles a year and distributing

printed material throughout Egypt. CEOSS also boasts one of Egypt's largest community action efforts in its Development Sector, operating projects in 120 separate communities, focussing upon Minya and Cairo Governorates. Community projects are bolstered through partnerships with local Muslim and secularist NGOs, and CEOSS has become renowned for its work in bringing together diverse elements of poor communities in grassroots endeavors. For example, one high-profile project involved a large-scale education programme geared toward educating women in Talal Zeinhom in south Cairo, in partnership with the Centre for Development and Population Activities.[65] Development efforts are further enhanced through community based "trust banks" and private enterprise training programmes.

In an attempt to address the core of interreligious discord in Egypt, CEOSS has established a department geared toward studies in religion and culture, with a view toward education and consciousness-raising. The "Forum for Intercultural Dialogue" began in 1992 and has become a regularized meeting-place for people representing the entirety of the political and religious spectrums. Its participants include various personalities, among them academics, clerics, Muslim scholars and imams, politicians, civil society advocates, bureaucrats, and media personalities. The Forum is unique in that few programmes in Egyptian society boast its breadth, reputation, and frequency - it organizes 10-12 sessions held per year, including 2-3 major conferences, in diverse venues including Cairo, Alexandria, and Minya in Upper Egypt. Themes of the Forum have included "human rights", "the right to differ", and "religion and justice". A bimonthly publication, *resalat al-nour* ("roots of light"), reports on the activities of the

forum and serves as a showcase of the larger efforts of CEOSS.[66]

The Anglican Church in Egypt has a less established presence and operates without a strong native membership. Emerging out of the Colonial period with an important regional presence but little claim to Egyptian loyalty, the Church targets its efforts in caring for large numbers of devotees in Sudan and other continguous areas of Africa. In Egypt, this has meant the growth of a significant presence among the expatriate African community, the provision of advocacy and care to refugees displaced by conflict and famine in Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Sahel. The presence of numbers of African refugees is an occasional irritant to the Egyptian government, sparking periodic clampdowns and mass deportations. Nonetheless, the Joint Relief Ministry based at the Anglican cathedral in Cairo operates to provide humanitarian services to the refugees in an attempt to minimize the tensions that arise between Egyptians and expatriate refugees. The programme proffers medical assistance, retailing opportunities, and emergency assistance to those in need.[67] The work of Anglican missionaries and associates has been curtailed over the years such that they are now a mere shadow of former days. Partnerships with evangelical groups help to keep some of their community projects intact.

CONCLUSIONS

The Church as Mother: Neo-millet Accommodationism and Separatism

Egypt is a case that demonstrates the influence of a united and popular peak organization among Christians. The Coptic Orthodox Church is strengthened by its unity

and its credible ability to speak as the sole representative of Christianity in Egypt. It is also founded upon strong traditional beliefs that tailor it into a deferential-style organization and lead to a neo-millet system of engagement. Respect for the leadership and institutions of the Church as the representative religious organization of Christians in the Muslim milieu, both among devotees and among members of other denominations, only tends to strengthen the neo-millet partnership between the government and the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. The system has elements of both accommodationism in the elite compromise forged between the Patriarchate and the government, as well as the separatism provided by the monastic movement and the apolitical stance embraced by Matta el-Meskeen and the mystics of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Elements of both the political environment and the popular belief orientation of Egyptian Christians set the stage for their interaction with the Egyptian polity. Relative numbers imply that Christians have little chance to dominate Egyptian politics, however their numbers are sizable enough that they might be likely to assume important positions in the government and form an important domestic constituency. In fact, individual Copts have assumed prominence at times but usually Copts fall into the popular portrayal of a politically quiescent and unassertive minority. In addition to limitations that are specific to the Copts, there remain significant general barriers to the participation of mass movements in general in Egyptian politics. A consistently restrictive legal apparatus that tightly controls the establishment of new civil society organizations and parties applied since the 1952 Free Officers revolution has limited the opportunity for all non-governmental activity. Associational groups are relatively numerous, including the major

professional associations and secularist non-governmental organizations that have

persisted despite occasional official harassment and manipulation. The non-democratic

nature of the regime decreases the significance of liberal opponents, while clientelistic

relationships between the government and major actors reduce the threat of violent

opposition.

However, the creation of specifically religious substate organizations is more often

hindered among both Christians and Muslims. The usual justification for this is the fear

of radical and insurrectionist religious movements. Even so, certain more directed

restrictions target the Coptic minority in specific. In the case of churches, legal

restrictions have made the maintenance of infrastructure in the form of church buildings

most difficult. In addition, individual Christians are limited in their access to jobs in the

government, bureaucracy, military, and civil service and have met with subtle and overt

discrimination in trying to communicate and celebrate their history and message. At the

same time, however, liberal rules allowing free assembly and relative press freedom have

allowed Christians to remain culturally influential. Among Christians associational

groups are usually closely related to the traditional churches and must accept close

regulation and control by the authorities. Christian organizations are both challenged and

favoured as a result: church building permits are controlled but their public activities are

given relatively freer rein. As a result, adherents of the major denominations, with minor

exceptions, have largely accepted the rule of the regime through patterns of

accommodation and separation.

The result is a singularly ecclesiocentric neo-millet approach to the larger political

order, that is, a system of engagement that favours the prominence of the traditional

Church and its hierarchy, especially the Patriarchate. A Church-centred approach follows

logically from the importance of the hierarchy of the Coptic Orthodox Church stemming

out of the deferential logic of popular theology. The tradition of sacramental authority

and the assertion of unique rights to speak for Christians in Egypt, coupled with a popular

notion of Coptic identity gives to the Coptic Orthodox Church a singularly important

place. This it maintains through patterns of elite accommodation and political interaction

at the highest level. An emphasis on the significance of the Coptic community and its

sacramental leadership, combined with a positive view of state institutions and the

Church itself, has led Copts to develop a strongly deferential organization in the Coptic

Orthodox Church. Monastic orders and individual groups at the local level may seek to

effect societal change through consciousness-raising, education, and social action among

the populace, but their acceptance of the hierarchical authority of the Patriarchate (and, to

an extent, the Synod and other levels of the hierarchy) further contributes to an

atmosphere of deference.

Given their relative numbers, the other churches, such as the Roman Catholic,

Anglican, and Evangelical Churches, are less likely to affect the direction of Christian

approaches toward the society and the state. Yet even so, these groups tend to accept the

preeminence of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Their primary focus upon societal and

individual (rather than institutional) change, contributes to a general tendency for

Christians in Egypt to accept the present institutions of the Egyptian state, so long as the

state accepts the primary role of the Coptic Church hierarchy in representing Christian

views. The ability of rival groups to address the everyday material needs of Copts through social services, development initiatives, and education, is likely to challenge the Coptic Orthodox Church to move in the direction of establishment and evangelical ventures, encouraging a more pluralist social concern discourse within the Church. As a result, the Coptic Church is changing to become more socially and politically active even as it endeavours to maintain its place of preeminence among Christians.

With this in view, the Coptic Orthodox hierarchy seeks to direct the government to accept the free association and growth of churches and organizations in Egypt. On occasion, this forces it to deviate from support for the regime when the status of Copts is threatened. Obvious examples include the mass protests that emerged against the enshrinement of *shari'a* law in the constitution in 1980 and recent outcry against perceived injustices against Christians pertaining to the el-Kosheh incidents and verdicts. The fact that a more activist policy undertaken by the Patriarchate has been the norm in recent years underlines a change in popular beliefs and conventional wisdom within the Church.

Challenges from modernist and evangelical elements within the Church, in particular certain critical members of the hierarchy and laity, as well as from a more and more activist group found among the diaspora community abroad, have caused it to take societal change more seriously. Activist episodes among Egyptians are a clear indication of the evolutionary nature of orthodoxy within the church, a theme to which we will return in the conclusion. The reformist spirit within the Coptic Orthodox Church has led to a larger reform movement that continually sows the seeds of future reform. They

reveal the weaknesses of the neo-millet system and threaten at times to erode its

importance. These threats tend to come from modernist and newly mobilized elements

both within the church in Egypt (witness activist clerics such as Bishop Wissa) and within

the diaspora abroad (with the expansion of the Coptic movement via new information

technologies and influence in Western capitals). These are evidences that the neo-millet

vision of the Coptic Orthodox Church may be under pressure to change and adopt more

western-style approaches and discard the millet visions of the past.

However, the Patriarchate accepts that state patronage and the continued acceptance

among parishioners of its primary role in voicing Christian interests are two indispensible

supports. It opposes the creation of strong rivals to its authority in the form of political

parties and separatistic organizations, further consolidating neo-millet style elite

negotiation of Christian status. It also manages any criticism of the regime so as to keep

it under control, even when the more modern and globalizing tendencies appear

extremely powerful. Thus the deferential style of community representation taken on by

Saint Samaan and the leaders of the church remains as the core of political action in

Egypt. Despite any challenges coming from activists at home and abroad, the Church of

Egypt remains home; it remains mother.

[1] *The Biography of St. Samaan, the Shoemaker* (Cairo: The Monastery of St. Samaan, 1994).

[2] Arthur Goldschmidt, jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East*, fifth edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 50-1, Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1991), 23.

[3] Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 78.

[4] Brenda Carter, *The Copts in Egyptian Politics, 1918-52* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1986), 17

[5] see B. L. Carter, "On Spreading the Gospel to Egyptians Sitting in Darkness: the Political Problem of Missionaries in Egypt in the 1930s", *Middle Eastern Studies* 20(4) (October 1984), 18-36.

[6] Saad Eddin Ibrahim et al, *The Copts of Egypt* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1996), 6.

[7] J.D. Pennington, "The Copts in Modern Egypt", *Middle Eastern Studies* 18(2), 158-79.

[8] Max Rodenbeck, *Cairo: the City Victorious* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1998), 238.

[9] For example, CNN has been citing this figure in its reports. "Ancient Church Struggles in Muslim Egypt", CNN Online Report, available http://www.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast /02/04/ coptic.church/index.html, cited February 24, 2000.

[10] It is surmised that the word derives from a Hellenization of he-ke-ptah, or "house of Ptah", an early term for the country of Egypt. Thus in its origins, the word "copt" was synonymous with "Egyptian", and the "Coptic Orthodox Church", the "Egyptian Orthodox Church". With the adoption of Arabic as the language of Egypt in the middle ages, the word came to be used for the only people who continued to use Greek: the Christians.

[11] Pennington, "Copts", 159.

[12] Edward Wakin, *A Lonely Minority: the Modern Story of Egypt's Copts* (New York: Morrow, 1963), 3-4.

[13] Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

[14] Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).

[15] Meir Hattina, "On the Margins of Consensus: the Call to Separate Religion and State in Modern Egypt", *Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (1), 35-67.

[16] Gamal Essam el-Din, "NGO Bill Enacted into Law", *Al Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 June 1999.

[17] Mona el-Ghobashy, "Antinomies of the Saad Eddin Ibrahim Case", *MERIP Press Information Note 106*, August 15, 2002.

[18] Personal Interview, Egypt, 22 July 2000.

[19] See Dina El Khawaga, *Le Renouveau Copte: la communaute comme acteur politique*, Thèse de doctorat, Paris: Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, May 1993.

[20] Pieternella Van Doorn-Harder, *Contemporary Coptic Nuns* (Columbia, SC: USC Press, 1995), 23-4.

[21] Paul Sedra, "Class Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10(2) (1999), 226.

[22] Cornelis Hulsman, "Reviving an Ancient Faith", *Christianity Today*, December 3, 2001, 38-40.

[23] Matta el-Meskeen, *Christian Unity* (Cairo: Monastery of St. Macarius, 1997), 16.

[24] Personal interview, Thomas, Bishop of Qusiya, Cairo, 11 April 2000.

[25] Ibrahim et al, *Copts*, 15

[26] Yvonne Haddad has plausibly linked the increasing role of Islamism to the social and religious ramifications of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 on Arab publics. See Yvonne Haddad, "Islamists and the 'Problem of Israel': the 1967 Awakening", *Middle East Journal* 46(2), 266-85.

[27] Hamied Ansari, "Sectarian Conflict in Egypt and the Political Expediency of

Religion", *Middle East Journal* 38(3), 400.

[28] Nadia Ramses Farah, *Religious Strife in Egypt* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1986), 3.

[29] Ansari, "Sectarian", 411.

[30] Farah, *Religious*, 2-4.

[31] Ibrahim et al, *Copts*, 18.

[32] Quoted in Andrew Mango, "Remembering the Minorities", *Middle Eastern Studies* 21(4), October 1985, 131.

[33] Ibrahim et al, *Copts*, 21. See also "Egypt's Copts: Not so Comfortable", *The Economist*, 9 May, 1992, 45-6.

[34] Warren Cofsky, "Copts Bear the Brunt of Islamic Extremism", *Christianity Today* March 8, 1993, 47.

[35] Cofsky, "Copts", 47.

[36] "Interview with Pope Shenouda III: Marriage, Politics, and Jerusalem", *al Ahram Weekly*, 1-7 April 1999.

[37] "Zagzoug Orders the Return of ChurchWaqfs and Coptic Organization Demands Return of 1326 Feddans, *al Mussawar*, 27 February 1998, English translation in *Arab Press Review* 1203, 2 March 1998, "275 Feddans in Eleven Governorates Given Back to Coptic Church", *al Ahram* 8 May 1998, English translation in *Arab Press Review* 1221, 11 May 1998.

[38] For a development of the distinction between the militants and the "centrists", see Raymond William Baker, "Invidious Comparisons: Realism, Postmodern Globalism, and Centrist Islamic Movements in Egypt" in John L. Esposito, ed., *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1997), 115-34.

[39] "Pope Shenouda to al Shaab: We are Against Obscene Shows, We Call for Decency of Dress", *al-Shaab* 10 May 1988, English translation in *Arab Press Review* 214, 12 May 1998.

[40] "Egypt Court Bars Egyptian Copt from East Jerusalem", Reuters News Report posted on *Copts Digest* Listserv, 15 January 2002.

[41] "Coptic Pope Confirms Copts Banned from Visiting Jerusalem", *BBC World Service Broadcast* 4 April 1997, "Egyptian Pope Says Hamas 'Doing its Duty'", *Reuters World Service* 29 April 1997.

[42] Van Doorn-Harder, *Contemporary*, 23-5.

[43] Ibrahim et al, *Copts*, 19.

[44] Salah Nasrawi, "Christian Spiritual Leader Rejects Court Rulings over Fatal Clashes", *The Independent* 7 February 2001.

[45] Press Release, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 28 February 2003.

[46] Shaden Shehab, "Tabloid's Outrageous Toll", *al Ahram Weekly*, 21-27 June, 2001.

[47] Nadia Abou el-Magd, "Unprecedented Show of Coptic Anger", *al Ahram Weekly*, 21-27 June, 2001.

[48] Nadia Abou el-Magd, "Kosheh File Reopened", *Al Ahram Weekly* 2-8 August, 2001.

[49] Shaden Shehab, "Copts Consoled" *Al Ahram Weekly* 20-26 October 2001.

[50] Recollections given by Moustafa el-Feki, "President Mubarak and the Challenges of the 21st Century", AUC Public Lecture, February 21, 2000, Cairo, Egypt.

[51] "Letter of the Council of Coptic Orthodox Clergy of Canada to President Mubarak", Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, St. Mark Church, Montreal, Quebec, 18 February, 2001.

[52] Press Release, Coptic Orthodox Church, Sydney, Australia, 18 February 2001

[53] Observers went as far as to estimate that the demonstrations were attended by several thousand Copts. *Copts Digest* Listserv, June 29, 2001.

[54] Michael Meunier, "International Coptic Congress Formed to Work for Equality and Security", *Copts Digest* Listserv 22 June 1999.

[55] Paul Rowe, "Four Guys and a Fax Machine? Diasporas, New Information Technologies, and the Internationalization of Religion in Egypt", *Journal of Church and State* 43:1, Winter 2000, 81-92.

[56] "Pope Shenouda Urges Copts in America to Give a Warm Welcome to Mubarak", *al-Alam el-Youm*, 8 March, 1997. English translation in *Arab Press Review* 1107, 19 March, 1997.

[57] Comments posted on *Copts Digest* Listserv, June 19, 20, and 21, 2001.

[58] *Copts Digest* Listserv, June 19, 2001.

[59] el-Magd, "Unprecented".

[60] *Copts Digest* Listserv, June 20, 2001.

[61] Carter, C*opts*, 11-12.

[62] US Copts director Michael Meunier, perhaps the most active Coptic American activist, has gone on record opposing any significant territorial or military movement among the Copts, stating that "We are asking for equality in Egypt for both Copts and Moslems. We are not asking for a different country of division of Egypt or all the other absurdity." As stated in *Copts Digest* Listserv, 21 September 1999.

[63] Cited in Nadia Abou el-Magd, "Message of Goodwill and Justice", *Al Ahram Weekly* 2-8 March, 2000.

[64] Mariz Tadros, "A Tale of Two Popes", *Al Ahram Weekly*, 2-8 March, 2000.

[65] Amira El-Noshokati, Times Have Changed", *Al Ahram Weekly* 24-30 September 1998.

[66] *Annual Report 1998* (Cairo: CEOSS, 1999), and Personal Interview, Samuel Rizq, CEOSS Staff, April 19, 2000.

[67] *Joint Relief Ministry Annual Report 1999* (Cairo: All Saints Cathedral, 2000).

Chapter Five - Lebanon: Confrontation and Retreat

L'écorce de notre planète est ridée de cimes et de vallées.
Les unes ont dimension d'Eternité,
Les autres en sont le chemin
Nul ne sort de la vallée sans que son âme n'en soit renouvelée....
-Bertrand Lemaire[1]

Pour le Liban, le seul fait que les catholiques, et les maronites en particulier, aient
pris l'option du renouvellement et de l'intégration facilitera leur participation
effective au renouveau du pays tout entier.
-Nassib Lahoud[2]

The patriarch of the Maronite Church, a Roman Catholic Uniate Church indigenous to

Lebanon and the largest Christian sect in the country, maintains two residences in

Lebanon. The winter residence, Bkirké, is used as the symbol of patriarchal authority,

and as such is the centre of the Maronite faith. It is built upon the side of a sheer and

rocky cliff that rises from the Bay of Jounieh, overlooking the conurban sprawl

connecting the city of Jounieh with Beirut. Standing nearby are the massive cathedrals of

Harissa. The modern cathedral of Our Lady of Harissa, fronted by a large statue of the

Virgin, dominates the skyline at the crest of the ridge. The complex at the top of the

ridge is symbolic of a Christian establishment confronting the modern and urbanized

culture of Lebanon. Bkirké is a symbol of power, permanence, and presence. The

interplay of ancient and modern buildings displays the continuity and adaptability of

Christianity in Lebanon while the structures on the ridge appear as eminent claim to the

mountains of the patrimony.

The patriarch's summer residence, Diman, is located on the edge of the famed Qadisha

Valley in north Lebanon and maintains a more subdued ambience. It is equally built into the sloping bedrock of a sheer cliff face. Nevertheless, its surroundings are serene and pastoral: the valley is a deep canyon leading down from the highest of Lebanon's mountains, *Qornet el-Sauda*, to the west, descending in rocky crags toward the coastal city of Tripoli. Nearby, meandering roads lead upward into the interior, to the town of Bcharré and Lebanon's oldest reserve of cedar trees, and downward toward the beaches and cities of the coast. Diman is a perfect retreat: a place of quiet reflection and solidarity that blends seamlessly into its tranquil setting.

In a significant move during the peak of an internal conflict in late 1989 raging between rival militias, the Lebanese Army, and Syrian forces, the movement of the patriarch from Bkirké to Diman was symbolic of a basic turn in direction for Christian political movements in Lebanon. For the patriarch's two residences speak to two modes of contact between Christians and the larger political culture of Lebanon. In one mode, Christians use the bedrock of an identity-based conception of belief to aggressively seek change to suit their interests and to sequester territory as a base of power. In another, Christians accept the primacy of their own traditional religious authorities to negotiate their presence and privileges. Prior to desertion of Bkirké and the climax of the civil war, the cumulated impact of years of resistance to Arabization and pluralism among Christians had led to the ascension of identity-based parties intent on a specific type of order in Lebanon. Popular abandonment of these parties in the face of protracted war, their own unspeakable atrocities, and the ascension of a doomed national movement under General Michel Aoun brought a close to a long period of identity-nationalist

discourse among Lebanon's Christians. The grudging acceptance of the Ta'if regime

meant that Christians had moved toward a deferential-style neo-millet system in Lebanon.

Confrontation had ended with retreat.

BACKGROUND

Lebanon's Christian Legacy

There have been Christians living in Lebanon since the first century of this era. The

region of greater Syria took a central role in the early doctrinal disputes that forged the

various Middle Eastern churches, and to this day most every sect of Christendom may be

found there. Greek Orthodox and Jacobite (Syrian Orthodox) groups have remained in

the region since their original division at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Of these, many have adopted the authority of the Vatican and formed Uniate Churches in

their homelands. Groups of Armenians and Chaldaeans have come and settled the land as

refugees or migrants from other areas of the Middle East. Missionary activity over the

last two centuries has brought some to espouse the Protestant and modernist faiths that

followed the Reformation. However, the largest single group of Christians in Lebanon is

a singular group known as the Maronites.

The Maronite Church was forged out of Uniate consensus within a historically isolated

church. Its early history suffers from a lack of strong documentary and artifactual

evidence and thus it is given to highly legendary and unverifiable claims. Most scholars

hold that the early Christians of Lebanon were largely Monothelites who were at once

Eastern and Western in their allegiance. That is, they maintained a Syriac rite in

deference to their origins in southwest Asia, and they also accepted a Byzantine compromise over the nature of Christ. Thus there were obvious ties to both East and West among the Maronites. There were also reasons for mutual alienation. In 517, the Monothelites were massacred by devotees of the Monophysite version of Christianity, the Jacobites (today mixed among the Eastern Churches and the Uniate Roman Churches), and their group solidarity dates to a time when they first settled Lebanon under persecution from Christians as well as Muslims. They are first recorded as a separate group in sources dating to 745.[3] Their associations with crusader kingdoms made them targets of wider antagonism from both Muslim and Christian Arab sources during the Middle Ages.

By virtue of its geography and the presence of various religious minority groups, Lebanon has had a series of unique political arrangements under the control of the Middle Eastern empires succeeding the Muslim conquest in the 630s. Lebanon stood at the margin of the Fatimid and Seljuq Empires until the late tenth century, when there was a brief return to Byzantine rule, lasting almost until the onset of the Crusades. At that time, minority communities of Shi'is and Druze came to the area seeking refuge from persecutions by mainstream Sunnis elsewhere in the Middle East. Lebanon was divided between the kingdom of Jerusalem and County of Tripoli under the Crusaders from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, when Mamluk rule brought Lebanon back under the control of a Middle Eastern empire. Under the Ottomans, beginning in 1516, the *millet* system was applied to the regulation of the various religious communities in the littoral around Beirut, becoming problematic for the Shi'i and Druze groups on the basis of their

subjection to majority Muslim authority.

From 1590, Lebanon was ruled autonomously under an *imara* that maintained its relative autonomy as against the central Ottoman administration. The *imara* brought about a system of feudal loyalties that served to characterize Lebanon throughout its modern history even to the present day. Specific clans and families emerged as regional power brokers, originally favouring the Druze Ma'ans and Junblatts, and later benefiting the enlarged Maronite community with the patronage of the Shehab emirs of the Chouf, up to and including the period of occupation by the Egyptian forces of Muhammed Ali in the 1830s. The increasing importance of the Maronite community was clear in this period, due to the growing area of Maronite settlement in Kesrouan and the Metn, and to the enrichment of newly ascendant Maronite families through trade links through French connections to Europe. After 1842, Lebanon was divided between two overlords, one Christian (of the Abilama' clan) in the north and one Druze (of the Arslan clan) in the south.

The *imara* came to a close with the advent of the breakdown of Ottoman authority and the assertion of French and British colonial "tutelage" in the 1840s and 1850s, primarily benefiting the French in Lebanon.[4] The increasing power of Maronite feudal lords and merchant classes as against the Druze, additionally empowered by the capitulations of the previous centuries up to the *hatt-i-sherif* of 1856, led to a conflict that erupted into open civil war from 1958-61. In spite of the relative advantage of numbers and resources, Maronites were outmaneuvred by the Druze, leading to large-scale violence directed mainly against Christians. In the wake of the war, Ottoman authorities under pressure

from the Western empires established a unique intersectarian system to govern the area of

Mount Lebanon, known as the *mutasarifiya*. This established a pattern for governance in

Lebanon that was followed into the later republic. The French mandate established after

the Treaty of San Remo in 1920 gave France the opportunity to follow the advice of

Maronite Patriarch Huwayyak and create a greater Lebanon dominated by Christians, but

including the areas populated mainly by the Druze and Shi'i. During this period,

important intersectarian ties were developed among the Sunni and Maronite merchant

upper classes, which led to a nascent nationalist movement among the economic elites.

Thus when Lebanon came under Vichy rule during the Second World War, the economic

elites, taking advantage of Allied support, managed to establish an independent

multisectarian confessional government in 1943, under a constitutional system known as

the National Pact (*mithaq al-watani*).

Relative Demographics

Population change has been a major factor in the evolution of the Lebanese political

system over the last century. The National Pact was based upon a 1932 census that found

Christians of all sorts to make up 51% of the population. Further censuses have not been

carried out relative to the fear on the part of Christian (especially Maronite) elites that

they would reveal a significant extreme deterioration of the Christian majority. However,

it is clear that Christians have continuously declined as a proportion of the Lebanese

population as a result of lower birth rates due to other groups, most importantly the Shi'a,

and as a result of mass emigration over the last few decades. A recent survey of pertinent

literature by William Harris suggests that professing Christians compose approximately 35% of the Lebanese population, from around 40% at the beginning of the civil war. Furthermore, he gives some stock to statistics that show 21% of the population is of the Maronite Church while 14% belong to other Christian sects.[5] These figures mean that there are about 735 000 Maronites and 490 000 other Christians, for a combined total of around one and a quarter million out of a population of three and a half million. The declining percentage of Christians among the Lebanese population is one of the singular most important observations to be made about relative demographics over the past century.

Sects in Lebanon are generally geographically isolated one from another. Although one may find Christians and Muslims of various sects scattered throughout the country, there is a definite pattern of sectarian settlement in the country. Christians - and particularly Maronites - are concentrated in the north central region known as Mount Lebanon, and form the majority population throughout the Kesrouan and Metn regions, the Qadisha Valley, and along the coast between Batroun and Beirut. There are also isolated Christian communities in the Beqaa Valley, especially Greek Orthodox and Melchites, including major cities and towns such as Zahle and Qabb Elias, and in the extreme south. The civil war accelerated a tendency toward regional concentration of Christians, and as a result many have left the south and the Chouf mountain range of south central Lebanon, developing stronger concentrations in the eastern suburbs of Beirut and along the coast to the north. Although there is some resettlement occurring, the number of returnees to the areas south of Beirut remains limited. Individual minority

Christian groups have also formed enclaves in various parts of Lebanon as a result of a

natural clustering phenomenon at the time of their original settlement in the country. For

example, the Armenians (mostly devotees of the Orthdox and Roman Catholic Churches)

have historically settled in the Camp Marash area of the eastern Beirut suburb of Bourj

Hammoud and now number somewhere approaching 150 000.[6]

The integration of class analysis into Lebanese politics has often stressed the

concentration of capital in the hands of Christians and Sunni Muslims in Lebanon. By

and large, Christians are wealthier than their Muslim and Druze compatriots, and are

more likely to have property and connections abroad. They have historically been

disproportionately represented among upper class professions, merchants, the

bureaucracy, and educational professions. Although one effect of the civil war was the

leveling of some class divisions through general economic malaise, Christians remain the

larger part of the upper class in Lebanon.

FACTORS OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND PATTERNS OF BELIEF

The National Pact System

Lebanon has alternately been seen as a model for democratic agreement among diverse

religious elements and as a nightmarish example of sectarian incoherence and violence.

Arend Lijphart's famous consociational model established Lebanon as a prime example of

a system in which major vertical cleavages or differences of "identity", were

foundational.[7] Nevertheless, there were those who perceived the latent dangers that

lurked beneath the surface.[8] The National Pact (*mithaq al-watani*) that set the pattern for Lebanese government from independence in 1943-1944 established a system in which sectarian differences determined representation and role in government. It was a semi-presidential system with an executive and an elected parliament. Unwritten rules ensured that the President would always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'ite Muslim, and the Vice-Premier would be Greek Orthodox. Other provisions of the pact involved the commitment that Lebanon would remain an independent state with "an Arab character" and that the President would serve only one term.[9] Legislative supremacy was granted to Maronite Christians by numerical superiority alotted within the Parliament. Christians would always control the seats in the House of Parliament by a margin of six to five as against Muslims of all sects, and Maronites would be dominant through their control of the Presidency. The system appeared successful in that it ensured participation by all groups in the government while guaranteeing the dominance of the largest group, and remained stable for several years following independence. Even now, the National Pact remains largely intact *de jure* and *de facto*, notwithstanding the innovations of the 1989 Ta'if Accord and the continuing dominance of Syria in Lebanese politics.

Yet clear strains were implicit in the system as early as the crisis of 1958 (the *hawadeth*), when then-President Camille Chamoun faced a crisis created by his pro-Western foreign policy and attempts to alter the electoral system (threatening the presence of many established leaders in the legislative assembly) and to pursue a second term in office in contradiction to the tradition of the National Pact to cede the Presidency to

another. At the same time the growing popularity of pan-Arabism attached to Soviet alignment as championed by Gamal Abdel Nasser threatened the continued neutrality of Lebanon in the event of Chamoun's downfall. The threat of civil war was clear as tensions rose that pitted the traditional leadership and pan-Arabists against Lebanese and pro-Syrian nationalists such as the Phalange party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP).[10] After the intervention of American forces in 1958, General Fouad Shehab was elected as a compromise candidate, eventually heading up a cabinet that included members of both factions, including Phalange leader Pierre Gemayel. Even today, many perceive Shehab's neutralist regime as a sort of golden age of Lebanese political accord, having favoured a strong social welfare network and a strong state insulated from society through effective security services, a system known as "Shehabism".[11] Nevertheless, the important changes implemented by Shehab and his successor Charles Helou, were insufficient to deal with the problems of the Lebanese regime. The National Pact and patterns of elite control enforced a glass ceiling upon ambitious leaders in various denominational groups (notably the Druze and Shi'a), in addition to its inability to address demographic change.

Civil War and the Dynamic Political Environment

The status quo of the National Pact was rigidly based on the results of the population demographics of the 1930s. The inability of the system to accommodate changes in demographics is widely blamed as a first cause of civil war beginning in 1975. The influx of thousands of (mostly Muslim) Palestinian refugees in the years following the

1948 and 1967 wars, and, more importantly, following King Hussein's armed clampdown

on Palestinian refugees in "Black September" of 1970, were a further challenge to the

system that could not be accommodated. Michael Hudson points out that the

consociational system necessitated strong state autonomy to facilitate elite negotiation,

but internal divisions managed to overcome the state and to erode its legitimacy and

resilience.[12] The presence of massive numbers of Palestinians thus presented a challenge

to the rigidity of the system given its already changing demographic bases, a challenge

that was inevitable given the patterns of demographic growth, but one that was made far

more severe in its immediacy and scope. The intervention of several external actors only

served to complicate the problem.

The Lebanese government's decision to allow Palestinians control within their refugee

camps and free rein to operate their resistance movement against Israel under the Cairo

Agreement of November 1969 was a concession that provided an important turning point.

Pan-Arabist and radical supporters of the Palestinian cause, including the SSNP,

Ba'athists, Communists, and radical Palestinian militias, were united under the banner of

the "national movement" headed by Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) leader and Druze

power broker Kamal Junblatt. Opposed to the Cairo Agreement and the further support

of the Palestinians were Lebanese nationalists and the traditional local leaders, who had

more to gain from the depoliticization of the Arab war with Israel than from its

continuance. In 1970, one of the latter was elected president: Sulaiman Franjieh, a local

power broker from the north and a supporter of close ties to Syria and the maintenance of

the confessional system. Franjieh was increasingly unable to bridge the gap between

forces opposed to the growing military might of the Palestinians and the need to maintain the appearance of sympathy with the Palestinians in response to the opposition national movement and the priorities of his ally President Assad of Syria. In May 1973, the army backed away from a confrontation in Beirut with the Palestinian militias. The state provided firm evidence of its growing inability to deal with the issue.

Given the complexity of causes and contributions, the descent of Lebanon into civil war and anarchy over the period from 1975 to 1990 remains a subject of intense scholarly attention and controversy. The onset of civil war from 1975 to 1982 is relatively well documented but the alteration of the system under war conditions into the 1980s made documentation and study difficult. The operation of the system under conditions of civil war distilled away the institutions of the state and created substates within the Lebanese state that competed for the future of Lebanese politics. Politics became a matter of armed conflict rather than the traditional deal making that had gone on in the period of the National Pact. Negotiation gave way to the funding and execution of armed struggle in the form of daily skirmishes, terror, kidnapping, and organized crime on a wide scale. What is more, the conflict became increasingly regionalized – involving Israeli support of Lebanese Christian-dominated militias against the Palestinians and Syrian support for their allies in Lebanon, as well as intervention by international peacekeeping forces.

The civil war is often traced originally back to the eruption of skirmishes between Christian and Palestinian militias after a bus carrying Palestinians and Lebanese to the refugee camp of Tel el-Zaatar was attacked by the Phalange militia in the Beirut suburb of Ain el-Rummaneh. The skirmishes led to the collapse of the cabinet of Prime Minister

Rashid el-Solh and the gradual deterioration of central authority. From early 1975,

factions began to carve out their own territorial niches within the Lebanese state,

escalating in September and October of that year with clashes in areas outside Beirut and

an escalating conflict between Christian- and Sunni-dominated militias in West Beirut,

the so-called "Battle of the Hotels". This led to the consolidation of Christian factions in

East Beirut and the coastal areas to the north. In December 1975 the Phalange militia

reacted to an attack on their own turf by launching indiscriminate attacks on Muslims in

Beirut and a blockade against Palestinian refugee camps in Tel el-Zataar just east of

Beirut. Over the summer of 1976, the Christian-dominated militias besieged and

destroyed these Palestinian settlements in the "Battle of the Camps". Growing militancy

on the part of the PSP-led national movement brought on armed Syrian intervention

inside Lebanon against Palestinian and radical opponents to Franjieh's regime beginning

in April 1976. Unable to gain general acceptance of constitutional change in February

1976, President Franjieh came to the end of his term without coming to a conclusive end

to hostilities. In September 1976, his successor Elias Sarkis had to accept Syrian

occupation of Lebanon and the consolidation of control of areas north of Beirut under the

Lebanese Front, led by the Phalange in concert with other Christian-dominated militias.

Continued machinations of the PSP and the left led to the assassination of Kamal Junblatt

in March 1977 (to be succeeded by his son Walid), but in general relative calm prevailed

until 1978, providing further opportunities for Palestinian attacks on Israel from their

bases in Lebanon.

In March 1978 Israel invaded southern Lebanon in an attempt to root out these

Palestinian bases and established an alliance with a Christian militia led by Saad Haddad

to control a self-proclaimed security zone along the Lebanon-Israel border. This militia

came to be known as the Army of Free Lebanon, and later the South Lebanon Army, and

maintained control over the southern tier of Lebanon (with Israeli support) for more than

twenty years. Clashes continued despite the deployment of an international peacekeeping

force to the area, known as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). In

mid-1981, an attempt by the Christian-dominated militias to bring Zahle into the

Christian sphere of influence under the noses of Syrian forces in the Beqa'a led to the

escalation of the conflict in south Lebanon between Syria and Israel. In June 1982, Israeli

forces invaded Lebanon and laid siege to Beirut over the summer of 1982 as a means to

eliminate the Palestinian militias presence for good and to install a friendly regime in

Lebanon under the head of the Lebanese Forces militia, Bashir Gemayel.

Bashir was elected president in September only to be assassinated a few days later on

September 14, 1982. In response, the Israeli army occupied all of Beirut and gave

opportunity to the Lebanese Forces to attack Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps

south of Beirut over the following days. Bashir's brother Amin was elected his successor

and oversaw the installation of an American-led intervention force following the

departure of the major leaders of the Palestinian resistance. In April 1983, a car bomb

exploded at the US Embassy in Beirut and in May the Gemayel regime came to a

withdrawal agreement with Israel, only to be scuttled by renewed fighting. In February

1984, amid growing violence and kidnapping directed against foreigners, American and

Western forces departed Lebanon and in April the same year, a government of "national

unity" was formed under Gemayel and Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami. Beginning

in January 1985, Israeli forces began to evacuate south Lebanon, as far as their security

zone, now patrolled by the SLA under General Antoine Lahd. Over the course of 1985,

Syrian diplomacy brought about the December 1985 "Tripartite Agreement" between the

PSP, the Shi'i Amal party, and the LF in favour of reassessing the National Pact and

reunifying the army. The agreement met clear repudiation within the Christian sector in

January 1986 with the ouster of LF leader Elie Hobeika. The consolidation of Lebanon

into territorial cantons dominated by rival militias thus remained, even as Syria pursued a

policy of gradually developing full control over areas of the Chouf and West Beirut over

the following two years. Beginning in 1988, a final endgame eventually united the parties

in opposition to the Lebanese government after an impasse over succession to the

Presidency, which was occupied *de facto* by General Michel Aoun in September of that

year. The conclusion of hostilities after the final ouster of Aoun by a coalition of

sectarian forces allied with Syrian forces in October 1990 established a new regime,

known as the Ta'if regime, after the Saudi city where it was negotiated.

The Taif Regime

The Taif Accord altered the National Pact slightly in order to address demographic

shifts: it equalized seats among Christians and non-Christians in the Lebanese

parliament, and it implemented a shift in power from the President to more diffuse power

relationships among the President, the Prime Minister, and the Chamber of Deputies. As

a result, it clearly weakened the position of Christians in the government and gave a

stronger voice to Sunni and (to a much lesser extent) Shi'ite Muslims.[13] In practice, these

new powers have remained subordinate to pressure from the Syrian government, which

has maintained several thousand soldiers in Lebanon as a "peacekeeping force". While

Syria maintains firm control over Lebanese military and foreign policy, the operation of

domestic affairs has remained essentially in the hands of the chamber of deputies and

domestic social forces.

Social forces set the stage for negotiation within the government. Although Lebanon

has reamained an ostensibly democratic country governed by the parliament, the National

Pact and the Ta'if Accord, in practice the government is weak and the state has generally

been subordinated to the operation of major social forces. State policy has been

controlled by specific power blocs associated with leading local power brokers known as

the *zuama* (sing. *za'im*). So despite the existence of an institutionalized democracy with

legal and electoral underpinnings, clientelistic and patrimonial networks continued to set

the direction of power and policy.[14] Prior to the descent into civil war, the *zuama* were

associated with political parties such as the National Bloc, the Constitutional Bloc, the

Progressive Socialist Party, the National Liberal Party, and the Phalange, with emergent

ideological and programmatic platforms. This was touted as an indication of maturation

within the system, so much that scholarly observers were predicting the eventual demise

of the competitive system dominated by the old familial power blocs.[15] On the contrary,

the old system has remained and been strengthened, even as the personalities involved

have disappeared or been eclipsed by new actors as a result of the changing power

constellations and disjunctures between the masses and ruling elites.[16] The overall

pattern has been toward the declining fortunes of Christian elites and the rise of Shi'i and Sunni elites, all of which is directly related to trends related to the civil war, relative wealth, relative demographics, and to Syrian domination.

The advent of Syrian domination in 1990 and the contribution of external actors in the region brought new advantaged groups into focus, creating governing coalitions that have not been based upon the traditional power blocs or parties. As a result, governments since Ta'if have been coalitions of personalities rather than parties, although the major parties remain in an undignified and relatively powerless opposition. The accession of Syrian allies such as Elias Hrawi and Emile Lahoud among the Maronites and Rafiq Hariri among the Sunnis, not to mention Syrian sponsorship of Shi'ite movements (both Hezballah and Amal), have placed new groups in authority while dispossessing old parties and elites. Nonetheless, the basic form of negotiated politics operating behind the legislative apparatus of the Lebanese government has not changed with the Ta'if regime. The operation of politics remains strongly patrimonial and competitive even as implacable hostility to Israel and cooperation with the Syrian regime is a necessary precondition for participation in the governing coalition.

The involvement of Syria in bringing the civil war to a conclusion and in bringing Lebanon into its orbit of control is just the end of a series of foreign engagements that has affected Lebanese politics. Foreign intervention and penetration have rivaled internal demographic and sectarian challenges as explanations for the history of Lebanese politics, especially its disintegration and descent into civil war.[17] The displacement of thousands of Palestinians from Israel into Jordan and Lebanon, and their subsequent displacement

from Jordan, are direct results of the larger Arab-Israeli crisis that destabilized the entire

region in the period from 1948 to 1975. The invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982

further destabilized Lebanon by involving Israel in the internal politics of the country and

activating a resistance movement to Israeli occupation.[18] Furthermore, the continued

presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon as actors before and during the civil war from the

mid-1970s on served to complicate internal relationships. These complications

multiplied with the involvement of intergovernmental organizations such as the Arab

League, the United Nations, their related peacekeeping forces, in addition to *ad hoc*

peacekeeping forces from the United States, Italy, and France, and as a result of

sponsorship of internal groups from external sources such as Iran and Iraq, among other

players. Over the past twenty years, Lebanon has gradually declined in significance to the

external powers with the conclusion of the Cold War, the advent of a peace process

between Israel and the Palestinians through the 1990s, and the withdrawal of Israeli

forces from south Lebanon. Furthermore, the decline of Lebanon as an economic

clearinghouse and entrepot centre for the Arab Middle East has affected the significance

of Lebanon to several key players. The trend has been toward the retreat of transnational

forces from of Lebanese politics, with Syria becoming the primary external actor. The

final redeployment of Israeli forces to the northern border of Israel in June 2000

(notwithstanding the Lebanese demand for a further retreat from the "Chebaa Farms" area

near Mount Hermon/Jebel el-Sheikh) marked another step in this process. However, with

the eruption of hostilities between Palestinians and Israelis in late 2000 and sympathetic

violence occasionally erupting among Hezballah guerillas along the Lebanese border,

international interest in Lebanon seems only likely to increase in the future.

Conditions in the political environment have encouraged the creation of kinship and loyalty networks around key Christian Lebanese *zuama*. In the destabilized environment created by the influx of Palestinian refugees and foreign-armed intervention, coupled with the breakdown of key government services, the environment encouraged the development of self-help networks among all communities, and thereby heightened the appeal of communal solidarity. With the civil war, these organizations became quasi-state authorities that vied for control with the national government and against one another. The end of the civil war with the Ta'if regime has restored some structures of the old system, even as it has ushered in a new set of elites and power brokers and disestablished many others. Under the Ta'if regime, sectarian loyalties remain important, while many erstwhile parties have been disenfranchised in favour of more personal political relationships. Whereas pugnacity was the rule of the game during the civil war, the ascension of Syrian power in the 1990s has encouraged a pattern of cooptation among established elites.

Beliefs

Popular beliefs among Christians in Lebanon have been the subject of many scholarly and journalistic studies. Most of these focus directly upon the followers of the Maronite Church, who form a majority among Lebanese Christians. Maronite historiography has become the core of a Maronite conception of identity. Drawing upon traditions that describe Lebanon as a sanctuary for sectarian groups from all backgrounds, Maronites

have forged a popular theology of solidarity and survival. The escape from persecution became the foundation for Christian Maronitism. In the words of one apologist, "[t]he Maronite, witness of the divine truth, becomes the Maronite, defender of his existence and being."[19] Maronites have a strong commitment to social solidarity as defined by "existence and being" and a strong tradition of scholasticism. It is not surprising that there is little in the way of a voluntarist attachment to the historic doctrines of the faith. Little in the way of an evangelical or renewal movement has emerged in Lebanon of the sort espoused by the "Sunday School movement" in Egypt. The Reformation that changed the history of modern Europe for Roman Catholic and Protestant alike was never even a speck on the horizon of Lebanon. Thus personal connection with Christian faith relates more to symbols and communal solidarity than it does to individual commitment to the core teachings of the church. Communal solidarity and a tradition of sacred authority have meant that loyalty and allegiance to the community, and later, to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, distinguished the church. The Maronites joined the Roman Catholic Church as a semi-autonomous group in the medieval period but it was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that formal relationships developed.

Colonial contacts with Western imperial powers, most importantly France, are credited with developing a European sense of nationhood and ascriptive and territorial identity among the Maronites. This was combined with an emergent communal solidarity and a mythos of connection to the ancient Phoenicians and the distant past. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, lay leaders such as Tannus al-Shidyaq were expounding on the ancient Phoenician (and pre-Muslim) roots of Lebanon. This led to

more specific associations of Lebanese identity with the Maronite Church. Niqula

Murad's mid-eighteenth century historiography described Maronites as *marada*, an ethnic

group that stood for Roman Catholicism against heretics and non-Christians. Perhaps

more influential was Yusuf al-Sauda, who drew a stronger relationship between

Phoenicians and Maronite Lebanese by which "'Lebanese nationalism' became organically

dependent on the existence of the Maronite community."[20] This Phoenician legacy was

developed through the mid-twentieth century at institutions such as Saint Joseph

University in Beirut through the work of scholars and leaders, most notably al-Sauda and

the Alliance Libanaise.[21] The Maronite community was strongly associated with the

(specifically Lebanese) nationalist movement, and Lebanon (or, more specifically,

"Mount Lebanon") was directly associated with an ethnic community of Christians

resident there since antiquity. All of this has translated into a favourable stance toward

the established norms of the confessional system that privileged the Maronites, and an

antipathy toward newly prevailing pan-Arab norms embraced by most Muslim and some

other Christian groups.

Whereas popular sentiment among Egyptian Copts remains in large measure hearsay

as a product of the low level of survey work, there exists somewhat clearer evidence of

beliefs among Lebanese Christians. Findings reinforce the view that communal solidarity

inspired by the past remains strong among Maronites. Hilal Khashan's work among

Lebanese students reveals definitive distinctions among sects with regard to their notion

of ethnic integrity and solidarity, as evidenced by such factors as loyalty to group leaders,

satisfaction with "group membership", sectarian solidarity and group interactions.[22] For

example, Khashan found that group members within the Maronite sect were most likely

to prefer leaders of their own sectarian background as against other sects, with only other

Roman Catholic coreligionists preferring themselves and Maronites to a similar extent

(see Table 5.1). Futhermore, a scale of "satisfaction with group membership" created by

Khashan based on three diagnostic questions revealed the intensity of devotion to

community among Maronites in particular.

Table 5.1: Attachment to Group Leaders by Sect in Lebanon[23]

Most Preferred Leaders	Sunni %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G. Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Armenians %
Maronite	41.7	1.7	3.4	93.7	35.0	78.3	26.4	13.1
Catholic	0.6	2.9	1.7	2.9	7.5	13.1	8.6	4.0
Orthodox	6.3	6.3	4.0	2.3	30.4	3.4	29.9	17.1
Protestant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armenian	0	0.6	0	0	1.1	0	4.6	40.0
Sunni	44.0	2.9	13.7	1.1	19.2	4.6	28.7	21.7
Shi'i	2.3	85.0	1.7	0	1.1	0	0.6	1.1
Druze	5.1	0.6	75.4	0	5.7	0.6	1.1	2.9

Table 5.2: Level of Satisfaction with Group Membership[24]

Level of Satisfaction	Sunnis %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G.Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Armenians %
High	55.1	15.4	18.9	68.0	29.7	36.1	58.5	46.9
Medium	36.1	30.6	26.1	9.5	48.2	40.0	24.6	29.1
Low	8.8	54.6	55.0	22.5	22.1	23.9	16.9	24.0

Source: Hilal Khashan, *Inside the Lebanese Confessional Mind*, 1992

In addition to strong group coherence registered along these lines, Maronites appeared to be less reconciled to changes within the system advocated by leftist and revisionist ideologues, most of which were in ascendance during the Lebanese civil war. In fact, any alterations to the continuance of the Lebanese order as established by the National Pact, aside from the decentralization (or cantonization) of the entire country to allow autonomy of Christians, are anathema. This is displayed in vociferous opposition to stronger cultural and political ties to the Arab world and Syria and to naturalization of Palestinians living in Lebanon, as well as continued commitment to the sectarian system established under the National Pact.[25] So long as the order remained congruent with the identity structure maintained by popular Maronite teaching, the Maronites were in favour of the status quo. New innovations would be suspicious, since they might threaten the Maronites, defined by their communal solidarity and advantages.

Table 5.3: Attitudes to the Political Order

Do you believe that Lebanon should establish close cultural and political ties with the Arab world?

	Sunni %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G.Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Arm. %
Yes	95.8	63.3	93.9	7.6	55.0	13.3	75.4	88.6
No	2.8	32.4	2.8	90.4	35.0	82.8	20.0	4.6
DK	1.4	4.3	3.3	2.0	10.0	3.9	4.6	6.8

Do you believe that Lebanon should establish special diplomatic ties with Syria?

	Sunni %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G.Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Arm. %
Yes	24.4	53.0	17.8	8.0	38.6	17.2	38.5	10.3
No	75.6	47.0	82.2	92.0	61.4	82.8	61.5	89.7

Civilian Palestinians residing in Lebanon since 1948 should:

	Sunnis %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G.Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Arm. %
Be Naturalized	81.2	11.9	61.1	0.9	11.4	3.3	46.1	71.4
Maintain Refugee Status	14.6	35.7	36.7	17.8	74.3	11.7	53.9	23.4
Be Deported	4.2	52.4	2.2	81.3	14.3	85.0	0	5.2

Which of the following political positions concerning the Lebanese situation best describes

your attitude?

	Sunnis %	Shi'is %	Druze %	Maronites %	G.Orth. %	Catholics %	Prot. %	Armenians %
Substantial reforms in a centralized framework	25.6	86.8	6.7	5.1	36.8	23.3	66.1	77.1
Modest reforms in a centralized framework	46.7	11.7	0	8.4	48.9	40.5	18.5	18.3
Substantial reforms in a decentralized framework	1.4	1.5	87.8	63.1	8.9	4.5	12.3	4.6
The National Covenant of 1943 is still workable	26.3	0	5.5	23.4	5.4	31.7	3.1	0

Source: Hilal Khashan, *Inside the Lebanese Confessional Mind*

No less affected by the common loyalty to communal identity are the Eastern churches

that form a minority among Christians in Lebanon. These include the Greek Catholic and

Greek Orthodox Churches, strong regional organizations of Christians that are not

attached to the Maronite heritage. Their vision of the external order displays some

divergence from the mainstream Maronite line, mostly with respect to their openness to

alterations in the status quo. Khashan discovers that Greek Catholic Melchites are

similarly motivated by a sense of communal solidarity and identity, and also rationalized

to the Lebanese order. They share a common aversion to disruption of the status quo of

the National Pact, but remain more cautious than the Maronites on matters such as

cantonization (declaration of a Christian autonomous region) – obviously related to their

higher rate of dispersion throughout the country. Greek Catholics are thus susceptible to both rationalizing with the Arab culture (they are somewhat less likely to disavow inter-Arab ties, for example), and to sympathizing with the Maronites who are skeptical of a pan-Arab order.

Greek Orthodox and Protestants in Lebanon display a far different set of orientations. The Greek Orthodox Church membership display mixed results, and it is generally fair to say that both group solidarity and acceptance of the larger Arab culture and new order displayed by innovations in the National Pact are not group-dependent in their case. There remains a high degree of identification with the sect, but this does not associate with a strong antipathy for the National Pact or for pan-Arab ties. The Greek Orthodox is a divided group, with signs of both deferential and establishment elements. It is important to note that Greek Orthodox churches have a high rate of non-observance among the sects and that the higher echelons of the clergy of the Orthodox Churches remain non-Arab. This suggests that while the leadership of the traditional church may have an important role in the community, their political identifications do not necessarily mesh with those of Church adherents. As a result, Orthodox adherents have ideological loyalties that are not related to their stated religion among communalist and non-confessional parties (that is parties not defined by Christian identity). For instance, Greek Orthodox adherents have formed an important part of the core support for the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (formed to enhance ties with Syria) and the Lebanese Communist Party. Further evidence comes in the form of a staunch non-confessional stand taken by their patriarch, Aghnatious Hazim.[26]

Although a small group, Protestants equally display patterns of non-confessional

orientation and do not display strong internal group solidarity, mixed with divisions in

their orientation toward the larger Arab and sectarian order, patterns identifying them as

adherents of either establishment or evangelical viewpoints. The Armenian community

displays strong divergence from the line taken by other groups. Survey results display a

high degree of group solidarity coupled with a friendly attitude toward both pan-Arab ties

and acceptance of substantial reforms to the central government that form the prevailing

view of political reformists.[27] They display clear tendencies toward deferential

acceptance of identity and popular reforms. Overall, Orthodox and minority Christian

groups in Lebanon are clearly identified by their commitment to Christian identity, but

have little commitment to the sectarian nature of Lebanon, nor do their religious

affiliations translate into single political orientations, except toward compromise and

cooperation with other groups, as well as a friendliness toward pan-Arab and –Syrian

sentiment.

In sum, a commitment to identity-nationalist politics viewed as contrary to innovations

in the National Pact system sets Maronites and other Catholics as the most likely to form

nationalistic groupings based on their religion. Maronite- and other Catholic-led

nationalistic groupings are then likely to lead to competitive nationalistic systems of

engagement. Other Christian groups are more likely to accept innovations in the National

Pact and the introduction of friendly relationships with neighbouring Arab states,

favouring a neo-millet style subordination of their community to elite negotiation. In

fact, both patterns have been observed in Lebanon since the 1960s.

Interestingly, attitudinal distinctions between the major sectarian divisions in Lebanon

have been disappearing since the period of the civil war. Fabila Azar and Etienne Mullet

published a study in the *Journal of Peace Research* in 2002 that found differences

between the sects in general in Lebanon on political issues to be converging. Most

interestingly, Maronite respondents in their survey of 397 Lebanese tended to be

rationalizing to the positions held by their compatriots within Orthodox and other

Catholic groups, while they remained more skeptical about the general strength and

neutrality of the country.[28] The trends indicate a gradual leveling of sectarian attitudes in

both the Christian and non-Christian constituencies.

COMPETITIVE NATIONALISTIC AND NEO-MILLET SYSTEMS IN LEBANON

Political Parties and Identity-Nationalist Religious Groupings, 1958-1980

In the years preceding the civil crises of 1975-1982, the importance of Maronite

identity combined with increasing distrust of the surrounding culture fed into the

development of groups representing Christian interests on the basis of ethnic and group

solidarity. Lebanon was already primed for the evolution of identity-nationalist groupings

as a result of the legacy of the traditional *zuama* power structure and the development of

the confessional system, unfettered by its modern Parliamentary system. Yet fundamental

disjunctures between popular opinion and the activity of the elites challenged the

continued prominence of the traditional families. So Farid el-Khazen observes that

Maronite-dominated elites had a "flexible and diverse communal structure" emerging

from earlier pluralist traditions, allowing them to keep close watch on the development of new ideas within the community. This weakened the traditional parties or familial networks, based as they were upon the rigid control of Lebanon through elite negotiation. Furthermore, it spurred the growth of new groups, most importantly the Phalange and related militias, sped by a growing gap between elites and their constituencies.[29] As observed previously, Maronite and other Christian society was absent a strong reformist tradition – this left Christians with strong group solidarity but an increasing tendency to bypass Church institutions in favour of direct political involvement.

This tendency to eschew new and voluntarist theology, coupled with resistance to alternative theologies such as the official position promoting dialogue with non-Christian groups or liberation theology ripe among South American subaltern Catholic leaders, created a sense of elites under siege. The Christian community was distanced from the higher levels of the Maronite hierarchy, and the hierarchy as well from the central core of Roman Catholic policy. Despite some evolution of popular opinion among the masses, both the traditional elites and the hierarchy of the Churches remained unresponsive and unchanged in their approach to drawing upon popular support. Thus religion remained a communal motif but not a source of ideas. This first led to the development of competitive nationalistic political parties that prioritized the preservation of the community as against the larger plural culture in the period up to the end of the civil war in 1990. Following the conclusion of the war, it created a neo-millet style system where Churches became the chief interlocuteurs for the Christian population.

Certainly the rise of nationalist parties was not originally intended to be a Christian

religious-nationalist project. However, the structure of the confessional system in Lebanon led political parties into a conundrum. In order to garner support among the Christian sects (an important factor in a country where 6 seats out of 11 were reserved for Christians), parties needed to be both secularist in their outlook (to appeal to various religious sects) but also to adhere to the maintenance of a confessional system built on a set of religious foundations. In sum, both religion and secularism needed to be used as mobilizing forces in the Lebanon of the National Pact. In fact, it was impossible for political parties to rely upon the support of more than one sect and therefore individuals seeking election as independents or as party members were forced to create electoral alliances with candidates from other sects. In order to maintain such electoral alliances political parties and individuals seeking election needed simultaneously to demonstrate loyalty to the sect and clan that formed its particular support base and the flexibility to create intersectarian alliances with other political parties. The inability of political parties to sort through this inherent contradiction inevitably led communally-based political parties to be dominated by one religious group. Given the preponderance of Christians under the National Pact, the development of a single electoral alliance that spoke for all of the Christian sects would be an effective way to dominate Lebanese politics. It should not be surprising that the strategy of Bashir Gemayel, who came to dominate sectarian mobilization among the Christian sects during the period 1976-1982, was to create just such a centralization of sectarian power.

The Lebanese Phalange (*kata'ib el-lubnaniya*) was founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, an athlete from a relatively new *za'im* family in Bikfaya in the upper Metn east

of Beirut. The Phalange's roots were in the European fascist movements of the 1930s,

and it is well known that Gemayel founded the group after traveling to Nazi Germany for

the 1936 Olympics and being extremely impressed by the discipline, order, and pageantry

displayed by German society. A further visit to Czechoslovakia gave him the opportunity

to become familiar with that country's Sokol movement, an organization geared to

developing the educational and athletic pursuits of young people.[30] Gemayel returned to

Lebanon eager to develop a similar group that would encourage discipline, patriotism,

and martial skill among the people – in particular, the young men – of Lebanon.

Although much is made of the fascist roots of the Phalange, it was (and is) generally

devoid of clear ideological direction and was based upon the discipline and strength of

the young members of the community rather than any specific political programme. Its

primary aims were the development of a strong nation and a "commitment to an

independent and Western-oriented Lebanon."[31] In the years after its creation, it became a

sort of patriotic "boy scout" movement rather than a political force *per se*. What is

significant about this is that this patriotism was built upon Christian identity, for the

Phalange was a Christian wing of an otherwise nation-wide movement, one that had a

counterpart in the Muslim Najjadah. Neither group was initially political in its ambitions.

It was the Phalange's involvement in the nationalist opposition to French colonial

authority and the subsequent imprisonment of its leadership during the Second World

War that caused it to emerge as a political force. Nevertheless, it developed into a

popular mass movement and first had members elected to the national assembly in 1951,

competing most vigorously with the SSNP of Antun Sa'adeh.

The role of the Phalange in bolstering the Chamoun regime during the *hawadeth* and

its own "counterrevolution" of 1958, in which the Phalange held out against Shehab's

regime until they were included in the cabinet, furthered the political involvement of the

party and served as a platform to enhance its position among Christians and non-

Christians.[32] As a result, the Phalange became one of the first mass parties to challenge

the control of traditional *za'im* and their power blocs. Official positions taken by the

leaders – in particular Pierre Gemayel and his sons – differentiated the Phalange from

pan-Arabism and accentuated the quasi-racial and ascriptive religious particularity of

Lebanon without injecting a strongly revivalist element. Initially, this was given a bent

designed to appeal to all of Lebanon's sects: pan-Arabism was rejected on the basis of the

innate religious differentiation of the Lebanese people. For the Phalange, a true

"Lebanonism" was "the nationalist expression of a multiconfessional society."[33] Yet

clearly, this formulation assumed a continuing identity-nationalist religious direction.

"Lebanonism" was consistently and increasingly associated with ascriptive Christian

loyalties. With the breakdown of authority and the influx of thousands of Palestinian

refugees into Lebanon over the period following the 1967 war with Israel and the

dispersal of Palestinian militants from Jordan beginning in September 1970, the Phalange

became the strongest voice of Christians as against the growing popularity of pan-Arab

sentiment among both Lebanese Muslims and the Palestinians. However, it was not until

the civil disturbances of the mid-1970s and the ascendance of the Phalange paramilitary

wing, that it was reduced to being no more than an exclusivist Christian nationalist

movement.

The existence of strongly Christian-oriented political parties and the rejection of the

deferential style taken by the Church leadership came as a result of secularization and the

avowedly apolitical hierarchy of the day. As a result, political parties became the conduit

for popular discontent. The average Maronite was attracted rather to better-organized and

more representative groups dedicated to maintaining Christian, community, and kinship

privilege. Parties apart from the Phalange did not provide the same alternative appeal to

the new middle classes of the 1960s and 1970s, based as they were upon established

power-blocs. Among these were the Chamounist National Liberal Party and the National

Bloc of Emile Edde, which assumed secondary importance to the Phalange in the

sectarian "Tripartite Alliance" the three parties created for the 1968 parliamentary

elections. Most of the other parties and power blocs (aside from the National Bloc) arose

out of networks established under the Constitutional Bloc of President Bishara el-Khoury

in the early post-independence period. Most of them were patrimonial and kinship-based

rather than mass parties. In fact, one of the strongest political blocs centred on the

Franjieh clan of Zghorta developed a parliamentary following without a strong party base.

In the case of the NLP, the popularity of former president Camille Chamoun as leader

buoyed electoral fortunes into the 1970s and maintained it as a strong challenger to the

Phalange as a representative of Christian, and in particular bourgeois, interests.[34] The

competition between these parties and power blocs emerged as the most significant factor

among Christian-dominated organizations from the conclusion of the civil war of 1975-6

to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Civil War: Praetorian Parties and the Consolidation of the Militias, 1975-80

The civil war of 1975-6, sparked by a firefight between Palestinians and Phalange

militiamen near a church in Ain el-Rummaneh, was the culmination of a series of

incidents between Christian-dominated militias and the more revolutionary groups that

formed the National Movement (that allied among others the Palestinians and Druze) and

the Maronite militias. The war came to a rest during 1976 with the intervention of the

Syrian armed forces in favour of the Christian militias. In the midst of the conflict in

February 1976, President Sulaiman Franjieh promoted a "Constitutional Document"

under pressure from Syria. The document was a compromise offer meant to give Muslim

and Christian sects parity in the Chamber of Deputies while maintaining the position of

Maronite Christians in the government. Negotiated between (Maronite) President

Franjieh and (Sunni Muslim) Prime Minister Karami at the behest of Syrian President

Assad, the Document also implied a Syrian programme for Lebanese foreign policy. In

the words of one analyst,

> Asad's objective was to convince the Christians they could
> trust Syria, and thereby to wean them away from their
> Western orientation and from any scheme for an
> "isolationist" little Lebanon. The approach bore a faint
> resemblance to the Ottoman stance toward the Maronites in
> the late nineteenth century. At the same time Syria would
> take care of the interests of the Muslims and Palestinians,
> thereby patronizing a new consensus under Syrian pre-
> eminence.[35]

The programme this implied was a return to a sectarian Lebanon characterized not by

territorial or statist recognition of religious identity claims but by the *millet*-style

autonomy of the Ottoman period. The Document was soon rendered ineffective due to

the opposition of Palestinian and National Movement (dominated by the Druze under Kamal Junblatt) forces unhappy *inter alia* with its inattention to devolution of power from the (Christian) Presidency and the reintegration of the army, split along confessional lines during the civil war.

Although it initially carried the blessing of the radical Christian militias then entering into a united Lebanese Front, the premises behind innovation in the National Pact served to polarize Christian groups over the following two decades. Two very loose and vague visions of Christian political action vis-a-vis the larger system emerged. One involved acceptance of the pro-Syrian status quo, meaning the establishment of neo-millet autonomy within a secular Arabist state. This option was supported by many of the established *zuama*, especially northern Maronites such as the Franjiehs and non-Maronite Christians from the outlying areas of Christian settlement in the Beqa'a. The second option involved the alteration of Lebanese institutions to recognize the existence of a Christian ethnic homeland within Lebanon, and tended to be the vision of the radical leadership of the Phalange and its allies among the other parties. With certain exceptions, the distinction usually pitted the deferential forces wedded to the historic institutions of the church and institutionalized *zuama* versus identity-nationalist groupings that represented the newly mobilized challengers to the National Pact and sectarian consociationalism.

The period following the civil war provided an opportunity for the paramilitary organizations of the Christian-dominated parties to jockey for position and, eventually, to emerge under the single leadership of the younger leaders of the Phalange party. To some

extent, this development was generational: the younger leaders of unaffiliated militias and second-generation *zuama*, especially Camille Chamoun's son Tony and Pierre Gemayel's son Bashir, were more vociferous and aggressive in their use of rhetoric and tactics than the traditional leaders. In the case of Tony Chamoun and Bashir Gemayel, there also remained latent ambitions to enter the higher echelons of Lebanon's national leadership. Amid the crucible of civil war several new nationalist paramilitiaries dominated by Christians, many of whom were former soldiers and dedicated to open acceptance of the Christian Lebanese as an ethnic group entitled to national claims, managed to develop the erstwhile political factions into competitive armed fronts. What was notable about them was that they represented the ambitions of a growing number of Lebanese Christians, especially the younger echelon of the leadership. Among these were the General Union of the Lebanese Nationalist Students and the Lebanese Nationalist Front, out of which emerged more radical paramilitary groups such as the *Tanzim* (associated with the operation of the Maronite League[36]) and the Guardians of the Cedars (*munazzamat hurras al-arz*).[37] Their creation in the early 1970s came as a direct result of the dissatisfaction of Christian Lebanese with the inability of the government to deal with the increasingly aggressive Palestinian militias. Not all of these paramilitary groups were directly related to the Phalange, but by late 1976 it was clear that the Phalange was the largest of the militias and its leadership increasingly took the role of leadership among the Christian militias. This led to the creation of the unified Lebanese Forces militia (LF) under Bashir Gemayel and the eventual eclipse of the Phalange as a unique militia force.

The generational challenge that transformed the Phalange from a political movement

to a militia had been paralleled among the other major factions in Lebanese Christian

society. Out of the parliamentary faction that supported the Franjieh family, the Marada

(later ZLA) militia was created. Out of the Chamounist Liberal Party (*ahrar*) came the

Tigers (*nimr*), militia. Yet it was the Phalange and similar youth movements based upon

an ideology of Christian national claims and aggressive confrontation against pan-Arab

and socialist movements represented by the Palestinians and Druze groups (and later

Shi'ite) that formed the core of the militias. Among these were the *Tanzim*, a renegade

paramilitary organization, organized to support the Lebanese Army against "foreign"

(generally Palestinian) elements, as well as the so-called "Guardians of the Cedars"

militia of Etienne Saqr also known as Abu Arz, and the Army of Free Lebanon (later the

South Lebanon Army or SLA) led by Saad Haddad.

The militias became central to Christian relationships with the government in the wake

of government inability to deal with Palestinian paramilitaries in the area around Beirut in

the early 1970s. Their role in the civil war only served to increase the ambition of their

leaders and to lead to four years of bitter rivalry that culminated in the unification of the

militias by force in 1980. The most active protagonist in this process was Bashir

Gemayel. In May 1976, his militia fought with the National Bloc militia in Jbeil.

Responding to the call of the National Liberal Party to eliminate Palestinian fighters from

the area surrounding east Beirut, the Phalange used the siege of the Palestinian refugee

camp in Tel el-Zataar beginning in June 1976 to create a groundswell for a unified

Christian militia. The operation was significant in that it marked the complete

submission of party elites to the direction of militia leaders.[38] But continuing clashes

between the militias, in particular Tony Chamoun's NLP Tigers and the Phalangists,

belied the unity of the Christian-dominated groups. After the fall of the refugee camp, the

militias sought to address continuing rivalries by creating a united command, the

Lebanese Forces (LF), under Phalangist Bashir Gemayel on 30 August 1976. The LF was

originally forged under a political wing, known as the Lebanese Front, led by NLP leader

Camille Chamoun. However, the LF paramilitary became the more important part of the

organization into the next decade. Bashir Gemayel, whose objective was to subordinate

all the allied militias under his own personal authority, saw to the gradual elimination of

rival groups. This involved direct skirmishes between the supposedly fraternal militias.

Over the following four years, Bashir developed the LF into his own personal power bloc

and relied on his increasing personal stature and popularity to become the strongest of the

leaders among Lebanese Christians.

The *Tanzim* were quickly and seamlessly integrated into the Lebanese Forces militia

with the declaration of the Forces in 1976. The Guardians of the Cedars maintained a

notional autonomy gathered around their leader, whose mantra was, "it is the duty of each

Lebanese to kill one Palestinian."[39] The South Lebanese Army operated as a mercenary

army of Israel from April 1979 in south Lebanon, a partnership that lasted almost two

decades with the continued Israeli military occupation of the South. These militias

remained neither ideological nor explicitly "religious" in their foundations: rather they

formed organized mercenary armies and gangs based loosely upon the former ascriptive
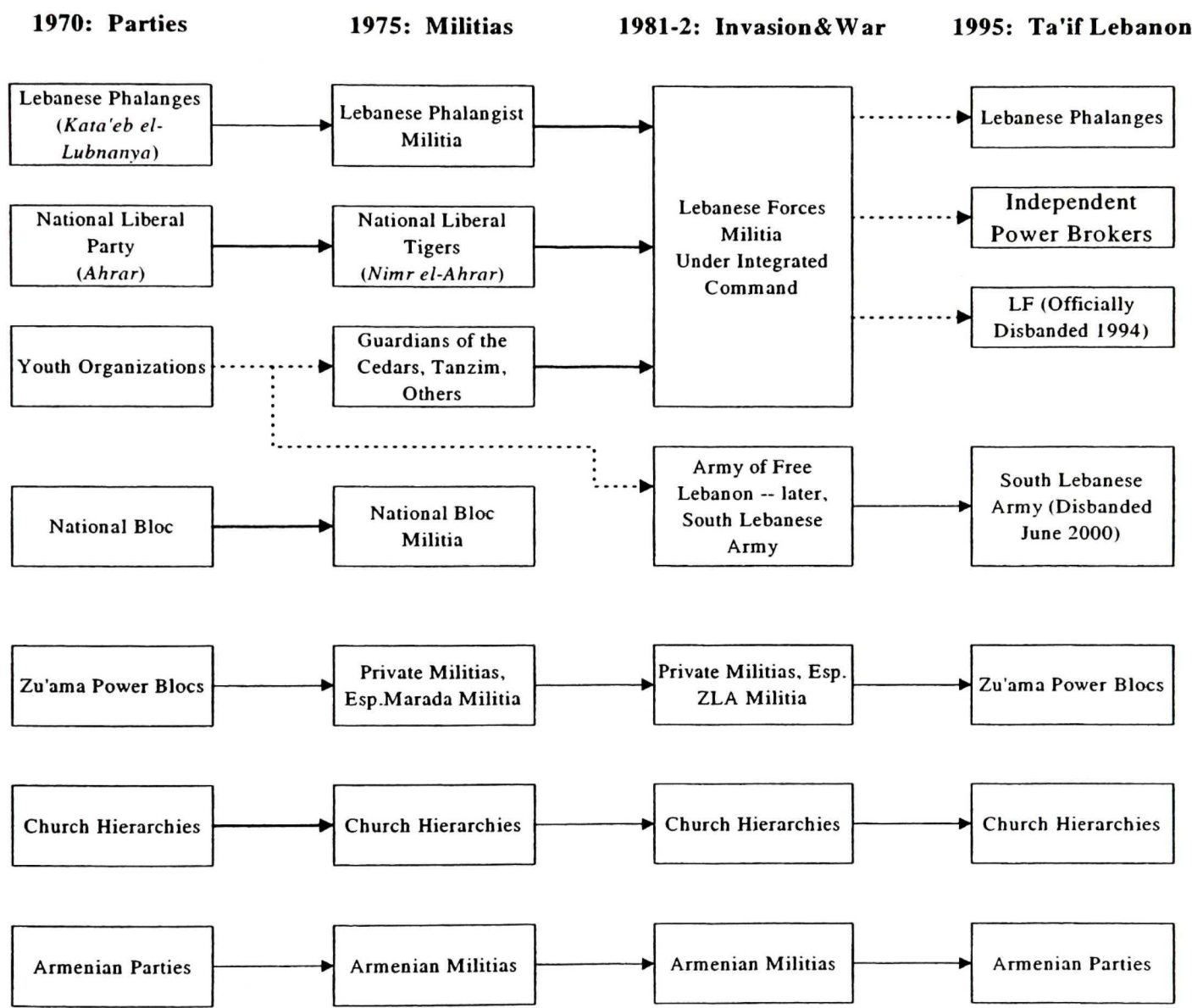
loyalties.

Outside of these specific militias, Bashir's Phalange-dominated LF quickly targeted

rivals that would not submit to his direction. In May 1978, the Phalange launched an assault upon the headquarters of the Franjieh clan in Ehden in north Lebanon. Tony Franjieh, the son of former President Sulaiman Franjieh, was killed with his family. The incident left implacable hostility between the LF and the Franjiehs, who remained allied with Syria against the other militias throughout the following decades. Continuing rivalry between the Tigers militia and the Phalange despite their notional unity under Bashir led to open fighting in Beirut in May 1979. In August, the Phalange targeted Armenians in east Beirut, whose militias had also resisted integration and declared their intention to remain neutral. However, the most important clash came on 7 July 1980, when Bashir's Phalange militia virtually eliminated the Tigers as a fighting force, the remnants of which were thereupon integrated into the larger organization of the LF. Bashir Gemayel called this action the "corrective movement", and managed thereby to force individual Maronites and other Christians within his sphere of influence into accepting either the unified authority of the LF. Those outside the area controlled by the LF tended either to accept the sponsorship of the Syrians (in the case of the Franjiehs and local power brokers in the Beqa'a) or the Israelis (in the case of the Army of Free Lebanon in south Lebanon).

In the early 1980s, the nationalist groupings of the youth wings of the Christian parties and their associated militias thus continued to form a bloc that militated against popular acceptance of innovations in the National Pact. Nevertheless, over the course of the civil war, it became clear that a negotiated change to the National Pact was inevitable short of a mass exodus of Christians or partition of the country. The continuation of armed conflict in the 1980s led to mounting fatigue with the war and with the intransigence and

venality of the Christian militia. The result was a crisis of legitimacy among identity-

nationalist groups and the desertion of Christians to rival groups that espoused more

establishment or deferential visions of Christian action. The dramatic disintegration of

identity-nationalist groups and the increasing salience of deference are hallmarks of

Christian political action in Lebanon over the past two decades, as we shall see.

Figure 5.4: The evolution of Christian-dominated groups in Lebanon

1970: Parties	1975: Militias	1981-2: Invasion&War	1995: Ta'if Lebanon
Lebanese Phalanges (*Kata'eb el-Lubnanya*)	Lebanese Phalangist Militia	Lebanese Forces Militia Under Integrated Command	Lebanese Phalanges
National Liberal Party (*Ahrar*)	National Liberal Tigers (*Nimr el-Ahrar*)		Independent Power Brokers
Youth Organizations	Guardians of the Cedars, Tanzim, Others		LF (Officially Disbanded 1994)
National Bloc	National Bloc Militia	Army of Free Lebanon -- later, South Lebanese Army	South Lebanese Army (Disbanded June 2000)
Zu'ama Power Blocs	Private Militias, Esp.Marada Militia	Private Militias, Esp. ZLA Militia	Zu'ama Power Blocs
Church Hierarchies	Church Hierarchies	Church Hierarchies	Church Hierarchies
Armenian Parties	Armenian Militias	Armenian Militias	Armenian Parties

Militias and Cantons, 1980-1988

Christian militias involved as combatants in the civil war were direct offshoots of

existing patronage networks and nationalist political parties. As such, each was

associated with prominent *zuama* from established families and each had a stake in the

process of government emerging from consociational consensus in the Cabinet and

Chamber of Deputies. Thus it should not be surprising that most of these identity-

nationalist groupings were competitive and tended toward disagreement. As we have

seen, a lack of strong doctrinal orthodoxy apart from agreement over a secularized

Christian identity led to the formation of various blocs based upon familial patronage and

later, organized extortion. Under the civil war regime, the disappearance of formalized

negotiation between the factions led to the distillation of the community into areas of

influence in majority Christian zones. In the Kesroun and Metn districts, the so-called

Lebanese Forces (LF), dominated by the Phalange and a succession of militia leaders,

created their own sphere of influence. In the Beqa'a valley and the far north, Christian

zuama created smaller fiefs under the observation of Syrian occupation forces. The most

prominent of these remained the Syrian-allied Zghorta Liberation Army (ZLA) dominated

by the family of former President Sulaiman Franjieh in the Qadisha Valley. In the far

south, Saad Haddad's Christian-dominated Army of Free Lebanon relied on Israeli

support to create a zone of influence that lasted until 2000. No matter the distinction over

the goals of the various militia movements, the modus vivendi of the militias was the

same: territorial control of chosen enclaves coupled with economic and financial

dominance and extraction from the enclave and the enhancement of their own business

interests.

As stated above, the Phalange had only weak ideological roots, and the simplicity of its ideology rendered it susceptible to reification. Beyond a general belief in the protection of an independent Lebanon controlled by its nominally Christian population, there was little to direct the actions of the movement. By the early 1970s the Phalange had devolved into a party with an essentially praetorian structure. Furthermore, its association with the personal interests of Bashir Gemayel altered it from a mass party into the secondary partner to the LF. The LF developed a state within a state, albeit predominantly designed to enhance the status and prestige of its elite of self-styled vigilantes (among their supporters) or mafiosi (among their enemies and detractors). Over the course of the armed crises and civil war beginning in the early 1970s, the ideology and political organization of the Phalange party dwindled while the actions of armed elements and personal interests within the party became the primary activity of the group. Thus Bashir Gemayel's fortunes became more clearly associated with the LF militia than with his erstwhile connections in the Phalange. Furthermore, over the course of the early 1980s, documents pertaining to the early ideological and organizational development of the party tended to disappear as the nation descended into chaos.[40] The Phalange was in decline as a political movement, but the vestiges of the party formed the core of a Christian nationalist movement dominated by the LF that quickly became a substate government after the division of Beirut following the first civil war of 1975-6.

Bashir Gemayel's consolidation of control over east Beirut, the coast to the north, and the Kesrouan as a result of the corrective movement of July 1980 left the LF with new

ambitions to bring Lebanon back under the special control of the Christian community (in

defiance of calls for innovations to recognize new demographic realities) or to create a

smaller Lebanese canton in the region under its control.[41] Its subsequent attempt to take

Zahle out of Syrian hands in 1981 was a further call for centralizing and aggrandizing the

Christian national claim. The invasion of Lebanon by Israeli forces in June 1982 was

designed in part to give the LF a chance to overwhelm all of its adversaries and deliver

the Lebanese presidency to Bashir Gemayel. In return, the Israelis expected the LF to

dedicate itself to eliminating the enemies of Israel resident on Lebanese soil.

Bashir's election to the Presidency in 1982 seemed to mark the ascendance of the

Phalange as a political movement and the concomitant predominance of Bashir's LF.

Nonetheless, the disintegration of the mass ideological base of the party over the years of

civil war prior to and following his election meant that the trajectory of the entire

movement was arcing. The Phalange had ceased to be a political movement so much as

an armed mafia defending Christian interests, and more importantly the interests of

Gemayel and his coterie. Hence it deviated from the desires of its larger constituency and

headed outside of the confines of a patriotic Christian mass movement. The disjuncture

was lost to many outside actors: the Phalange-dominated LF was often described as a

group fighting for the freedom of religious practice in Lebanon by Israelis and various

Western allies when in fact it was becoming less and less ideological. The

misunderstanding prompted one journalist to point out that the party was

> not a group of hooded monks living in a besieged monastery but, rather, a
> corrupt, wealthy, venal collection of mafia-like dons, who favoured gold
> chains, strong cologne, and Mercedeses with armor plating. They were
> Christians like the Godfather was a Christian.[42]

With the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the various armed interventions that ensued, the LF

remained an identity-nationalist organization led by its radical wings. But these wings

had become armed gangs opposed to compromise within the regime as a result of their

own pugnacity rather than a clear religious or ideological stand. This developing divide

between the stated aims of the LF and the actions of its constituent parts wearied the

Lebanese Christian community and created a growing crisis of legitimacy in the

"Christian canton". The final inability of Bashir to translate his machinations into a

unified Christian front able to dominate Lebanon were revealed in the wake of the Israeli

invasion. Israel was loath to give him a free hand along its northern border, preferring the

rival Army of Free Lebanon as its client militia.[43] In the following months, the LF proved

generally unable to mount a serious threat to its Syrian-backed enemies in the Shouf and

west Beirut.

The assassination of Bashir Gemayel in September 1982 and his replacement as

President by his more moderate brother Amin days later heralded a decisive division

between the political and military organizations of the Phalange. Amin had an

established presence within the Phalange but relatively little interest in the operation of

the LF militia. The ensuing massacre of thousands of Palestinians in the Sabra and

Shatila camps under the permission of Israeli forces from 16-18 September 1982 was the

final symptom of the malaise that afflicted the identity-nationalist parties. The assault

was apparently conceived as a means by which the LF could hand out retribution against

those they (likely mistakenly) blamed for the assassination while dealing a blow to the

enemies of their Israeli allies. However, the sheer brutality of the operation became

legendary. Unmotivated by anything other than revenge and dissociation, the Phalangist leaders of the LF allegedly entered the camp led by Elie Hobeika, the LF intelligence chief, and his close associates. One later reminisced that "[i]t was Maoun Mashaalani's men, undaunted by their regular and immoderate use of heroine [sic] and cocaine who perpetrated the most ghastly slaughters in the camp bordering Ghaza Hospital at the entrance of Sabra."[44] The massacre marked a major turning point in relations between the Christian Phalange and the Israelis and diminished the enthusiasm for the Israeli war in Lebanon among Israelis and observers in the West. It became the most memorable event of the invasion and continues to hang over relations between Israel, the Christian minority in Lebanon, and other Arabs to this day. Despite the immediate disavowal of responsibility voiced by all the leaders of the militias and their related political wings, the massacre was the worst of a series of atrocities that began to bring the nationalist movements into disrepute.

Developments among the Christian community and the decisions of their leadership following the firestorm that erupted in the wake of the Israeli pullout reveal the sources of the collapse of the competitive nationalistic system of engagement and the development of a neo-millet alternative in the 1990s. Over the course of the next two years, a wide gap emerged between the Phalangist-dominated Presidency of Amin Gemayel and the Lebanese Forces militia that was implacably hostile to deals with Syria. Amin's moves distanced him from the truculence of the LF and betrayed his ambivalence about its alliance with Israel and highlighted the divide between the radicals of the paramilitary organizations and the established leaders, who were more closely in tune with popular

weariness of the protracted state of civil war. The agreement for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon arranged on 17 May 1983 was an attempt to institutionalize the Western alignment envisioned by Bashir but ran up against Amin's reluctance to attach himself to Israel. It was, however, perceived by most of the opposition and by Syria as a full concession to Israel, and therefore unacceptable. Gemayel tried to put the best face on the agreement, playing up Lebanon's pan-Arab connections by announcing to a mostly Muslim audience at one point that "Lebanon's sense of oneness with the Arab world is a matter of conviction and free choice" but that the Accord was the only way to ensure "liberation".[45] Gemayel's ambivalence was remarkable considering the vociferous reactions the Phalange had always had against involvement in the pan-Arab Palestinian cause. Yet Gemayel remained fenced in by his more radical coreligionists and Israeli and American supporters of the agreement on one side and by the increasingly strong Shi'i elements that had overtaken south Beirut.

The further eruption of hostilities in Beirut in early 1984 and the inability of the President to deploy united government forces into all of the city and the south of the country, coupled with the departure of the US-led multinational force in early 1984 only served to increase the pressure on Gemayel. The President was forced to reevaluate the 17 May Accord and then to abrogate it under Syrian pressure on 5 March 1984, announcing that

> If we are convinced that the blood of our people is not too high a price to
> pay for Lebanon, then no accord can possibly be too great a sacrifice.
> When the choice lies between the homeland and an accord, then we must
> choose the homeland.[46]

But Gemayel's agreement with the Syrian government to abrogate the accord ran against

the grain of popular opinion within the LF and alienated him from most of his Maronite supporters. LF Commander Fadi Frem was ousted in favour of Fuad Abu Nader in November 1984, seen to be more willing to accommodate President Gemayel's attempts at courting the Syrian government and ready to accept Gemayel's policy of reasserting government control over customs duties. However, divisions within the LF and the Phalange became eminently clear when in March 1985, "Doctor" Samir Geagea took over control the Lebanese Forces, only to be ousted in May that year by Elie Hobeika, who set about putting together an agreement with Syria behind the back of President Gemayel. In January 1986, Elie Hobeika's attempt to maintain control over the Christian sector backfired when his support for the Tripartite Agreement set him at odds with the majority of the Christian population, the armed forces under Christian command, the Maronite patriarchate, and the erstwhile leadership of the LF. This led to a well-publicized fight for the leadership of the Lebanese Forces between Doctor Samir and Elie Hobeika that exposed a truly serious split in the leadership of the Phalangist leadership over relationships with Syria. The victory of Geagea left the Christian canton under the control of the LF while the President looked askance for an agreement that would bring the de facto division of Lebanon to an end. Elie Hobeika fled to Zahle where he remained a Syrian ally until the end of the war.

During this period, the Phalange government and the party apparatus that had formed the Lebanese Front had to remain in an inauspicious alliance with the institutions of the LF. Despite strong propaganda in support of the Front, its popular support gave way to a gradual decline in fortunes over the course of the 1980s, due to the increasing importance

of the LF's Command Council and institutions and the ageing and death of its traditional

leaders (including Phalange founder Pierre Gemayel in 1985, and Camille Chamoun in

1987). While the party apparatus of the Phalange and its LF allies was diminishing, the

LF militia represented by its Command Council remained an important operation as it

formed a cantonal government for the areas under its control. The strengths of the

Lebanese Forces were their sources of financial support and their ability to provide

bureaucratic services for the population of their zones during the civil war. Marie-Joelle

Zahar points to three sources of financial autonomy that strengthened the forces in the

period leading up to the mid-1980s: black market activities including piracy and

extortion, direct formal taxation of people living in the LF enclave, and financial support

from the state of Israel.[47] Financial autonomy gave the LF the ability to create an

independent subgovernment that rivaled that of the national administration and proved

more efficient and effective in providing services for the Lebanese population. These

services included price fixing, public policing, health services, and public

transportation.[48] What is more, the LF forged a mass movement within its zone of

control, as secondary school students were drafted into the militias. All of this was

backed up by concerted media campaigns, centred in the early 1980s upon the Maronite

publications such as *al-Liwa'*, *al-Mawqif*, and *al-Maroni*, the (semi-clandestine) Voice of

Lebanon radio, and publications written by the leaders of the nationalist movement such

as Said Aql, Bulous Na'aman, and academic associations such as the Organization of

Christian Intellectuals in Lebanon and the Research Committee of Kaslik.[49] Later, the LF

developed their own media outlets, the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation and the

weekly *al-Massira*. LF ventures included an economic plan to revitalize the Lebanese

economy, the Gamma group, and the institutionalization of its own banking institution.

The large-scale institutionalization of the LF became an impediment to the conclusion of

a peace accord for Lebanon as the leadership defended their privileges and places in the

Christian canton.[50]

The essential services provided by the LF helped to legitimize its role. But it was

never a proper replacement for a national government and it suffered from a continuing

disjuncture between the political leadership, which sought a compromise based upon the

National Pact, and the paramilitary leadership, which was never reconciled to a truly

multiconfessional Lebanon. Amin Gemayel's stated intentions to restore the unity of

Lebanon and to restore the status and respect of state institutions, in particular the army,

throughout Lebanon inevitably set him at odds with the more radical groups within the LF

seeking to ensure the independence of the Christian canton or the devolution of Lebanese

government into a federal system. Through the mid-1980s he remained unable to bring

the various elements in the conflict to any peaceful resolution and the institutionalization

of the LF in the Christian enclave appeared to mean that partition would eventually be

inevitable. However, Amin's distaste for the LF leadership led to the unforeseen creation

of another rival to the LF among Lebanese Christians. When Amin Gemayel ended his

presidency in 1988, the Phalange had lost almost all of its relevance as a political

movement. The LF retained strong control over the Christian canton but was gradually

losing ground to other forces. In particular the LF met up with a most important rival

when the central government was put under the command of General Michel Aoun, who

had little use for the militia. Clear evidence of the divisions within the ranks of the

Christian population came with the final decision of the LF to fall in with the Ta'if

Accord (and against government forces led by Aoun) in June 1990.

The LF thus emerged one of the notional victors at the close of the war but its

ambivalence about the Ta'if accord made it inevitably unacceptable to the Syrian-inspired

status quo. In February 1994, the bombing of a church in Zuq Mikael was blamed on LF

leader Samir Geagea. With the arrest of Geagea and the enforced disbanding of the

Lebanese Forces militia in 1994, almost all of its old institutional foundations had

crumbled. Today the Phalange is likewise decidedly demoralized and divided. Doyens of

the party such as former leaders Amin Gemayel and Elie Karameh have denounced the

present leadership of the Phalange, forced into acceptance of the Syrian-dominated status

quo, as a "falsification" designed to uphold the current order.[51] In short, radical parties

once committed to a Christian-dominated greater Lebanon or a smaller Christian

homeland have been effectively marginalized by the Ta'if regime.

The Militias and the Lebanese Army: Christian Divisions 1988-90

The erosion of support for the Lebanese Forces militia was in part a direct result of

competition coming from the Lebanese government – in particular the army – after the

departure of President Amin Gemayel in 1988. Further, their continued divisiveness and

inability to articulate a vision for a peaceful solution to the civil war naturally drew a

coalition of identity-based and voluntarist groups toward the gradually strengthening

remnants of the Lebanese Army, largely led by Christians. The natural beneficiary of the

decline in LF legitimacy was the Prime Minister, Michel Aoun. Faced with an emergency

choice, Amin Gemayel unenthusiastically appointed the army commander as Prime

Minister in lieu of a new President on 22 September 1988. The decision was immediately

controversial – the Syrian-controlled sectors of Lebanon provided an opportunity for

surviving members of the Lebanese Parliament to meet and create a new government in

opposition to Aoun. In October 1989, Aoun's rival, Prime Minister Selim el-Hoss,

managed to gather enough of the members of parliament to elect a rival President, Rene

Mouawad, who was assassinated a month later, later to be replaced by Elias Hrawi.

Aoun was a Maronite, and his appointment to the Prime Ministership flew in the face

of the National Pact. Nevertheless, his stated goals to eliminate the Syrian presence in

Lebanon and restore order pending the reintroduction of elections sat well with both

popular opinion and various spokespeople in the Christian camp. As well, he displayed a

willingness to oust the Syrian army then occupying much of Lebanon while maintaining

legitimacy among the Christians and other sects by affirming a secular Lebanon devoid of

the militias.[52] His inability to combine effective diplomacy with his personal popularity,

however, led to his downfall. This began with the declaration of a "war of liberation"

against foreign occupiers (most notably Syria) in March 1989. Prior to the declaration,

neither Syria nor the leaders of the Christian militias had sympathy for the desectarianized

Lebanon he envisioned, and his sole external ally, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, left him

isolated after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait turned the U.S. toward friendly relations with

Damascus. The final showdown between Aoun and the LF in east Beirut that ensued

between January and May 1990 was the outcome of popular disquiet and General Aoun's

distaste for the role of the LF in Christian areas, where they had become an unwelcome and illegitimate substate government. In the words of one analyst, "[t]he rapid rise in Awn's popularity, feeding off the rapid decline in the LF's popularity, precipitated the inter-Maronite conflict."[53] The conflict pitted the final version of the pro-sectarian Phalange and its allies against the rising popular vision of Aoun for a free and democratic (and likely secular) Lebanon. The general's vision hearkened back to the reformulation of the national project under Fouad Shehab in the later 1950s. Aoun managed to assemble a fair-sized following among those disaffected by the National Pact, tapping into both secular-oriented nationalists and establishment Christians. Granted, it is not clear as to what was the precise nature of Aoun's vision for the future: many impugned Aoun as an opportunist and a self-aggrandizing aspirant to the Presidency. Nevertheless, it was the growing distaste for the patrimonial and clientelist sectarian system that fuelled his movement (and in fact continues to fuel it today).

It is well known that Aoun's decision to target some of the bastions of his likely support were a key cause of his downfall. The decision to eliminate the LF fit into his ideological challenge to the legitimacy of the militias but served to erode a key pillar of his strength and to add the best-equipped militia to his list of enemies. Furthermore, his intransigence in refusing to endorse a new sectarian system represented by the Ta'if Accord set him at odds with many in the establishment of the Christian community, eventually including the Maronite Patriarch, whose residence was shelled by Aoun's forces in March 1990.[54] Aoun had set himself against almost every group of significance in Lebanon and his doom was certain. He was ousted after a coalition of Lebanese

factions, including the LF, signed on with Syria and the rival Ta'if government in October 1990.

Aoun was later allowed to escape into exile in France and over the past decade, he has maintained a steady criticism of the Syrian-backed regime in Lebanon. In the late 1990s, the emergence of Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement/Free National Current (FPM) in Lebanon, officially disavowed and banned, has been in evidence in student strikes and public protests. For example, on 7 August 2001 several FPM activists were arrested in raids throughout the country. Further, on 14 March 2002, several thousand students in predominantly Christian universities took to the streets to commemorate the war of liberation, much to the chagrin of Lebanese security forces, which detained about 40 student leaders of the FPM.[55] The Movement taps into a wide dissatisfaction with the confessional constitution and the presence of Syrian forces, calling for an independent foreign policy and the reformation of the Ta'if regime under secularist lines.

The Maronite Uniate Church and the Emerging Neo-millet System, 1990-2000

All but left out of the politics of Christian groups active during the civil war of 1976 to 1990 are the hierarchies and organizations of the Christian Churches. Nonetheless, it is these – and more particularly the Maronite Church – that have created opportunities for Christians to engage the political system after the departure of Michel Aoun and the imposition of Syrian dominance. The core of Maronite organizations is the organized church led in Lebanon by the Patriarch of Antioch and all the Orient, the Roman Catholic bishop chosen to lead the Maronite Church. Nonetheless, it is only with the eclipse of the

militias and the ascendance of a deferential acceptance of millet-style negotiation that the leadership of the Maronite Church has taken centre-stage in the mobilization of Christians. The patriarch operates under the official sanction of the Pope as the hierarchical leader of the bishops of the Maronite Church, but his position is territorial and is limited to Lebanon. Under the authority of the Maronite Church are the Council of Maronite Bishops and the Congress of Monks. In other regions of the globe, Lebanese Maronites come under the authority of the local bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. The patriarch of the Maronite Church remains in court at Bkirké and in Diman. Although the Patriarch operates as the head of the Maronite Church with a strong degree of autonomy, he is directly responsible to the Vatican and this connection limits his independence of action. Strong deviation between the positions of the Patriarch or members of the Maronite Church and the Vatican are considered improper, and this has meant that the Patriarch and hierarchy of the Maronite Church are required to maintain a balancing act between allegiance to the worldwide Roman Catholic Church and their particular interests within Lebanon.

The tradition of Christian political mobilization via parties based upon patronage networks over the years following independence left the Maronite Patriarchate in a subsidiary and subordinate position among Christians in Lebanon. This was exacerbated with the descent into civil war. While the Patriarch maintained his role as the clerical head of the church, and as such the spokesman and leader of Maronite Christians, political movements such as the Phalange and the National Liberal Party established a stronger position for the representation of Christian interests. Maronite Patriarch Qureish

took a deliberately subordinate position to the parties, aiming to remain outside of politics. In 1977, he was quoted drawing a distinction between the political role of the church before and after independence: "In the past the Maronites were alone and the Patriarch was everything. But when we had our own Republic in 1943, the Patriarch's function and role changed."[56] The Maronite patriarchate, along with other support organizations of the Church, maintained an unsteady alliance with the leadership of the parties and militias, yet staked out a clear and consistent position in opposition to "foreign presence" in Lebanon.

This opposition to foreign presence contributed to distrust and opposition to Palestinian resettlement and set Maronites against the operation of Palestinian resistance on Lebanese soil. However, it also rendered foreign alliances (such as that between the Lebanese Forces and Israel and between the Franjiehs and Syria) suspect, serving to divide the Maronite community even as the patriarchate was calling for unity. The patriarchate remained committed to a diverse Lebanon in which it held a strong position as defender of the Maronite community, but its passive stance left it unrepresentative of the majority of Christians who opposed innovation within the constitutional system. The leadership of the Maronite Church under Cardinal Quraish remained uninspired and proved markedly unable to bridge disagreements within the Maronite community and between the militia leaders and other factions. Its opposition to Syrian involvement fuelled continued enmity between the militias and Syrian forces, further contributing to its unwillingness to compromise.

The Maronite Patriarchate was also weakened by divisive opinions within its own

notionally subordinate structures, which include three monastic orders and five female religious orders. Of particular note was the ongoing disagreement between the top echelons of the hierarchy and the leadership of the Maronite monastic orders. In November 1975, the Congress of the Lebanese Maronite Order of Monks, in solidarity with the Maronite League, proferred a memorandum to the Chamber of Deputies that supported the complete neutrality of Lebanon with regard to the Palestinian national movement and the maintenance of the National Pact without innovations as a system of consensus between Christians and Muslims. What is more, the head of the Congress, Sharbel Qassis, became part of the Lebanese Front established in 1976.[57] Papal nuncios dispatched to Lebanon during the early crises of 1975-1982 worked to strengthen the position of the hierarchy against the monastic orders. The nuncios, in concert with the patriarch, openly and vocally accepted the principle of a negotiated modification of the National Pact that granted more power to the various sects at the expense of Christian factions.[58] With the continuation of hostilities in the early 1980s, an increasingly vocal faction of the monks led by Abbot Bulous Naaman voiced the opposition of both the monks themselves and the militias to any deviation from the National Pact. At first this took the form of organized opposition to foreign presence - a position with which the patriarchate was in essential agreement. However, Naaman's nationalist rhetoric increasingly deviated from Bkirké's tone. His vocal support of the alliance agreement with Israel signed in May 1983 in defiance of the official position taken by the patriarch and papal nuncios brought him under discipline from the Roman Catholic hierarchy. This culminated in two papal summonses in December 1983 and April 1984 in which Naaman

was firmly instructed to alter his positions.

The accession of the new Patriarch, Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, in April 1986 at the height of the civil war was not greeted with a great deal of fanfare, as the divisions inherent within the Christian community and within the church itself left the patriarch in a weak position, unable to pursue the stated aim of pursuing a negotiated end to the civil war.[59] Even so, the patriarch took an aggressive stance to see an end to the war on the basis of a new sectarian agreement, differentiating himself from both the militias and (later) the independence movement led by General Aoun. In the midst of the worst of the internecine fighting in March 1990, the Patriarch threatened excommunication for the combatants if they were not willing to negotiate with the nascent Ta'if Regime.[60] This move alienated Sfeir from the constituencies of both the identity-nationalist groups and the central government of Aoun and drove him toward an acceptance of the Ta'if Accord. Preferring a new system in which he might play a role as spokesman for Christians, Sfeir threw his support behind the new order represented by the modifications to the National Pact. This angered General Aoun, whose threatening remarks to the patriarch forced his retreat to Diman and effected an enduring change in Christian orientations. During Aoun's "War of Liberation" and the following battles between the Lebanese Army and Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces, the Cardinal remained in agreement with the Ta'if forces despite a populist movement among many Maronites in support of the beleaguered Aoun.[61] With the ouster of Aoun and the implementation of the Ta'if Accord, the patriarchate emerged as an important neutralist force in support of the new regime, even if this support was tied to an increasingly vocal opposition to the presence of Syrian

forces.

With the exile of Aoun, the eclipse of the militias and the emergence of new subaltern groupings without ideological or established party affiliations under the Ta'if regime, the patriarchate became the one independent voice of Maronites in Lebanon. As a result, the Patriarchate has taken on an increasingly important role in Lebanese political affairs. The patriarchate has been a prominent critic of the irrelevance of the electoral process and has supported boycotts of the elections since the Ta'if accord. While erstwhile parties have languished, unable to win popular approval at the polls (likely due to both electoral controls and the perception of their own irrelevance) or to extract positions in the government, the Patriarchate is able to operate without resort to the electoral process and has used its considerable influence to bring together coalitions opposed to the Syrian presence. The Zuq Mikael bombing of February 1994 and the subsequent arrest and conviction of Samir Geagea led the patriarchate toward intensified criticism of the regime and its Syrian face. This criticism was backed by the Vatican, which also communicated its dissatisfaction with the process of the trial.[62]

The evacuation of Israeli forces from south Lebanon in early June 2000 and the death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and succession of his son Bashar sparked a newly instensified level of criticism of the Syrian presence. Following a meeting of the Council of Maronite Bishops on September 20, 2000, a forceful statement was published that addressed various issues of concern, including a demand for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon as stated within the text of the Ta'if Accord. The statement argued *inter alia* that the Syrian armed presence "embarrasses the Lebanese, to say nothing about

demeaning their sovereignty and national dignity", that it only perpetuated the improper

involvement of foreign actors in Lebanon that has caused Lebanon no end of problems. It

argued that "the political situation" led to serious economic problems, that these were a

direct result of the government's mismanagement of the economy and its favourable

attitude toward accepting Syrian labour and Syrian subsidization and product dumping in

Lebanon. Finally, it complained about electoral fraud and the rigging of electoral districts

to ensure the preservation of the government.[63] The statement fit into a series of more

and more frank criticisms of Lebanese and Syrian official policy. It has been followed up

by continuing criticisms of government policy emerging from the conference of bishops.

In October 2002 the group met and issued a statement condeming governmental

harassment of critics of the regime both at home and in the diaspora.[64] Later the next

month, the conference condemned the continued interference of the government in

electoral politics in the event of a most irregular byelection annulment in the opposition-

favourable region of the Metn.[65]

Despite the critical stance taken by the Maronite Patriarch and conference of bishops,

the governmental authorities recognize the Church as the new legitimate interlocuteur for

Christians in Lebanon. It is called regularly to the Presidential palace in Baabda as the

sole opposition authority among Ta'if dissidents. It occupies far more prominence in

editorial circles than any of the Christian-dominated parties or the opposition gatherings

in the National Assembly. The continuing distance between the Patriarch and the Syrian

authorities is well known, and Cardinal Sfeir has yet to visit Damascus to discuss the

concerns of his parishioners with the government there. However, both the Lebanese

government and the Syrian regime regularly court the Patriarch as the strongest

representative of Christians in the region. The consolidation of a growing neo-millet

partnership was revealed with the onset of war over Iraq in March 2003, when the

patriarchate took a strong position against war and in favour of Syrian foreign policy on

the issue. The sea change was palpable as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad addressed a

Beirut crowd, including elements of prior sworn enemies such as the PLO and Phalange

and supported by the council of Maronite bishops, demonstrating against war on 9 March

2003, "This demonstrates to everyone that there is no group in Lebanon today that is

outside [the framework] of national consensus."[66] His kindest words were now for the

support of the Maronite leadership. The strategic turnaround was termed "a historic

gesture" by PSP leader Walid Junblatt and prompted many government spokespeople to

affirm interest in the involvement of the Patriarchate in discussions on the future of

Lebanon. At the same time, opposition MP Nassib Lahoud cautioned that the move was

primarily aimed at the war, and did not mean a complete change of direction of the

overall policy of the Church leadership.[67]

Other Groups and Changing Christian Voices Following the Civil War

Opposition voices in the post-Ta'if republic have languished, as has already been

noted with regard to the Phalange, the LF, and the Aounist Free Patriotic Movement. The

relative decline of Christian-backed political movements has silenced them as direct

participants in competitive politics, ceding the field of political activity to the Maronite

patriarchate. Participation of opposition critics in the Lebanese parliament has been

limited for various reasons. In August 1992, a widespread popular boycott eliminated

most Christian opponents from contesting parliamentary elections. List construction took

place amid little competition: among Maronites in particular, just less than 69% of the

winners ran virtually unopposed.[68] However, there has been some movement on the

ground to console the woebegone opposition. The elections of 1996 and 2000, although

also subject to a popular boycott, revealed stronger opposition participation and the

election of prominent critic Nassib Lahoud in the Metn district. Syrian forces resident in

Lebanon since the 1970s, long the most important target of opposition criticism, have

been redeployed (albeit long after the date agreed to under Ta'if) out of Beirut in June

2001 and out of Mount Lebanon and the south in April 2002. In the wake of the pullout,

Lebanese Christian members of the legislative assembly have formed a loose organization

of opposition elements known as the Qornet Shehwan gathering, united primarily in their

criticism of Syrian involvement in Lebanese politics. Existing outside the traditional

party apparatuses, the gathering incurs the criticism of pro-Syrian Christian parties,

including the transformed Phalange of Karim Pakradouni, who recently dismissed the

opposition gathering as a destructive group of radicals "following the street, rather than

leading it."[69] He went on to explain how pro-government organizations still require open

relationships with the Syrian regime to gain influence.

Under the Ta'if regime, traditional *zuama* and new clientelist networks, all

representing pro-regime deferential groups, have regained their central and lucrative place

in the political order. Prominent Syrian backers and erstwhile parliamentarians have

gained from the imposition of Syrian authority and the restoration of the modified

National Pact. The list of Christian members of the cabinet reads as a who's-who of the

traditional and pro-Syrian elite. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the Franjieh clan

of Zhgorta, whose participation in the government has become *de rigeur* as a result of

their consistent alliance with the government in Damascus. The presence of scion

Suleiman Tony Franjieh in the cabinet was originally the source of a black joke, as

Wednesday evening cabinet meetings were scheduled to give the youthful minister

"ample time to return from school".[70] Allies of the Franjiehs, including MP Nayla

Mouawad (widow of the late President Rene Mouawad) and the Duwayhi clan of

Zghorta, remain important figures. In the Beqa'a, the Greek Catholic Skaff family has

been returned to prominence. A late addition to the Syrian coalition was Elie Hobeika,

whose ouster from the LF leadership cut him loose to forge a deal with Damascus and

become a newly appointed member of the pro-regime establishment after the war. He

remained in the government until his death due to a car bomb attack in 2001. Greek

Orthodox MP from Metn, Michel Murr, who had a role in negotiating the Tripartite

Agreement along with Hobeika, also became an important cabinet figure in the late

1990s.

A sort of loyal opposition to the regime also remains among deferential groups that

work within the status quo of the Ta'if Accord in favour of Christian – and more

specifically, Maronite, rights. Operating in parallel with various Maronite organizations

has been the political lobby known as the "Maronite League" (*rabitat el-maronit*). The

League has a record of longevity and participation in partnership with the various factions

that exceed that of many of the militias, and its significance to the larger direction of

Christian movements has been remarkable. Founded in 1952, the League was created as

a forum for political dialogue among Maronites of all stripes. As such, it has maintained

a significant, albeit backroom, presence in the community. Through the civil war it was

dedicated to mediating between the militias, and worked in tandem with many of the

nationalist groups, including the importation of arms to support the Christian enclave.[71]

Its work coordinated directly with the support arms of the LF and allied organizations

such as the Permanent Congress of Maronite Monks. Nonetheless, its operation as a

parachurch organization with a notionally non-sectarian mandate has given it the ability

to outlast the eclipse of the militias and the Ta'if alterations to the National Pact.

The League is now described as a "pressure group founded to support a free,

sovereign, plural and democratic Lebanon; to strengthen ties and promote cooperation

between Maronites in Lebanon and internationally; and to advance Maronite interests

within a plural Lebanon."[72] It operates as a lobby within the institutional apparatus of the

Ta'if Regime. It presides over a union of allied Christian lobbies known as the "Council

of Christian Leagues", in which it clearly remains the senior partner.[73] In addition, it has

managed to keep a close association with the Patriarchate. The League has proven able to

adapt to changing circumstances and to work within either the competitive or the neo-

millet system. Considering its orientation toward elite lobbying, there are clear

indications that it prefers a establishment style that would integrate into whatever general

direction taken by the more powerful forces established by the traditional churches,

zuama, or other political forces.

Participation among non-Maronites, including the Greek Orthodox, the Greek

Catholics, and Protestants of various stripes, remained closely related to the popular

divisions that were evinced during the protracted civil war. In the wake of the Ta'if

Accord Greek Orthodox *zuama* are closely tied to the regime and there remains a strong

Greek Orthodox presence in the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Similarly, Greek

Catholic power brokers have been included in the government under both SSNP and

independent affiliations. The Greek Catholic Patriarchate's work remains divided among

the various dependent churches throughout the Middle East, complicating its role in

Lebanese affairs. Prominent Palestinian Melchite Vicar replaced ageing Greek Catholic

Patriarch Maximos V Hakim, taking the name Gregorius III. This promised to keep

international concerns in the centre of Melchite interests, and to maintain the low political

profile of the patriarchate in Lebanon proper.

Armenian parties in Lebanon are each local branches of international Armenian

nationalist movements that have been in existence since the turn of the last century.

There remain three Armenian parties: the Hentchak and Tashnak were both revolutionary

parties originally created to fight Turkish domination in majority Armenian parts of

Turkey in the early 1900s, Hentchak representing a more radical socialist nationalism and

Tashnaq espousing more conservative and pro-capitalist sentiment. The Ramgavar was

founded as a more moderate voice of the Armenian nationalist movement in the 1920s.

In the late 1970s the emergence of a more aggressive Armenian nationalist movement

throughout the Middle East contributed to the creation of a clandestine revolutionary

group known as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). The

group was based in Lebanon and claimed responsibility for several attacks on

international targets. The outbreak of war in 1975-6 sparked the creation of Armenian

paramilitaries in Beirut, many of whom cooperated with the Palestinian and Lebanese

elements of the national movement. As a result, the Armenian radicals were largely

dispersed by the Israeli invasion in 1982.

Yet generally, the Armenian parties emerged as defenders of a community that

preferred a deferential style of integration to an internal defence of identity, and were

largely reactive. They served to defend the Armenian communities in west Beirut, mostly

against rival factions and the Christian militias that resented perceived Armenian

neutrality during the civil war. Having maintained a studied neutrality throughout the

civil war, the Armenians were close to the winning coalition at its close. Hence all three

Armenian parties have been elected to seats in the Lebanese government since Ta'if, and

Tashnak leaders such as Shahe Barsoumian and Sebouh Hovnanian have managed to

retain Armenian cabinet positions.

Relative newcomers to Lebanon, Protestant missionaries had a major effect upon the

development of Beirut from a marginal part of the Ottoman Empire to the key entrepot

and intellectual centre of the Middle East in the early nineteenth century. The highest

profile impact was the development of major educational institutions, most importantly

the Presbyterian College in Ras Beirut, now the American University of Beirut.

However, the current impact of Protestant groups in Lebanon remains somewhat

circumscribed by their low numbers and victimization as a result of the civil war.

Protestant activities are decentralized and small-scale. However, budding partnerships

with external organizations and sponsorship has given some impetus to social service

organizations such as community schools, orphanages, and community development

networks partnering with local Muslim and secular organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

Confrontation and Retreat: The Transition from Competitive Nationalistic toward Neo-Millet Style Engagement in Lebanon

The case of Christians in Lebanon illustrates the movement from a competitive

nationalistic system through years of chaos, its failure under the stresses of a system

unable to deal with significant demographic challenges to Christian domination, and the

eventual collapse of the competitive nationalistic system of engagement. Competitive

nationalistic groups based upon Christian identity were doomed to failure. They proved

unable to rationalize the need for nationalistic and intersectarian alliances with the reality

of sectarian divisions, leading to the cantonization of Lebanon, a situation unfriendly to

the demands of any of the sects. Later, they fell victim to the growing popularity of the

secular alternative presented by Michel Aoun (later defeated through force). Finally, they

were outgunned and forced to submit to the installation of a client regime dominated by

Syria that would no longer tolerate armed sectarian struggle in Lebanon. As a result,

Christians have adapted by choosing the only option available given strong adherence to

deferential religious viewpoints: a neo-millet subordination of the community under the

recognized Maronite Church and its counterparts, with individual members of the

Christian community able to negotiate their own place in the regime on the basis of neo-

patrimonial politics. Other sects, in particular the Greek Orthodox, were already

rationalized to this policy, meaning that Maronite acquiescence to communal solidarity with the Ta'if regime brought about a comprehensive neo-millet system of engagement that embraced all Christian sects.

Reflecting upon the choices Christians had in Lebanon beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, Samir Khalaf argues that there were three possible avenues of expression Christians might have followed. First were the political parties based upon the competitive politics established by the National Pact, the electoral and administrative system, and the patrimonial networks of the state. Second was the Maronite Church – that is, its hierarchy. Third was the "community and system of private schools."[74] Prior to the civil war and the emergence of the militias from the paramilitary wings of the parties, the favoured choice was the first. What is remarkable about these groups was their attachment to a non-clerical and non-ecclesiastic notion of Christianity. They accepted the foundational premise of the National Pact system that Christians were an ascriptive community, even as they criticized innovations within the system. Increasing fear and antipathy toward the new version of the National Pact and closer ties to Arab countries led Maronites (and to some extent, other Christians similarly motivated) into revisionist identity-nationalist parties. This led to a competitive patrimonial system that eventually devolved into civil war and anarchy. The detachment of militias from traditional parties meant the disavowal of any strong ideological or religious convictions and inadvertently led to the eventual collapse of the Christian party system. The second and third options presented by Khalaf – reliance upon the Church hierarchies and upon community organizations, have been pursued ever since.

Thus in the past decade, there has been a significant retreat from the aggressive

nationalist politics of the militias. Mental and physical dislocation in addition to the

elimination of strong ideological cohesion among the political parties led to the inevitable

acceptance of the Maronite Church as the major interlocutor for Christians. Certainly the

Patriarchate and the hierarchy of the Maronite Church – especially the monastic orders –

have often harboured sympathies for the identity-nationalist parties. At some point in the

future, this relationship may be rekindled. Nonetheless, the preference has been for the

establishment of a stronger link between the interests of Christians and the negotiating

stance of the Maronite patriarchate. The Lebanese government has anathematized the

secularist discourse espoused by Michel Aoun and the Free Patriotic Movement, but its

mass support survives in popular movements on the ground and in the popular distrust of

electoral politics among Christians, as well as a nascent opposition element in the

Lebanese parliament among Christians. There remains a small and determined mass of

support for establishment and evangelical options – particularly within Greek Orthodox

and Protestant groups – that would strengthen the social concern and pluralist discourse

among Christians in Lebanon. Both groups could potentially provide the core of a more

voluntarist, secularized system. However, the institutionalized sectarian system is not

likely to be challenged by a public that remains consistently nominal, and generally

sectarian, in its religion.

At the same time, in post-Ta'if Lebanon there has been a clear return to the rule of

traditional power brokers and newly promoted allies of Syria. The erstwhile association

of these *zuama* with militia power blocs during the Lebanese Civil War has been

forgotten as a result of strong ties between the Syrian authorities and internal forces within the Lebanese government. The involvement of some of these power brokers in the government depends upon their continued support for the regime. The stability of that regime in turn rests upon its continued support for the regional ambitions of its stronger neighbour. Any sudden transfers in the balance of power among the important power brokers, though unlikely at this time, could potentially lead to the resumption of civil conflict. Though the war is to all intents and purposes over, there are pockets of clandestine and nostalgic support for the military might to redress the subordination of Christians to the Ta'if regime. The threat of violence remains close to the surface as a function of the agreement of the parties to accept the status quo as it exists. Any destabilizations coming from elsewhere in the Middle East threaten to give new life to these parties, but as yet they remain unable to mobilize sufficient support both inside and outside Lebanon.

Yet the emergence of the Maronite Church as a more central organization in the post-Taif milieu promises to provide opportunities for the creation of a more reformist and rigorous church network to transform Christian activity in Lebanon. While modern evangelical approaches are decidedly foreign to the Lebanese Churches, the provision of social concern organizations and the construction of alliances with regional churches have begun to challenge the neo-millet vision established by the established Churches, although far less markedly than among Egyptian Copts. Even as the neo-millet system asserted itself in place of the competitive nationalistic system that obtained throughout the civil war, there are voices of establishment and evangelical groups sowing the seeds

of potential change. Such submerged voices are tantalizing glimpses of possible new

systems of engagement in Christian activation in Lebanon.

[1] "The surface of our planet is wrinkled with peaks and valleys. Some have the appearance of eternity, others are routes to it. No one emerges from the valley without his soul being renewed...." Bertrand Lemaire, "Vallées Saintes", *Maronites En Europe*, Paris: Editions Lo Tedhal, 1994, 87.

[2] "For Lebanon, the very fact that Catholics, and Maronites in particular, have taken the option of renewal and integration will facilitate their effective participation in the renewal of the entire country." Quoted in Martiniano Pellegrino Roncaglia et Samira Bassil-Roncaglia, eds., *Les Maronites: Communauté, Peuple, Nation*, Paris: Nou Press, 1999, 372.

[3] Matti Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986.

[4] The process of breakdown and intervention gave the French an opportunity to dispatch an expeditionary force to defend the Maronite population, long felt to be of concern as French compatriots. See Caesar Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Lebanon, 1830-1861* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 702-706.

[5] William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996), 81-86.

[6] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 61.

[7] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy", *World Politics* 21:2, 207-225.

[8] For example, Michael Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968).

[9] Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Praeger, 1980), 5.

[10] For a consideration of the larger strategic issues surrounding the crisis, see Erika G. Alin, *The United States and the 1958 Lebanon Crisis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).

[11] See Bassem Khalifah, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon*, (Toronto: York Press, 1997).

[12] Michael Hudson, "The Problem of Authoritative Power in Lebanese Politics: Why Consociationalism Failed", in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Hoffar Mills, eds., *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 224-39.

[13] Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon after Ta'if: is the Civil War Over?",

Middle East Journal 45(3) (Summer 1991), 457-473.

[14]Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, 73-101).

[15]John P. Entelis, *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 9.

[16]Farid el-Khazen, "Lebanon's Elite-Mass Politics: the Institutionalization of Disintegration", *Beirut Review* 3 (Spring 1992), 53-82.

[17] Fawaz Gerges, "Putting the blame where it belongs", *The Daily Star*, 20 January 2001.

[18]Farid el-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000).

[19]Maroun Yazbeck, "The Political Role of the Maronites in Lebanon", paper presented at the International Maronite Congress, Los Angeles California, June 23-26, 1994.

[20]Paul Tabar, "The Image of Power in Maronite Historical and Political Discourse", *Beirut Review* 7 (Spring 1994), 91-113.

[21]Asher Kaufman, "Phoenicianism: the Foundation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920", *Middle Eastern Studies* 37(1) (January 2001), 173-194.

[22]Hilal Khashan, *Inside the Lebanese Confessional Mind* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 61-78.

[23]Responses originally coded into first, second, and third choices and modified into general preferences such that first choices are weighted double against second choices, and four times as much as third choices. I have reduced overall findings to percentages to simplify reading. Percentages may not add up to zero due to rounding.

[24] Based on responses to the level of agreement with the following statements: I am particularly proud for being a member of my sect? I believe that my sect can serve this country better than any other sect? And culturally speaking, the traditions customs, and values of my sect are superior to those of any other sect in the country?

[25]See Khashan, *Inside*, 94,113.

[26]Khashan, *Inside*, p.19.

[27]Khashan goes on to say that "The intensity of group support, through a general

communal trend, is more evident among the Armenians than any other group." Khashan, *Inside*, p.69, 94, 113.

[28] Fabiola Azar and Etienne Mullet, "Muslims and Christians in Lebanon: Common Views on Political Issues", *Journal of Peace Research* 39(6), 2002, 741.

[29] Farid el-Khazen, "Lebanon's", 67, 77.

[30] Entelis, *Pluralism*, 46.

[31] Entelis, *Pluralism*, 49.

[32] Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism*, 98.

[33] Entelis, *Pluralism*, 80.

[34] Deeb, *Lebanese*, 25-8.

[35] Harris, *Faces*, 163.

[36] The founder and leader of the *Tanzim* was Dr. Fouad Shemali, who also sat as a member of the executive board of the Maronite League. Deeb, *Lebanese*, 29.

[37] Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism* (Boulder: Lynne Riener, 1995), 105.

[38] Lewis W. Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: their Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics", *Middle East Journal* 38(1), Winter 1984, 7.

[39] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 520.

[40] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 65.

[41] Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1983* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984), 115.

[42] Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1989), 137.

[43] Rabinovich, *War*, 144.

[44] Robert M. Hatem, *From Israel to Damascus: the Painful Road of Blood, Betrayal, and Deception* (United States: Pride International, 1999), 46.

[45] Amine Gemayel, *Peace and Unity: Major Speeches 1982-84* (Gerrards Cross,

UK: Colin Smythe, 1984), 99.

[46] Gemayel, *Peace and Unity*, 181.

[47] Marie-Joelle Zahar, *Fanatics, Mercenaries, Brigands...andPoliticians: Militia decision-making and Civil Conflict Resolution*, PHD Thesis presented at McGill University, 1999, 119-124.

[48] Snider, "The Lebanese Forces", 13-26.

[49] Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism*, 127-30.

[50] Zahar, *Fanatics*, passim.

[51] Sabine Darrous, "Pakradouni officially takes over as Phalange leader", *The Daily Star* 30 April 2002.

[52] Annie Laurent, "A War Between Brothers: the Army-Lebanese Forces Showdown in East Beirut", *Beirut Review* 1(Spring 1991), 94-96.

[53] Laurent, "War", 98.

[54] Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-1992* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

[55] Maha al-Azar, "Gridlock as Students Defy Protest Ban", *The Daily Star* 15 March 2001.

[56] See Moosa, *Maronites*, 296-301.

[57] Deeb, *Lebanese*, 36-8.

[58] George Emile Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Press, 1986),126.

[59] Harris, *Faces*, 226.

[60] O'Ballance, *Civil War*, 200

[61] Habib C. Malik commented that "...Bkerke, the seat of the Maronite Patriarchate and a onetime bulwark for the defense of Lebanon's freedoms and pluralism had fallen eerily silent.", Malik, "The Future of Christian Arabs, *Meditteranean Quarterly* 2:2 (Spring 1991), 78.

[62] Harris, *Faces*, 300-301.

[63]"Bkirki's Blast Could Spark Unity Dialogue: Bishops Issue Forceful Call for Syrian Withdrawal", *The Daily Star*, September 21, 2000.

[64] Rita Boustani, "Bishops attack 'campaign' to open old cases", *The Daily Star*, 3 October 2002.

[65] "Maronite Church blasts democratic 'inconsistency' in Lebanon", *Jordan Times* 8 November 2002.

[66] Badih Chayban, "March to Damascus draws thousands", *The Daily Star*, 10 March 2003.

[67] Mohalhel Fakih, "Maronite Signals", *Al Ahram Weekly*, 13 March 2003.

[68] Farid el-Kazen, "Lebanon's First Postwar Parliamentary Election, 1992: An Imposed Choice", AUB Digital Documentation Centre, available http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/ elections92-part2.html, cited 9 May 2002.

[69] Marlin Dick, "Pakradouni Urges Christian Dialogue with Syria", Lebanonwire.com, July 29, 2002, http://www.lebanonwire.com/0207/02071905DS.asp, cited September 7, 2002.

[70]Khashan, *Inside*, p.172.

[71]Personal Interview, Antonio Andary, Director, Maronite League, Karantina, Beirut, June 19, 2000.

[72]*Maronite League*, promotional brochure, Beirut: Maronite League (no date given).

[73]Personal Interview, June 19, 2000.

[74]Samir Khalaf, "Ties that Bind: Sectarian Loyalties and the Restoration of Pluralism in Lebanon", *Beirut Review* 1 (Spring 1991), 46.

Chapter Six – Palestine: Embracing the Struggle

> **"We shall not allow ignorance, prejudice, and fanaticism to destroy the spirit of communion so beautifully visible in the Intifada, as Christian priests face the soldiers coming to arrest praying youths in the mosques in Ramallah, or as Muslim sheikhs enter the church to pray to the one God with the Christians in Beit Sahour."**
> **-Nadia Abboushi[1]**

In early 2002, the Church of the Nativity – from the outside a large and rather nondescript but venerated old shrine at the heart of the city of Bethlehem – became a symbol of Christian involvement in the decades-long conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in the land of Palestine. The Church itself is a telling microcosm of the general relationship between Christians and the larger population even as it is a place of worship for sects of varying stripes. Custody of the church and its shrine is divided among three frequently squabbling groups of monks: the Roman Catholic Franciscans, Greek Orthodox monks, and Armenian Orthodox monks. Since the establishment of Status Quo agreements between the European powers in 1852, custody of portions of the church has been apportioned to each of the three groups. The Greek Orthodox monks retain pride of place by controlling the main body of the church, the aisles, and the grotto of the nativity underneath the altar. The Armenian Orthodox clergy control one north transept of the church and are allowed to use the grotto on occasion. The Roman Catholic Latin Church has control over one portion of the grotto and an altar there, known as the Grotto of the Manger and maintains a star adjacent that marks the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Both the Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches retain the right to travel through the church to the sites of their respective custody.[2] The awkward division of the church into sectarian enclaves has often led to vitriolic antagonism between the churches. But

disputes over control of specific portions of the church were put into new perspective by the entry of several Palestinian militants seeking refuge from an armed Israeli incursion beginning in early April 2002.

For more than a month, beginning 2 April, the Church of the Nativity remained under siege by Israeli forces. Inside, Muslim militants, Christian parishioners and clergy alike were trapped with little to do but ransack the kitchens of the beleaguered priests, themselves unwilling to abandon the church out of a mixture of devotion and reticence to leave the holy place to their sectarian rivals. Conditions inside the church were dismal: the lack of sufficient provision for food, the stench of a dead militant, and the odour of approximately 200 men inside the claustrophobic interior of the church all seemed to mirror the misery of ordinary Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat made his presence known as an *eminence grise* directing negotiations from his own besieged headquarters in Ramallah. The remote oversight of negotiations seemed to signify that the fate of all those within the Church was in the hands of forces above and outside their control. Roman Catholic Franciscans appeared to be somewhat more resigned to the presence of the militants than their Greek and Armenian Orthodox counterparts, but all of the priests retained an uneasy neutrality with regard to the presence of the militants, even as they bemoaned the disruption of the tranquility of the site. Toward the end of the siege on 2 May, foreign supporters of an international pro-peace movement, the Christian Peacemaker Teams, managed to enter the church while several of their comrades were detained outside.[3] The event had brought together Christian and Muslim Palestinians, the

leadership of the Israeli government and defence forces and Palestinian Authority, foreign

journalists and interested parties in one place to witness the ongoing struggle between

Palestinians and Israelis.

Somehow the siege had managed to provide a picture of the Palestinian plight in

miniature. Outside, the people of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were equally besieged in

their stuffy apartments, with Christian and Muslim Palestinians alike subject to strict

curfews on penalty of death while Israeli forces moved through the towns and cities

searching for presumed supporters of the Palestinian paramilitaries. Despite no lack of

trying, the Israeli government was unable to force Palestinian leaders into steering

negotiations away from Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, and the entire incursion

served to increase the level of international criticism of Israeli actions toward the

Palestinian population. Amidst the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, Christian

groups in Palestine and abroad were increasingly being forced to take sides and denounce

the violence then being unleashed.

The Church of the Nativity siege opened the eyes of the world to the politicized status

of Christian holy sites subject at once to Israeli claims and Palestinian veneration. Yet

Christian groups were only a part of a conflict that has eminently religious symbols at its

heart. For example, one of the most intractable issues in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

remains that of the status of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Muslim, Jewish, and

Christian holy places contained therein. Until 1967, the Old City of Jerusalem remained

under Jordanian administration and brushed up against the armistice line that divided

Jordan and Israel. After 1967, the Old City was captured and annexed by the state of

Israel, which today declares that it is an integral part of the "eternal and undivided" capital of the Jewish homeland.

Various groups inhabit the Old City, but the greater proportion of its inhabitants remains Palestinian, many of them Christian. In the aftermath of the annexation of the Old City, the southeast portion of the Old City has been developed as a magnet for Jewish pilgrimage, centring on the Kotel and the "wailing wall". In the meantime, residences elsewhere in the Old City have become the front trenches of a war of position between Jewish groups intent on acquiring property in the area and Palestinians and others who are intent on retaining their hold on the holiest piece of real estate on earth. The Old City has been notionally divided into four quadrants: the "Muslim Quarter" in the northeast, the "Jewish Quarter" in the southeast, the "Armenian Quarter" in the southwest, and the "Christian Quarter" in the northwest.

Much like the distinctive religious groups in Palestinian society, this subdivision is on the surface a neat and ideal compartmentalization of the social cleavages present within the city. Below the surface, however, a patchwork of subsections and enclaves betrays the disunity of factions and groups. Appearances of unity are belied by the existence of complicated inner conflicts between and among the notional sects of Jerusalem. Yet despite the dissatisfactions of individual groups, a rough acceptance of a religious status quo has established a Jerusalem of three religions. As a result, there is general consensus among Palestinian Christians in the street in favour of a settlement that will guarantee Christian rights as a religious minority in an Arab state. This rough unity characterizes the Christian community among Palestinians who, in spite of their division among several

different sects, tend to agree on the broad strokes of a neo-millet partnership with the

powers that be, both under Israeli and Palestinian authority. Christians in the Holy Land

are Palestinian and their preference for Palestinian statehood and national rights is clear.

BACKGROUND

Christianity began in Palestine following the death of Christ, c.30 CE. During the

early years of its development, the church existing in Palestine was a Jewish sect, equally

dominated by a Jewish leadership. As such, Christians in Palestine suffered the same

dispersion and dispossession as their orthodox Jewish compatriots during the period of

Roman occupation and persecution beginning in 70 CE. The depopulation of the region

following that era made Palestine a marginal part of the Roman Empire in the ensuing

centuries. This continued in spite of the official adoption of Christianity as the religion of

Rome in 391. Despite its status as a notional focal point of Christianity, Palestine

remained less relevant to the great religious controversies of the third to the tenth century

than other regions of the empire. Even so, it was singularly affected by divisions within

Christianity as every sect sought to maintain a toehold within the land of Jesus Christ's

birth. Byzantine overlordship encouraged the continued primacy of the Greek Orthodox

Church, at the time known as the Melchite (or "imperial") Church. Jacobites (followers

of the monophysite doctrine established as a result of the Council of Chalcedon in 451)

and other oriental sects remained in small groups throughout the region.

The Islamic conquest of Palestine in 636 ushered in a period of gradual decline in

numbers of Christians and set the stage for the polarization of Eastern Christianity

between Rome and local patriarchates as a result of the Crusades. Dominance of Muslim elites was coupled with the assumption that Palestine was an integral part of *dar al-Islam*, the world controlled by Muslims and introduced by conquest to the religion of Islam.[4] The role of Jerusalem in the tradition of the Prophet's ascension to heaven and the later construction of the *haram al-sherif*, the "noble sanctuary" of the Dome of the Rock and the *al-aqsa* mosque on the central high place of Jerusalem set the city apart as a centre of Muslim pilgrimage and worship.

The era of the Crusades was significant to the entire Middle East, but as the target of crusader intentions, Palestine was uniquely affected, with lasting implications. The Crusades placed Palestinian Christians in a difficult position, as their association with Christendom made them suspect among the local Muslim population as collaborators, while their adherence to the Eastern churches did not endear them to their Roman Catholic conquerors. Quite apart from the continuing legacy of distrust that the Crusades created between Christians and Muslims, Roman attempts to reintegrate Eastern churches dating from this time spawned strong hostility between Eastern churches and Roman Catholic and Uniate (reunited with Rome) churches. Ongoing diplomacy and missionary activity on the part of the Roman Catholic Church succeeded in winning many Middle Eastern Christians to the recognition of papal authority. This was added to a small emigrant community of Christians who came with the crusaders. Today these groups form the Latin and Uniate Churches in the Middle East, and their distinction from the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental churches remains the most significant structural attribute of Palestinian Christendom. Unlike Lebanon, where the great majority of Christians have

accepted papal authority and joined the greater Roman Catholic community, and unlike

Egypt, where Roman Catholicism has made only minimal inroads, Palestinian

Christianity is divided almost equally between Eastern and Western churches, leading to a

highly divided and mixed atmosphere among Christians.

Under the Ottoman Empire, these communities were governed through *millet*

organization and retained their privileges to free practice of their religion. Their numbers

dwindled as a result of emigration and conversion, but the system allowed the continued

presence of minority communities in established numbers. As in other regions, the later

Ottoman period brought emancipation of the Christian population from the erstwhile

burdens of the *jizya* tax and exclusion from national institutions such as the army and the

bureaucracy. In the late nineteenth century, the influx of both Jewish immigration and

Christian missionary presence presented a demographic and philosophical challenge to

Muslims and indigenous Christians alike. Western missionaries managed some inroads

among the Arab Christian population of Palestine but remained a minor presence.

In Palestine, the close of Ottoman rule meant occupation of the land by British forces

under the League of Nations mandate established at the end of the First World War. The

absence of a full agreement over postcolonial administration at the close of the mandatory

period led to internal strife and then the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. The war divided

Palestinian nationals between the new state of Israel and its Arab neighbours. Christian

Palestinians shared their compatriots' fate, finding themselves under the administration of

various states, including Jordan, Egypt, and Israel. As a result, they have become

minorities within a minority refugee community in their countries of exile. The

concentration of Christians in northern portions of Palestine, especially Galilee and "the

triangle" region along the border of the West Bank in central Israel, left a larger portion of

them in Israeli-controlled areas of Palestine after the war. In spite of the dislocations of

war, each of the major churches; Eastern Orthodox, Latin, and Uniate, retained large

portions of property throughout Palestine.

Relative Demographics

The continued dispersion of Palestinians throughout the Arab world and beyond

makes estimates of its Christian population a complicated enterprise. Fairly accurate

estimates are possible when it comes to the Palestinian population in Israel and the

occupied territories. Bethlehem University Sociologist Bernard Sabella brought together

several source estimates of the Palestinian Christian population in 1994, and put the

number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at approximately 50 000.

Assuming a population of approximately 1 832 000 Palestinians in the occupied

territories, this would mean that Christians account for about 3% of the population. Of

these, more than 50% belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church, with another 30% claiming

membership in the Latin Roman Catholic Church and almost 6% the Greek Catholic

Unite Church. The population of Palestinian Christians in the occupied territories is

largely concentrated in the central West Bank centres of East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit

Jala, Beit Sahour, and Ramallah, accounting for approximately 75% of Palestinian

Christians in the occupied territories.[5]

Christians form a larger core of Palestinians living in the state of Israel, originally

comprising over 20% of the Israeli Arab population. However, Israeli government

statistics show a continuing decline in their proportion of the Israeli Arab population. In

1989 they remained close to 13% of 842 500 Israeli Arabs, whereas in 1995, they

comprised about 9-10% of the total Israeli Arab population of one million.[6] Christians

tend to be concentrated in Galilee, especially the city of Nazareth, and spread out among

the Arab population of mixed cities such as Haifa, Acre, and Jaffa. A strong decline in

the population of Christian Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territories, as

well as among the refugee camps of the diaspora, indicates that Christians have departed

to Western countries in disproportionate numbers to their Muslim counterparts. Through

the years of the *al-aqsa intifada* beginning in late 2000, this decline appears to have

markedly accelerated.[7] The relative decline of the Christian population is an important

demographic trend. Part of this relates to high rates of emigration and part is due to a far

lower rate of natural increase among Christians as against their Muslim compatriots. A

study published by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies in 2002 claimed that the

Christian population of the old city Jerusalem was declining, from around 6900 in 1967

to somewhere around 6700 in the 1990s.[8] At the same time, the Muslim population of

the old city was burgeoning, leaving Christians a rapidly shrinking minority.

Aside from the aforementioned regional concentration of Christian Palestinians, they

are generally undifferentiated from the larger Palestinian population, and it is common for

Muslim and Christian Palestinians to be unaware of one another's religious background.

There is a high rate of literacy and a relatively high level of education among the

Christian population. On the whole, one is given the impression that Christians are

relatively better off than their Muslim compatriots, but their tendency to shun blue-collar work that is more readily available in the Palestinian territories forms a barrier to stable and reliable employment – a reason often cited as a cause for their emigration from their homeland.[9] Yet in spite of these minor distinctions, Christians are entirely mixed within the majority population, with only their names occasionally revealing their religious background.

A large number of foreign Christian expatriates in the state of Israel and in parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem has added complications to the creation of Christian organizations among the Palestinians. Given the relatively small number of Christian Palestinians, the international influence is sizable and given to altering the prevailing mood of Christian political awareness. It also serves to increase the number and strength of denominational divisions among Christians in Israel and the Palestinian territories, as foreign expatriates transplant the religions and styles of their homelands to the setting of the Middle East. In addition, the presence of a minute but growing number of Jewish (Messianic) Christians adds a further division among Christians in the region. Some estimates of this group place it between three and five thousand, divided among 40 Messianic congregations located throughout the country.[10] However, relationships with Jewish converts, made difficult by political and cultural divisions, are few and far between.

By contrast, the foreign element among the hierarchs of the popular churches (especially the Latin and Greek Orthodox clergy) has been an important factor. Actions of the Roman Catholic clergy in Israel and the Palestinian territories remain important

and central concerns of the Vatican. What is more, Palestinian Christians often clash

with western conservatives over western support for Israeli actions, as will be considered

further in this chapter. Generally, the presence of non-Palestinian Christians serves both

to moderate the nationalist zeal of the Palestinian Christians and to strengthen their

position in international terms. It also provides a higher number of international contacts,

thereby facilitating emigration of Christians, another factor that serves to explain their

increasing tendency to move abroad.

One would assume that a marginal group of Christian Arabs among the Palestinians in

the occupied territories could have little impact on the activities and organization of the

national movement. As a shrinking minority of 3 percent, Palestinian Christians are

unlikely to possess the sort of demographic weight to affect Palestinian politics to any

significant degree. However, the impact of Christians Arabs in Israel and the transnational

nature of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute have given Christians a far more powerful voice

in Palestinian national politics than would otherwise be the case. Within Israel and the

occupied territories, the high educational and socio-economic profile of most Christians

in Palestinian society provides a platform for greater prominence. Palestinian Christians

in Israel, more numerous than those in the occupied territories, provide an important

bulwark of support for the national movement. Outside the region, they become a

witness to the multireligious nature of the Palestinian national cause.

FACTORS OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND BELIEFS

Political Environment

Politics among the Palestinians are complicated by many factors, most important of which is the legacy of their dispersion from their country of origin and foreign control or occupation of their homeland. Foreign occupation and Palestinian displacement created a polity dominated by the national question and the goal of national liberation and independence. Palestinians have been separated by national boundaries since the end of the colonial period. The first Middle East war (*al-nekba*) between Jewish settlers and their Arab neighbours beginning in the late colonial period and leading to the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948, forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. Most were forced to flee their homes in areas consolidated by Israel and settle elsewhere, both within Israel and the West Bank and throughout the Arab world. This left a significant population of Palestinians caught within the boundaries of the declared state of Israel, becoming Christian and Muslim Arab citizens of a state dedicated to Jewish majority rule. Until 1967, Palestinians remaining in Palestine outside the state of Israel (areas known as the Gaza Strip and West Bank) found themselves under Egyptian and Jordanian administration. Neighbouring Arab states allowed Palestinian refugees into their countries but adamantly refused to settle and naturalize them.

During this period, a national movement for the restoration of all of the land of Palestine to its Arab population arose under the tutelage of various Arab powers. The rise of pan-Arab nationalism and the desire for many of the disenfranchised Palestinians to recover all of Palestine inspired many young leaders to take up arms against Israel, using

irregular tactics against a far superior foe. Various paramilitary organizations were

established over the course of the late 1950s and 1960s, among them Yasser Arafat's

Fateh faction, and the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) led by Ahmad

al-Shuqayri, sponsored by Egypt. From the foundation of the PLO, guerilla attacks

against Israeli targets became the modus operandi of the Palestinian national movement.

Following the1967 Six-Day Middle East War most Palestinians living in their

homeland were subjected to Israeli military occupation as Israeli forces occupied all of

the territory west of the Jordan River, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula by

force. The displacement of thousands of Palestinians due to the wars of 1948 and 1967

left an even larger population in exile among neigbouring Arab states – in particular

Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria – and throughout the world. The national movement among

the Palestinians was at once humiliated and newly emboldened. While Shuqayri was

impelled to step down as leader of the PLO, the forces of *Fateh* launched continued raids

into the territory of Palestine, gaining fame as the constant champions of Palestinian

independence. As a result, *Fateh* was enabled to take over the Palestinian National

Council, the chief decision-making body of the PLO, and *Fateh* leader Yasser Arafat

became the chairman of the PLO in February 1969. The PLO became, and remains, a

loosely-associated grouping of various elite-led cadres dedicated to the creation of a

Palestinian state in the territory of Palestine.

In the period following, the PLO became a more aggressive and independent

organization, establishing bases of operation for its varying factions in states throughout

the Middle East, and most importantly in the front line states of Lebanon and Jordan. Its

presence in the latter state threatened the continued viability of the Hashemite monarchy.

Following a dramatic series of airline hijackings in early September 1970 and threatening

propaganda coming from the PLO and its more radical members, the Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PDFLP), Jordan declared martial law in September 1970.[11] Over the course of

the following six months, Jordanian forces rooted out Palestinian positions throughout

Jordan, a campaign that "represented a defeat of the strategy of people's war championed

by the various guerilla groups since 1967".[12] In the years from 1971 to 1974 the PLO was

further radicalized and became involved in a major series of terrorist incidents including

inter alia the assassination of Jordanian Prime Minister Tal in November 1971, the

abduction and eventual murder of several Israeli athletes at the 1972 summer olympics in

Munich in September 1972, and the murder of three diplomats at the Saudi embassy in

Khartoum in March 1973, as well as several airline hijackings.

Despite the forced eviction of PLO activists and paramilitaries from Jordan, the PLO

scored a series of diplomatic victories in the 1970s. In October 1974, the Arab League

recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The next month,

Chariman Arafat was afforded the opportunity to speak before the United Nations

General Assembly, and soon afterward the PLO was granted observer status at the UN.

At the same time, the PLO was establishing a major foothold in Lebanon as a result of the

1969 Cairo Agreement. It thus managed to create a huge administrative and institutional

"state within a state", with the express aim of using Lebanese territory as a base of

operations against Israel – operations that continued through the 1970s. The Palestinian

presence strained the already tense relationship between the various sects in Lebanon and

set various groups, most importantly Maronite-dominated militias and Syrian forces in

Lebanon, against the PLO. Added to this was the effective alliance of the PLO with the

radical Lebanese national movement of Kamal Junblatt. The violence of late 1975 and

early 1976, set off by skirmishes between the Phalangist militia and the PLO, lit a fuse on

the simmering frustrations of Lebanon's factions and opened up a period of protracted

civil war that often involved violent clashes between the PLO and other groups, as well as

making individual Palestinians targets of Lebanese retribution. Among the more high-

profile incidents was the siege of the Palestinian refugee camp at Tel al-Zataar in East

Beirut in the summer of 1976. The intervention of Syrian forces in Lebanon beginning in

October 1976 and then the onset of Israeli invasion in June 1982 proved too much for

even the resilient PLO, which was evacuated from Beirut to a new headquarters in

Tunisia in late August 1982. To add insult to injury, hundreds of Palestinians remaining

in the Sabra and Shatila camps of south Beirut were massacred by the Lebanese Christian

militias in mid-September. The setback was decisive: "its effect was immense on the

PLO, which lost the territorial base of its state-in-exile, its headquarters, and the bulk of

its military infrastructure."[13] Throughout this period, the largest party in the PLO, Yassir

Arafat's *Fateh* group, remained the core leadership of the national movement.

Nevertheless, diverse factions both within and outside the PLO, especially the DFLP,

PFLP, and PDFLP, remained occasionally uneasy partners in the liberation effort, often

seeking more radical action against Israel and Western states perceived to support it. This

resulted in consistent rivalry among the nationalist organizations: the mainstream factions

of the PLO based in Beirut, and later in Tunis, and other organizations based in Damascus and within the Palestinian territories under occupation, a rivalry that continues to this day, although the more mainline factions such as the PFLP notionally remain part of the PLO fold.

At the same time, following the period of regional turmoil brought about by the mass dispersion of the Palestinians and the administration of Palestinian land by Jordanian and Egyptian authorities up to the early occupation period in the 1970s and 1980s, a new Palestinian elite emerged within the occupied territories. This newly emergent elite provided a challenge to the liberation organizations by establishing a rival leadership to that of the diaspora. In addition, Palestinian Arabs living in Israel had been granted citizenship since the foundation of the Israeli state. While their status as a minority in what Sammy Smooha terms an "ethnic democracy" left them largely outnumbered and politically weak, their ability to take part in Israeli democratic politics gave them a unique involvement as Arab advocates within the occupying power.[14] Their tendency was to vote for the Israeli left, in particular the indigenous Communist party, Maki, later to be divided along ethnic lines, forming the Palestinian-dominated Rakah movement. Associations of the Arab activists of Raqah and its splinter movements with the radical Palestinian groups abroad ensured that it did not move beyond a core Palestinian support base. Groups that found its participation in elections to be an unacceptable compromise with the state of Israel favoured boycotting elections.[15] The dominance of the Communist movement and the more general "inability [of the Palestinian elite] to establish an effective grass-roots political movement" were marked into the 1980s.[16] The increasing

inclination of the larger Palestinian national effort abroad toward compromise with Israel amid the strategic setbacks of the later 1980s led equally to a restructuring of the Arab vote and parties.

In the occupied territories, however, the strategic setbacks abroad only served to increase the frustration of politically active Palestinians, leading to the first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) of 1987-1991 launched in Gaza in December 1987. The eruption of small-scale violence against the Israeli occupying forces, most notably the appearance of stone-throwing youths from throughout the occupied territories initially "caught the PLO by surprise" and highlighted the development of two streams within the elite, the established international leadership of the national movement and newly emerging rivals within the Palestinian homeland. The uprising became a singular opportunity for the development of new leaders of the Palestinian movement on the ground, including radicalized new youth movements that were not tied to the traditional leaders of the past.[17] Many observed the way that politicized organizations entered into the political space created by the *intifada* to organize small-scale educational, social service, as well as resistance movements for those enduring the punishments that accompanied their activities.[18] In particular, it provided opportunities for the assertive growth of the radical and militant Islamist *Hamas*[19] and Islamic Jihad organizations, which became the most important rival to the PLO in the occupied territories.[20] Even after *Fateh* cadres took over the leadership of the struggle in the occupied territories leaders inside and outside the territories remained rivals and "two divergent strategies made it difficult to transform events into political gains".[21] This bicephalous nature of the *intifada* came as new

elements undermined the authority of the external leadership of the movement. The long-term impact of the uprising set the stage for long-term rivalries between the protagonists in Palestinian political society. Writing toward the end of the organized *intifada*, Rex Brynen observed that "[t]he uprising has ushered in a new era in Palestinian mass mobilization; it has altered the structure and dynamics of occupation; it has reshaped regional diplomacy, and the possibilities for regional conflict resolution."[22] Indeed, the *intifada* had important implications for the future in many ways, but not all of those directions were clearly foreseen at the time.

Notwithstanding the transnational roots of the PLO and occasionally strong challenges to its legitimacy originating within the Islamist movements, the PLO adapted its programme to changing international and domestic conditions. The first signs of adaptation came in late 1988 when a series of events brought about an important turning point for the PLO. In July 1988, King Hussein of Jordan announced his disengagement from the administration of the West Bank. In November 1988, the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council, conveyed acceptance of a two-state solution implied by Security Council resolution 242, thereby implicitly recognizing an Israeli state, and opened diplomatic relations with the United States.[23] This move provided potential for the pursuit of negotiated settlements, but such did not see fruition until the end of the Cold War and the conclusion of the 1991 Gulf War. The war closed with clear implications for the regional strategic calculus of the Middle East: gone was the impact of Soviet support for liberationist movements such as the PLO, as was the potential for regional champions of the pan-Arab cause. A new Middle East had been created when

the regional players convened the Madrid Peace Talks in October 1991. The talks gave

impetus to informal contacts between Israelis and the PLO that in turn led to the

negotiation of interim agreements over Palestinian self-rule. Facing an international

system newly unsupportive of their continued operation in exile and rival movements in

the occupied territories, the international leadership of the PLO decided to come to an

agreement for interim moves toward a peace deal with the Israeli occupiers.

The September 1993 Declaration of Principles (following on the Oslo Accords

negotiated between the two sides), and subsequent creation of a Palestinian National

Authority (or PA) administering small portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip allowed

the PLO elite to create nascent national institutions and consolidate their control over the

national movement in the occupied territories. It ushered in a new era in which the PLO

were able to create nascent state institutions within the territory of Palestine and negotiate

directly with the Israeli government, which had considered it anathema to that time. In

July 1994, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat entered the West Bank and swore in his first

cabinet, thereby instituting a new era in Palestinian self-rule.

For most of the 1990s, the PA operated under Israeli occupation as a subordinate

government. It was forced to submit to Israeli control over its borders and external

security, and the acquiescence of Israeli authorities was a pillar of PA control over its

limited territory. While the involvement of foreign governments in providing the basis of

the Palestinian public budget has been conducive to strengthening Palestinian institutions,

the continued insertion of the PA into the process of funding has granted it significant

autonomy to control the activity of other organizations. This is conducted through

personalized patronage and the maintenance of a neo-patrimonial approach to public

management of the diverse factions present in Palestinian political life.[24] What is more,

its "large public sector, irregularities in it fiscal regime, and problems of corruption and

off-the-books financing" have provided a poor template for future development.[25] The

perpetuation of authoritarian rule in this way makes it necessary for most civil society

actors to acquiesce to the rule of the Authority and ally with the regime in order to

maintain their status, although controls on non-governmental activity have remained less

stringent than in neighbouring liberally-oriented Arab states such as Egypt or Jordan.[26]

Organizations opposed to the Oslo Accords were gradually strangled of resources and

disciplined through security crackdowns such that the Authority and its associated

auspices remain the voice of the Palestinian resistance. The Palestinian Authority

government was composed of an executive committee directed by Chairman Arafat and

an elected assembly, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Since its inception, the

executive has been largely composed of key Arafat supporters and loyalists in the *Fateh*

movement. Such was also true of the PLC as a result of the insistence of major opposition

groups such as *Hamas*, the PFLP, DFLP, and Islamic Jihad on boycotting participation in

PLC elections, held in January 1996.

The creation of the Palestinian Authority was a milestone in the development of

Palestinian national ambitions and introduced a new dynamic in the leadership of the

Palestinian national movement. A new elite group composed of "outsiders" (leaders

coming from the PLO movement in exile), and "insiders" (Palestinians who had remained

in the West Bank and Gaza since the occupation) was created. At once, it restored the

PLO's ability to speak for Palestinians living under the occupation and integrated the two groups of disparate backgrounds. Even so, the elite leadership of the PA remained "overwhelmingly male, Muslim, and *Fateh*, made up of people who had proved their dedication to the movement."[27] Some have stressed the continuity between the pre-territorialization period of international struggle and the post-Oslo period of competitive politics in a neo-patrimonial framework.[28] However the transition is viewed, the newly established PA became the nexus of a new struggle for control over the national movement between the executive leadership of the Authority, established elite leaders from the territories, and radical opponents.

Some analysts stress the success of Arafat's group of outsiders and loyalists in eclipsing the *intifada*-era leadership of insiders while at the same time becoming the arbiter of politics against the strong Islamist rivals stemming from the Muslim Brotherhood and *Hamas* organizations.[29] With the creation of the PA and the consolidation of power by Arafat's group, it is argued, the Authority quashed dissent and provided patrimonial and patronage benefits for its corrupt leadership. Therefore, suggests Glenn Robinson, the process of consolidation undertaken by the PLO over the Authority has been a clear departure from the earlier need for negotiation and deliberation used during the years in exile.[30] Others, however, stress the relatively liberal approach taken by the regime as compared to other Arab states and its consistent efforts at providing opportunities for electoral participation and dissent.[31] Both arguments have their merits. It is clear that the *Fateh* executive of the PA seeks to maintain control over the national movement and that rivals are limited through various actions. At the same

time, the leadership of the PA uses both carrots and sticks in its approach in an attempt to

defend its position both internally and externally. While it regularly arrested and detained

opposition activists for their militant activities through the post-Oslo period in the 1990s,

it was also known to restore such activists to their freedom and co-opt them through

offering them positions in the PA.

In late September 1995, after some delays in the previously accepted timetable, the

Declaration of Principles was followed up by a second agreement ("Oslo II"). The

agreement set the stage for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho areas (later

delineated "area A"), coupled with Israeli security controls and Palestinian regulation in a

second region ("area B"), and the retention of full Israeli control over a larger portion of

the West Bank ("area C"). The agreement came with commitments to transfer territory

from areas B and C to fuller Palestinian control through interim arrangements aimed at a

final status agreement to be reached beginning in 1996. The assassination of Israeli

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 ushered in a period of increased dissent

among Oslo opponents on both Israeli and Palestinian sides, later emboldened by the

election of Likud party Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had been vociferously

critical of the security implications of the promised redeployments. At Wye Plantation in

October 1998, Israel agreed to implement a pullout that would give the PA control over a

wider proportion of the occupied territories but the implementation of the accord

languished under the disruption of Netanyahu's coalition government. In May 1999,

Netanyahu and his Likud party was defeated and replaced by Ehud Barak and the Labour

party. Barak had pledged to work toward comprehensive peace settlements throughout

the region and sought to proceed to final status negotiations with PA Chairman Arafat at

Camp David in the summer of 2000. In the event, the two failed to achieve final

agreement and negotiations broke down after the January 2001 with the renewal of

Palestinian uprisings against Israeli occupation.

The ins and outs of the peace process over the course of the 1990s have been reflected

in a fluid evolution of Israeli Arab support patterns. Rakah and its ideological descendent

Hadash have maintained their limited support among Israeli Arab voters in Knesset

elections, and the emergence of newer factions, especially Islamist and secular nationalist

ones, unassociated with the radical left has been an important point of development.[32] Of

particular note in the late 1990s was the rise of new leaders in nationalists such as

Hadash's Ahmed Tibi and Balad leader Azmi Bishara. Despite the rise of new leadership,

personal and philosophical divisions continue to hamper Israeli Arab unity even as

average Palestinian Arabs increasingly sympathize with their compatriots in the occupied

territories.

The *al-aqsa intifada* began after the visit of Israeli Likud party leader and then

potential candidate for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to the *haram al-sherif,* home of the

eponymous mosque, on 28 September 2000. The act was a deliberately provocative one

designed to give Sharon enhanced publicity, and in conflicting versions it provided a

pretext or an enticement for the eruption of violence between Palestinians and their Israeli

occupiers. The uprising marked the concentration of the national movement within the

Palestinian Authority, as units allied to the regime presented the strongest initial

challenges to Israeli occupation, among them the elite Force 17 Presidential Guard,

Fateh-organized Tanzim militias organized throughout Palestinian towns and villages, and the semi-clandestine *al-aqsa* Martyrs' Brigade established by *Fateh* militants to rival *Hamas* suicide bombers. The interception of a ship carrying arms to Palestine and the capture of documents linking the PA with the militant elements brought an end to negotiations and the new government of Ariel Sharon refused to deal with the PA throughout 2001-2. Throughout the period, continuing gunfights in West Bank areas abutting Israel and the sustained campaign of suicide bombers sponsored by radical Palestinian groups have spurred armed Israeli crackdowns.

The violence came to a head with the launch of the Israeli forces' Operation Defensive Shield, the reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in April 2002. This came with armed assaults on several Palestinian cities, most importantly Jenin, which was the site of a deadly pitched battle between the Israeli Defence Forces and Palestinian militants during the same period as the Church of the Nativity siege. A UN fact-finding mission carried out after the assaults found that 497 Palestinians had been killed between 1 March and 7 May 2002, with 1447 wounded. Over 17000 people were rendered homeless through the military operations.[33] While Israeli reaction was widely denounced as disproportionate, the renewed occupation showed every sign of permanency.

At the same time, the new *intifada* unleashed criticism from both foreign and domestic sources. International criticism of the PA has focused on its role in sponsoring the activities of militants and its unwillingness to accept more democratic and transparent principles of organization. Internal criticism focuses upon widespread corruption and greed within the leadership of the PA. Coupled with the American insistence on "new

leadership" for the Authority, the criticisms compelled some sort of change in the administrative structure of the Authority. The Palestinian President responded by the long-called for appointment of a Prime Minister in March 2003. The atmosphere of tension and violence that has characterized the Palestinian territories since late 2000 has curtailed the normalization of politics within the system. Further, the widescale redeployment of Israeli forces back into Palestinian-controlled areas and the continued siege of Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah through much of 2002 significantly eroded the presence of the PA. However, it remains the chief representative of the political ambitions of the Palestinian people.

Given the inherent challenges of politics among the Palestinians, it is not surprising that the involvement of non-state actors, among them religious groups, face controls that limit their activity. This comes both from Israelis, who among other measures limit the movement of Palestinians in and out of the territories and control movement within the territories, and from the PA, which has been relatively careful to maintain its control over the institutions of a nascent Palestinian state. However the limitations that constrain the activity of the more militant Islamist elements are not applied against Christian organizations, and Christians are granted a wide degree of freedom of association and assembly under both Palestinian and Israeli authorities. For the most part, the freedom of Christians is limited only to the same extent that all Palestinians without Israeli citizenship are forced to live within the occupied territories and are denied full mobility between points within the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

However, the control of existing holy sites, extremely important to the status of

individual denominations in Palestine, are governed by a series of agreements that date

back to 1852. At the time, Ottoman Sultan Abdul Majid agreed to the creation of a series

of rules that left certain groups in possession of specific holy places identified by

tradition. Attempts on the part of Roman Catholic France to alter the Status Quo of 1852

were in part responsible for the eruption of the Crimean War in 1854 and the resulting

settlements between the colonial powers at the time studiously enforced the custody rights

delineated by the Status Quo. Under Article 62 of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, the

Ottoman finding of 1852 was recognized as the reigning document as regards control

over Christian holy sites in Palestine, with the powers agreeing that "it is well understood

that no alterations can be made to the *status quo* in the Holy Places."[34] The force of

history has stood behind the Status Quo. Postcolonial regimes have maintained the status

quo as a means of avoiding interreligious friction and external intervention, and as a

result the agreement has been defended by each of the sects in Palestine with all the

authority of a sacred text. Occasional attempts to repair and refurbish the holy sites

remain extremely controversial. However, the custodial Churches are usually successful

in negotiating to repair individual items. When the disputes relate to public safety or

specific national interests defined by Israeli authorities, or when the disputes become

especially vexatious, Israeli authorities will become directly involved.

Beliefs

Almost uniquely among Middle Eastern societies, Christians in Palestine are strongly

divided by their sectarian affiliations. The largest group is the Greek Orthodox Church

(known in Arabic as *Rum Orthodoxia*, a label dating from a time when the group was associated with the imperial religion) making up around 50% of the identified Christian population. Latin and Eastern Rite Roman Catholics make up the majority of the rest.

The predominance of the Greek Orthodox is significant in that the Church is characterized by a singular nominalism that is more pervasive than among other Middle Eastern Churches. This pattern is effective throughout the Middle East, but among the Palestinians it has achieved a high point. One study among Christians in Nazareth established that almost two-thirds of Palestinian Christians do not attend church apart from major holidays and family occasions: among the Greek Orthodox, the figure is much higher.[35] This is not new: it is common knowledge that level of attendance within the Church has been much lower than among other denominations for decades.[36]

The reason usually stated for the high degree of nominalism in the Church is the disjuncture between the Arab culture of adherents and the insistence on the part of the leadership of the church on the maintenance of a Greek Liturgy and a hierarchy dominated by Greek expatriates. The inability of Arab parishioners to make strong inroads within the power structures of the Church and its apparent irrelevance to people within their own countries in past decades has led to a collective apathy that does not characterize other sects. This remains true in spite of recent trends toward the indigenization of the church: for example, an Arab patriarch was first elected in 1980.[37] Another matter that must be considered is the lack of a strong reformist or revisionist movement in the church along the lines of the Coptic Orthodox Sunday School movement or the Christian nationalist youth movements dominated by Maronites in

Lebanon. When such movements have emerged within the Orthodox Church, the

division of Orthodoxy between four sees and dozens of countries has inhibited their

growth. On one side, the high degree of nominalism within the Greek Orthodox Church

has led to a continuing hemorrhage of adherents toward modernist and missionary groups,

mostly to the benefit of Anglicans and other Protestants. It has also encouraged a

secularistic nationalism that agrees with placing religion in second place to national self-

determination and individual liberty.

Nominalism leads to a singular disavowal of strong doctrinal orthodoxy. Beliefs

remain fluid as far as the official doctrines of the church, but loyalty in the form of the

display of Christian symbols outside the home remains common. There are relatively

frequent common causes claimed between Palestinian Muslims and Christians, but this

extremely rarely translates into interreligious marriages or nominal conversions.[38] All of

this points to a high level of identity focus among Palestinians combined with a low level

of voluntaristic attachment to the churches. In short, when Christian faith matters to

Palestinians of the Orthodox sect, it is most important as an individual or clan label rather

than as a philosophy of devotion to Christian doctrines.

A high level of nominalism is also evident among other Christian groups, including

the Roman Catholic churches, being the Greek Catholic and Latin Rite Churches, as well

as the Syrian and Armenian Catholics. Religious identification encourages religious

beliefs that are based upon sectarian associations. A significant foreign element

dominates the Latin Church in Palestine, as well as the Protestant groups. However, the

Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have managed to avoid the difficulties of

imposing foreign leadership through the more consistent indigenization of the church leadership. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church all of this is in agreement with a general trend toward decentralization and indigenization implicit since the council of Vatican II. As a result, parishioners are more seriously dedicated to the official doctrines and practice of the church. Add to this the natural pull of the "Holy Land" for zealous adherents of the orthodox beliefs of the church, and one finds a group that tolerates a syncretic mix of religious identity mixed with voluntarist fervour. This has been displayed in a generally higher level of commitment to Church activity among the more conservative Roman Catholic and Protestant adherents.

The official policy of the Jewish state with regard to non-Jews both within and outside the declared boundaries of the state of Israel reinforces the identity conception of religion already implicit among Arab Muslims and Christians. Israeli national identity is strongly attached to an ascriptive religious loyalty that blends ethnicity and religion in popular and official discourse. The basis of Israeli nationalism is rooted in a Jewish conception of identity that instantly draws a religious dividing line between declared Jews (regardless of their internal orthodoxy) and non-Jews. The "right of return" that guarantees Jews worldwide the right of citizenship in Israel remains the foundation of citizenship law in Israel and provides a means to exclude both Israeli Arab Christians and Muslims in addition to Christians of Jewish descent.

The traditional Churches dominant among Palestinians do not provide a strong challenge to this culture. Aside from a certain degree of cynicism about the foreign element involved in the Greek Orthodox Church, most Palestinian Christians are positive

toward the internal hierarchy of their churches. In addition, this is coupled with a strong

identification with the nationalist project. On the whole, Christians are positive toward a

negotiated solution with the Israeli state, but they are also fully supportive of the

nationalist project and the creation of a Palestinian state. Occasional opposition to the

leadership of the PA is almost never coupled with defection from the goal of national

independence and resistance. In sum, Christian identity is not typically directed against

the Palestinian movement: rather it is united with the movement against Zionism

epitomized by the Israeli state.

The nationalist project has had an effect upon more voluntarist Christian organizations

and churches. Although small in number, Protestant groups have emerged as activist

organizations imbued with a liberation theology that is at once positive toward pluralism

and critical of the status quo of the Israeli occupation. However, the embrace of the

national movement leaves Protestants in a delicate position. Wedged between their

preference for an independent secularist state in Palestine and the increasing likelihood of

subordinate status within a Muslim-dominated state governed either by secular Muslims

or (more threateningly) a radical Islamist movement, Protestants are wary of close

associations with the national movement. What is more, conservative Protestants are

divided on the relative importance of supporting the legitimacy of the Israeli state, since

there remains a strong conservative element guided by a theological association of the

state of Israel with the will of the Divine.

THE MIXED NEO-MILLET/SECULAR SYSTEM AMONG THE PALESTINIANS

Christian Organizations and the Early National Movement

Following the 1948 war and the division of Palestine between Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, the Palestinian churches were forced to react to the reality of exile and the imposition of various authorities over the Holy Land. Christian organizations had long had tremendous local profile in Palestinian society. More specifically, the ancient and traditional churches retained strong communal significance while parachurch and national Christian organizations had been less visible. Parochial schools were the backbone of the educational system prior to and following the division of Palestine, providing educational opportunities for Christians and Muslims alike. Churches were the institutional support for social programmes for many Christians and non-Christians, providing basic services and social support. Even today, the churches maintain properties that give them importance as landlords to diverse tenants. As a result, they form the locus of social life outside of political action: for example, in Nazareth, the Greek Orthodox Church maintains a sporting club and provides rental accommodation to a significant portion of the city. Similarly, in the old city of Jerusalem, the churches remain the primary landlords for several hundred inhabitants.

Nonetheless, after the original dispersal of Palestinians in 1948, churches tended to take a back seat to a secular national movement as the primary locus of Palestinian political life. A tacit agreement with the goals of national liberation set the majority of Christians at odds with external aggressors and in favour of the popular resistance. This

contributed to and in turn was facilitated by the friendliness of the national movement to secular claims to nationhood as opposed to a majoritarian Islam. As a result, individual Christians have had close ties to the national movement since the "catastrophe" of the Middle East War of 1948. The generally high educational background of Christians, their relative wealth and status, and the non-confessional nature of the national movement allowed Christians to be integral to the early development of a Palestinian elite prior to and after their dispossession. Nominal detachment from voluntarist tenets of faith coupled with the weakness of churches numerically and organizationally, led to the operation of a quiescent neo-millet system or the establishment's integration into the national movement. The former was encouraged by the traditional churches: the latter, by the association of individual Christian Palestinians with the PLO and other groups and by new organizations dedicated to bringing Christian faith to bear on the national struggle.

The position of churches among the Palestinians was an awkward one beginning with the declaration of the state of Israel and the Middle East war of 1948. Palestinian Christians were found throughout the various jurisdictions and church hierarchies were loath to alienate themselves from either side. Churches were dominated by a foreign elite that coupled care for the plight of Palestinian refugees with concern for the maintenance of a Christian presence in the Holy Land. Concerted responses to Palestinian dispossession did not emerge, although local initiatives were forthcoming. The ecumenical movement at the global level called for a humanitarian approach, establishing the Near East Christian Council, and through the World Council of Churches, the

Department for Service to Palestinian Refugees in 1951, including relief efforts from

several interdenominational and parochial organizations. The World Council of

Churches report from Amsterdam following the war suggested that

> ...the churches are in duty bound to pray and work for an
> order in Palestine as just as may be in the midst of our
> human disorder; to provide within their power for the relief
> of the victims of this warfare without discrimination; and to
> seek to influence the nations to provide a refuge for
> 'displaced persons' far more generously than has yet to be
> done.[39]

The statement was hardly a call to arms in favour of Palestinian rights to nationhood and

territory. The refusal of the WCC to condemn Zionism as racism did not endear it to the

Palestinian cause, either. Staffs of the ecumenical agencies, including the Middle East

Council of Churches, were prohibited from participating in political organizations under a

protocol established in 1955.[40] While local churches were often first off the ground in

providing relief services to refugees, coordinated by the Middle East Council of

Churches' Department for Services to Palestinian Refugees, they were studiously neutral

on the issues of self-determination and return.

Within the territories under Israeli and Arab supervision, the Greek Orthodox Church

maintained important local involvement and provided continuing local leadership for

Palestinian communities. The central organs of the Patriarchate controlled the

administration of churches throughout the land, the operation of religious law courts, and

over forty elementary and secondary schools. The presence of the Convent of St.

Constantine and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the earliest

Christian presence in the city, gave the Greek Orthodox primary significance in the holy

places.

However, despite its relative size and significance, the Orthodox Patriarchate tended to keep free of direct political action outside the management of the holy places. It remained directly responsible for the administration of its assets and organs and habitually maintained cordial relationships with the governments of the day. This was expedited by the continued presence of a non-Arab leadership at the helm of the Orthodox Church and the deliberate distancing of the Patriarchate from the national movement. At the same time, this distance contributed to a continuing sense of detachment between the hierarchy of the church and parishioners. Furthermore, the Orthodox Church remained skeptical of ecumenical efforts to unite Christians under a common banner, mostly out of an anxiety about the true motivation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, each of which had in turn won converts and appeared to prey on the organizationally weaker Church. Unlike the other Churches, the Greek Orthodox Church remained outside the ecumenical effort to aid Palestinian refugees until 1969, even then averring that "[o]ur principle is to avoid and keep away from any interference in politics."[41] Both nominalism and caution keep the Church from assuming the major political status it might otherwise have as the largest in terms of membership among the Palestinians.

As in most Middle Eastern countries, the Roman Catholic Church was represented among the Palestinians both directly and indirectly. The Uniate movement begun in the Middle Ages created the Greek Catholic church, represented in Palestine by the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Jerusalem, who falls under the authority of the Greek Catholic

Patriarch based in Lebanon, as well as the hierarchy of the other Uniate churches, most significantly the representatives of the Maronite Patriarchate, based in Jerusalem. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church maintains direct authority over the Latin Patriarchate, led by the Latin Patriarch headquartered in Jerusalem. Although the Uniate and Latin Patriarchates operate separately with autonomy under the authority of the Holy See, they share many institutions, not the least of which are the religious courts established at Jerusalem and Nazareth.

Collectively, the institutions of the Catholic Church were large and diverse. The Greek Catholic Patriarchate – limited in its financial capacity as a result of the relative poverty of its adherents – has benefited largely from the sponsorship of educational monastic and lay orders from abroad. Orders established by adherents of foreign extraction provide the lion's share of Catholic social and community services. Chief of these is the "Custody of the Holy Land", held by the Franciscan order by papal decree since 1333. The Franciscan role has continued throughout the disjunctures of war and division. The order, dominated by expatriates, has continually controlled the greater part of Roman Catholic properties, and today runs a seminary, a school of Bible studies, an information centre and publication arm, and runs schools in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Overall, the dependency of the Uniate Churches upon the central authorities of the Church and the absence of a high-ranking Patriarchal office gave pride of place to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the importance of the Holy Land to Roman Catholic prestige and diplomacy frequently led to direct involvement by the Vatican.

Patterns in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches after 1967: A New Urgency

The attitude of the churches to the Palestinian national movement saw significant change over the period from the 1967 war (in which Israel occupied the entirety of Palestine) until the eruption of the first *intifada* in 1987. In tandem with the awakening Palestinian national movement and a regional trend toward radical Islamist sentiment, churches began to follow a more assertive line in the call for national rights and a justice, inspired by religion, for Palestinians. As a result, Christian organizations became an integral, if at times marginal, part of the national struggle. The official policies of the larger churches remained moderate, if notionally pro-Palestinian, but the movement of Palestinians into the higher echelons of the leadership of the major churches, and the movement toward a more voluntarist atmosphere within the churches, has pointed them in two divergent directions: that of a secularist and social concern model in addition to the more traditional neo-millet approach common to the traditional churches in the Middle East.

Larry Ekin characterizes the initial reaction of the Churches to the dramatic outcome of the six-day war of 1967:

> The local Christian communities went to work before there was
> any official relief or international support. Their resources were
> meagre. In many cases, they were themselves suffering the shock
> of displacement or unable to utilize their resources. Regardless,
> they organized and functioned as best they could. Greek Orthodox
> in Jerusalem organized a soup kitchen and milk centre. St.
> George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem helped provide food and
> shelter and enrolled refugee students free of charge in their schools.
> The Coptic Orthodox Church provided rent-free facilities for
> education. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch

distributed cash grants and allowed refugees to occupy the ground
in and around the Mar Elia Bteena monastery. The YWCA in
Lebanon started their night school, sewing classes, and other
programmes free of charge to refugees. The YMCA established
special programmes in Jordan and Lebanon.[42]

The efforts blended pluralist social concern with a neo-millet preference for individual

Church action. The two approaches became a norm for Christian involvements: nominal

Christians tended toward advocacy of the secular national cause inside the liberation

movements of the PLO while the more religious followed the lead of the official

hierarchies within their churches toward ecclesial representation of their interests.

The Greek Orthodox Church: Hierarchical Reticence and Popular Support

Distinctions between the hierarchy and the popular opinion of parishioners and lower

clergy generally became more pronounced after 1967 within the Greek Orthodox Church.

The absence of a major lay council to lead parachurch initiatives meant that Orthodox

community projects remained *ad hoc* communal organizations, further empowering lay

people within the Church who often question the larger purposes of the Patriarchate.

Many such organizations emerged, such as the Orthodox Invalids Home Charitable

Society, operating out of Beit Jala and Bethany, the Orthodox Arab Union Club,

providing athletic and social facilities for the Arab population of Jerusalem, and various

scout troops sponsored for the communities.[43] Financial backing for these initiatives has

been entirely based upon communal support from abroad and domestic fundraising.

These small-scale organizations proved markedly susceptible to internal dissensions as a

result of family rivalries, continuing disputes with the Patriarchate, and the hemorrhaging

of the Palestinian population through emigration. Established groups based within the

other Christian denominations and, more importantly, the secular national movement,

attract many of the Orthodox adherents who might otherwise be involved in enhancing

the church's position in the Palestinian areas and in Israel.

Among Israeli Arabs, the Rakah and locally, the Jebha party of Nazareth, have been

strongly associated with nominal Orthodox lay people while the hierarchy and associated

laity supported more conservative associations.[44] While the Orthodox of Nazareth and

"the triangle" region of north-central Israel have been among the most important leaders

of the Communist and Arab nationalist groups in Israel, they have periodically been

joined by prominent leaders of other backgrounds. For example, prominent Nazarene

Anglican clergyman Riah Abu al-Assal briefly ran under the Arab-led Progressive List for

Peace in the late 1980s before resigning the movement and moving upward in the

Anglican hierarchy.[45] Among the Palestinian nationalists in exile, the tendency to

associate with secular resistance movements was also marked. Among Orthodox

members of the national resistance pan-Arab rhetoric and devotion to a militant

Palestinian national cause assumed far more importance than day-to-day observance in

religious movements. Perhaps the most prominent resistance activists of the 1970s to the

1990s of nominally Orthodox background were also the most ardent secularist

revolutionaries: PFLP founder George Habash, and DFLP leader Naif Hawatmeh. This

radicalism was clearly unrelated to sectarian loyalties: the apolitical attitude of Orthodox

hierarchs and their distance from the popularity of the more radical nationalist

movements among their parishioners has by and large left the Orthodox Church itself

outside Palestinian politics.

The Vatican, Latin and Uniate Leadership: Balancing Regional and Local Priorities

The official policy of the Vatican tended toward advocacy of ecumenism and international control in Jerusalem after the 1967 war. Ecumenism came as a response to the need to build alliances among other minority communities and to the Status Quo arrangements that mandate negotiations among the major religious groups in order to manage the Holy Places. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish ecumenism from unitarianism: the attitude of the Vatican, and to a great extent that of the other traditional and historic churches favoured maintaining the neo-millet patrimony that they had inherited from the past. Church activism remained based on the maintenance of the neo-millet status quo with equal rights afforded to each of the historic churches rather than "Christianity" as such. In June 1980, the Vatican propagated a statement confirming *inter alia* calls for the sharing of Jerusalem as a "sacred heritage", the equality of treatment for all religious groups, and the establishment of an appropriate judicial safeguard to ensure these principles.[46] The vision for this regime was a two-state solution negotiated by the secularist PLO and the Israeli authorities.

In his treatment of Papal involvement in the Middle East, George Emile Irani suggests that it is motivated by "two fundamental interests". One is a desire (enhanced by shared notions of identity) to protect the properties of the church and the welfare of coreligionists. The other is an establishment strategy to enhance coexistence and

dialogue among followers of the "three monotheistic faiths".[47] The two strands set

priorities, but conditions in the political environment doctor the approach taken by the

Vatican, leading it to take both neo-millet and secularist social concern approaches

toward the larger polities. Contending local priorities have eroded the regional presence

of the Vatican and hampered a unified response to many of the most important issues,

including the Lebanese Civil War and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

In Lebanon, where the National Pact and the constitutional status of Maronites invites

positive reactions to the status quo, the Vatican has embraced ecumenical elite diplomacy

as a vehicle, true to the neo-millet style. Vatican nuncios despatched to Beirut during the

civil war concentrated upon mediation efforts between religious leaders and the

leadership of the PLO (much to the consternation of identity-nationalist groups within the

Lebanese Front). This has meant continued strong ties to the hierarchies and patriarchates

and a more judgmental stance against Christian parties and militias. In Palestine, the

absence of strong institutional conditions enhancing the role of Christians has translated

into a more aggressive posture of protection of the Christian communities remaining

under occupation and under Israeli rule. This distinction has allowed leaders of the

Roman Catholic Church in Palestine to be more actively involved as political dissidents

than their counterparts in other parts of the Arab world.

Thus from time to time the indigenous hierarchy demonstrated a strong independence

of action in favour of the Palestinian national movement. On occasion, this tacit support

broke through in high-profile episodes. For example, in July 1972, Archbishop Joseph

Raya lobbied for the return of Israeli Arabs to two border towns, leading strikes, sit-ins,

and protests. Although he was unable to convince the armed forces to restore his

parishioners, the campaign set a precedent for the involvement of the church leadership in

direct political lobbying, in which they had been relatively uninvolved.[48] Later, in a more

controversial incident, the Greek Catholic Vicar of Jerusalem Hilarion Capucci was

arrested in 1974 for gunrunning for the Palestinian national movement. He was convicted

and sentenced to prison, but eventually released before serving his entire term in

November 1977. His successor as Vicar, Lutfi Lahham, was a Syrian-born Arab

clergyman who proved a tireless supporter of a strong social conscience for the church

among the Palestinians. Thus the Greek Catholic Church remained politicized, but

without intimations of paramilitary involvement that had plagued it in the past. With the

appointment of Lahham to the position of Patriarch of the Greek Catholic Church in

2000, the politicization of the Church was only likely to remain, but his status as regional

patriarch gives the Latin patriarch in Jerusalem a more influential role, as we shall see.

Understanding the need for a continued relationship with the *de facto* Israeli

authorities in the whole of Palestine, the Roman Catholic Church was forced to walk a

tight line between its desire to remain non-partisan in the territorial conflict and popular

tacit support for the Palestinian struggle shown among most adherents of the church.

Even so, local concerns were often perceptibly subordinated to the larger ecumenical

moves of the papacy in the case of Jerusalem, whereas the local patriarchates remained

committed to move assertively for the protection of their established rights and

privileges.[49] Subordinate to the international concerns of the papacy toward both Western

support for the state of Israel and for the maintenance of its position in Jerusalem, the

Patriarchate typically took a low profile in dealing with the authorities. However, in more

recent times the patriarchal authorites have taken a more aggressive stance so as to defend

their position.

The Holy See remained critical of Israeli actions in the 1967 war and periodically

made strong pronouncements in favour of Palestinian national rights. This was true even

when coreligionists in other areas of the region were especially critical of the Palestinian

movement. For example, public meetings with PLO chairman Yassir Arafat in

September 1982 ran afoul of Lebanese Maronite parishioners opposed to friendly

relations with the movement then fighting them in the streets of Beirut, but this did not

slow Vatican support for the national cause. In the wake of the Oslo Agreements and the

implementation of the Palestinian Authority, the Vatican established official ties with

Israel in 1993, followed closely by official recognition of the PA in 1994. The tightly co-

ordinated timing revealed the close interplay of Vatican desire to remain friendly with the

Israeli authorities that governed Vatican-held properties, while pursuing an otherwise

positive line of communication with the nascent institutions of the PA, whose

benevolence stood to benefit a good number of their parishioners.

However, the Latin Patriarchate and its individual priests and ministers continued to

show a preference for the Palestinian Authority, often defending its actions and its

legitimacy with respect to the Holy Sites and citizens under its jurisdiction. For example,

in October 1998 Roman Catholic priests responded strongly to a Jerusalem Post article

suggesting that the Palestinian Authority was deliberately attempting to control the

Church hierarchies.[50] One wrote an open letter calling the report a blatant lie and "a new

way to divert the attentions on the main issue in the Middle East".[51] Another stated that

far from desiring to divide Muslims and Christians, the Palestinian Authority's "tolerance

towards Christians...was not only a praiseworthy attitude coming from goodness and

respect of human rights but a strategy and a vital interest for the Palestinian

Government..." and that, "the Status Quo is being respected especially at the Holy

Sepulchre and the [Church of the] Nativity."[52]

Closing the Gap: Palestinian Christians and the First and Second *Intifadas*

Despite the latent tension between Muslim and Christian aspirations under Palestinian

authority, Christians have habitually shown support for the national project throughout

the period of the *intifadas*. During the first *intifada* Christians became involved at the

mass level in large numbers, preferring modes of civil disobedience and diplomacy to

overt defiance of the majority. Glenn Robinson relates how popular committees created

during the early days of the first *intifada* were numerous in Christian-dominated cities

such as Beit Sahour and Bethlehem, but after the implementation of the Oslo accords

came to be subordinated to the control of the secular national movement.[53] The chief part

of the campaign against Israeli occupation in relatively wealthy Beit Sahour was a tax

revolt in the autumn of 1988, and a well-publicized "Day of Prayer" that united

Palestinians in opposition to the occupation. However, as PLO-affiliated activists took

control over the uprising, the Christians of Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and Bethlehem receded

as a focal point of the *intifada*. Further impetus for the embrace of the national

movement in the first *intifada* came with the occupation of St. John's hospice by Israeli

settlers in April 1990, later upheld by the Israeli judiciary and found to be supported by the Israeli government. Michael Dumper observes that this event led to the unification of most of the Churches behind Palestinian claims.[54] A key part of the local resistance movement, Christians returned to a neo-millet style embrace of the Oslo process over the 1990s.

The very title and justification of the second uprising beginning in late 2000, the *al-aqsa intifada* – implying a promise to redress Israeli control over the Muslim holy sites of the *haram al-sherif* – revealed a tension that continually threatens to divide Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Fears of Muslim takeover of the national movement usually lurk below the surface. There are rumours that many Christians in annexed portions of East Jerusalem have secretly taken Israeli citizenship in order to protect themselves in the event of partition. Christian Palestinians have fled the conflict-ridden areas of Beit Jala and Bethlehem in large numbers, unwilling to be targeted or involved in the fighting. One estimate was that over 500 families had left within the first eighteen months of the new *intifada*.[55] Occasional accusations of Christian complicity in the Israeli occupation have led to conflict between Muslims and Christians. In October 1999, a sermon delivered at a Gaza mosque identifying Christians with Israeli occupiers led to some attacks on Christians in the city.[56] Furthermore, Patriarch Sabbah publicly bemoaned the continual decline in numbers among Palestinian Christians, calling them to remain despite the pressures of constant conflict and mayhem.[57]

Nevertheless, Christians remaining in the territories still tended to support the national movement, even its more violent tactics, whether or not they were involved as members

of the various paramilitary organizations within the PLO.[58] The result was a grudging

subordination of popular criticism of the violent means used by the national movement

during the *intifada* to the demands of the national movement. This was certainly

bolstered by the continued malicious and poorly orchestrated Israeli system of control

over the occupied territories. For example, at the outbreak of the second *intifada*, the ·

Roman Catholic *custos* of the Holy Land reflected popular opinion when he chided the

Israelis for their "disproportionate military and civil reply" to riots that broke out after the

visit of Likud leader Ariel Sharon to the *al-aqsa* mosque.[59] Christians may be unhappy

with the execution of the national struggle, but they do not vocally oppose the national

authority in solidarity with their compatriots. Speaking out of such ambivalence, Hanan

Ashrawi, arguably the most prominent Christian in Palestinian politics and erstwhile

member of the Palestinian cabinet, opined in late 2001,

> How did some from amongst us take up the tools and
> weapons (however ineffectual) that are chosen by others and
> on their own terms instead of fending off and exposing
> Israeli military violence with our own empowerment as
> advocates of freedom, justice, and peace...When and why
> did we allow the concept of resistance (and the right to
> resist) to become the exclusive domain of armed struggle
> rather than the expression of our human will and spirit in
> defiance of subjugation, intimidation, and coercion?[60]

Voices of dissent against the occupation remain a source of strong solidarity between the

Christian organizations and the PA and Islamist resistance movements, but the use of

violent means, particularly in the case of suicide bombing, has been anathema to the

greater part of the Christian community within the Palestinian occupied territories.

Furthermore, the announcement in various versions of the draft constitution of Palestine

has included a reference to Islam as the official religion of a Palestinian state, to which

many Palestinian Christian leaders have objected.[61]

Interestingly, the rhetoric of PA Chairman Arafat and the national movement has

remained conspicuously inclusive since its inception, and their images have been

designed to firm up solidarity between Christian and Muslim Palestinians alike. At the

creation of the PLC in 1996, six of 88 seats were reserved for Christian Palestinians.

Press reports often report the fact that Arafat's wife Suha comes from a Christian

background and his public statements tend to stress the two major religious groups among

the Palestinians. For example, Arafat used his inability to travel to the Church of the

Nativity in December 2001 as an opportunity to increase the visibility of Christian

involvement in the national movement, denouncing it as "a humiliation for the entire

Palestinian people, Christians and Muslims."[62]   Arafat maintains close contacts with the

leaders of the Palestinian Churches and Christian members of the Palestinian legislative

council and cabinet.

The execution of the resistance struggle has also firmed up the solidarity of

Palestinians, at times in spite of the potential for division. One of the major focal points

of the second *intifada* and the Israeli incursion into Palestinian areas in spring 2002 was

Bethlehem and the neighbouring highly Christian communities of Beit Jala. Palestinian

militants used the vantage points of Beit Jala to fire small weapons and mortars upon the

neighbouring Israeli settlement of Gilo from the opening days of the second *intifada* in

the winter of 2000 up to an armed incursion by Israeli forces in April 2002. In the event,

the Palestinian forces moved for cover to some of the Bethlehem churches. The

occupation of the Church of the Nativity by Palestinian militants retreating in front of an

invading Israeli force on 4 April 2002 brought the churches into the forefront of the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the month from 2 April to 9 May when the mostly

Muslim militants held the church against Israeli forces, they effectively barred both

Franciscan and various Orthodox priests and individual civilians from leaving the site. In

response, the Vatican issued statements critical of both the use of force and the actions of

the Israeli government.[63] The continued occupation of the church suddenly became the

focal point of the *intifada*, with repeated gunfights taking place between the militants and

the Israeli forces.

The occupation became a symbol among Palestinians of their plight under the

occupation and the sacrifices they had undergone throughout the *intifada*. The siege did

give impetus to published reports that suggested that the militants were cynically

controlling the shrine as a means to awaken international interest in the Israeli incursions,

even suggestions that they were desecrating it. But Arafat's PA presented the case as

evidence of national solidarity among both Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Equally,

the siege provided the opportunity for *Hamas* founder Ahmed Yassin to attend a rally to

shore up interreligious opposition to the Israeli incursion.[64] Leaving the site after the lift

of the siege and deportation of the militants, an anonymous priest was quoted,

> Our situation is paradoxically a good one and we gladly assume the
> hardships. In the second intifada the Islamic street accused
> Christians of indifference or cynicism. We have now proven we
> are real Palestinians, not foreigners; that the church more than any
> other place helps people without discrimination.[65]

The prolonged siege had only further solidified the Christian embrace of the nationalist

struggle – but also gave them opportunity to voice their concerns about the level of corruption within the Authority and to call for religiously neutral institutions for the PA. Statements made by Latin Patriarch Sabbah in March 2002 coupled calls for an end to the occupation with the proviso that "[t]he state belongs to all" and that "[w]e clearly state that we want to embark upon a new way, a new entity where the Muslim is at ease and lives his Islam to the full, and where the Christian is at ease and can live his Christianity to the full."[66] In the wake of the standoff, Patriarch Sabbah issued a statement clearly upholding the continued support of the Roman Catholic Church for the cessation of Israeli hostilities and calling for an end of the occupation.[67]

Clearly Christian support for the national struggle is strongest when it is coupled with a secularized or neo-millet partnership with the Palestinian Authority. The continual erosion of the Christian population through emigration appears to betray some cynicism about the viability of Patriarch Sabbah's formulation of Muslim-Christian, although it also reflects the higher level of affluence among Christians. A pervading sense of frustration with both the continuing conduct of the national struggle and the current living standards in the territories is generally registered in the form of exit rather than protest, as growing percentages of Christians decide to leave Palestine for North America and Europe. While Christians identify closely with the national movement, their preference for negotiated settlements and suspicion of the Islamist-orientation of the major resistance groups such as *Hamas* and, to a lesser extent, *Fateh*[68], leaves them in an uncertain limbo. For an increasing number, the solution is to seek a way out.

Leading the Charge: Rival Leaders, Rival Visions

Neo-millet politics among Palestinian Christians in the period of Israeli occupation has

led to strong internal rivalries and disagreements. The Orthodox Church has struggled

with the legacy of schisms between the foreign-dominated hierarchy and the more

nationalistic laity and lower clergy. The institutional diversification of the Roman

Catholic and Uniate churches has led to several divergent attitudes toward the larger

political and social cultures. In general, however, both hierarchies have favoured the

maintenance of a deferential style of elite negotiation and agreement with both the Israeli

authorities and the Palestinian national movement. This has occasionally set them at odds

with both sides. However, some members of the hierarchy and a larger proportion of the

membership have displayed a more involved establishment vision that encourages their

more active involvement in the struggle.

Despite the tendency of the Orthodox Church to stay studiedly apolitical in the Israel-

Palestine dispute, it maintains an intense competitive and sometimes politicized rivalry

with the Roman Catholic Church, particularly over control of the holy places and

churches of the Holy Land. The rivalry often manifests itself in disputes over the repair

and refurbishment of churches, such as a continuing dispute in 1999-2000 over the

creation of a new emergency exit door.[69] This is especially difficult in sites held under

their joint control since Ottoman times, such as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Church property issues also tend to

implicate the Greek Orthodox Church in the struggle over land, since the Church remains

an extremely important landowner – including vast portions of land in Jerusalem claimed

by both Israelis and Palestinians. The potential transfer of such properties from the

Church to either Palestinian or Israeli control remains an anxiously awaited development

that threatens to engulf the Church in high stakes politics.[70] What is more, the process of

Arabization of the clergy that has begun to affect the Orthodox Church at lower levels has

set in motion a new dynamic, pitting the upper echelons of the clergy against the more

radical local clerics.

The politics of land sales and the polarization of clergy and laity were only more

clearly accentuated with the highly publicized case of Archimandrite Atallah Hanna.

Following the choice of a reformist and vocally pro-Palestinian clergyman as Bishop of

Jerusalem in August 2001, itself a coup for the Arab nationalist camp, Archimandrite

Hanna, well known for his politicized views, had been appointed spokesman for the

church. Unpleased with the election of an activist patriarch of the Greek Orthodox

Church, Israeli authorities refused to recognize the newly appointed authority. The Greek

Orthodox Church remained in this state of limbo throughout the following year while the

intifada raged and Israeli troops reoccupied many portions of the West Bank. Atallah

Hanna became one of the most impassioned defenders of the Palestinian right to resist the

occupation. Under pressure from the Israeli authorities Bishop Irenaeus decided to

remove Archimandrite Hanna from his position as official spokesman for the

Patriarchate, citing his support for "Palestinian violence".[71] But the clergyman continued

to claim to speak for the church in an unofficial capacity, supported by many Orthodox

laypeople.

On 22 August 2002, Hanna was held on charges of incitement to terrorism, illegally

entering an enemy country (Lebanon, where he had reportedly met with Hezballah leaders), and relations with terrorist groups. The incident provided an embarrassing moment for the Orthodox Church, which disavowed his activities and provided ample evidence of the dissonance between the radicalism of the Arab adherents and lower clergy and the attitude of co-operation that the Patriarchate has typically displayed with the Israeli authorities.[72] It threatened to bring the tense standoff between the Israeli authorities and the church to a boiling point.

Observers noted that the arrest was as much a way for the Israeli government to pressure Patriarch Irenaeus to clamp down on the more radical voices within the Church as it was particular interest in Hanna's own supposed activities. An unidentified "senior critic" in the church complained, "He [the Patriarch] won support for his election by declaring he would give property in the West Bank to the Palestinians. Now, however, he wants to get rid of Hanna to please the Israelis." Meanwhile, the Bishop's spokesman, Archbishop Aristarchus, countered that "As a church, we would have liked him to have acted in a more prudent and more moderate way...He is very much involved in politics and I think the Palestinians already have very good politicians to deal with their cause."[73]

Yet Hanna's continued action as an agitator and proponent of the armed struggle kept the pressure on the patriarch, who remained sandwiched between the popular wishes of many parishioners, who supported Hanna, and the Israeli government, still refusing to recognize his appointment. In January 2003, Hanna was reported to have publicly voiced his support for suicide bombings as legitimate means of resistence, saying *inter alia*,

"Resistence is the obligation of every Palestinian Christian Arab, as it is the obligation of every Palestinian Muslim Arab. We encourage our youth to participate in the resistence, to carry out martyrdom attacks, and to participate in removing the occupation."[74] The case of Atallah Hanna drew in clear relief the struggles of a Church forced to contend between its own neo-millet proclivities and the reformist and secular nationalist tendencies of its lower clergy and membership.

Given the strong internal dissent within the Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church increasingly has been seen among Palestinian Christians as the most influential, and therefore most important, interlocuteur between Christians and both the Israeli and Palestinian Authorities as well as the world at large. In this way, the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church has been accepting a position as *prima inter pares*. Michael Dumper observes that the level of cooperation and coordination between the Roman Catholic Churches and their traditional rivals has increased in the period after the end of the *intifada* and the advent of the Palestinian Authority in 1993.[75] This policy has encouraged the maintenance of a neo-millet, yet often ecumenical, style in governing the holy places of Jerusalem. Such a strategy is designed to safeguard the place of the Roman Catholic Church while retaining inter-sectarian harmony through certification of various sectarian rights.

Although official recognition had been extended in 1994, relations between the Vatican and the Authority were cemented in February 2000 with a basic agreement on issues related to the Palestinian conflict. The agreement reached between the Vatican and the Palestinian Authority included a preamble based upon the established position of the

Vatican over Jerusalem, calling *inter alia* for "an equitable solution…based on international resolutions."[76] While the agreement was viewed as a major coup for the Palestinian Authority, it essentially reinforced Roman Catholic preference for neo-millet negotiation within a two-state solution by recognizing an implicit connection between support for the cause and the retention of Church privileges in the Holy Land. In the wake of the declaration, Vatican involvement in the Palestinian case has been consistent in supporting the maintenance of the neo-millet system with special consideration for the Palestinian national movement embodied in the PLO and the PA.

Up until the period of the first *intifada*, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church had remained largely on the sidelines of the national struggle, supporting the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel and staying relatively neutral in its approach to the national struggle. To a certain extent, the strong foreign element present in the Roman Catholic Church tended to reduce its general impact on the Palestinian national movement. But the process of indigenization of the clergy established in the wake of the Second Vatican Council has integrated Arab leaders into the hierarchy at a remarkable pace. As a result, the Greek Catholic Uniate Church boasts an entirely Arab clergy, and the Latin Patriarchate has brought a large number of Palestinians into the higher levels of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church has also been committed to developing Palestinian leadership, Christian and non-Christian, through education, at Bethlehem University and the other educational institutions. This process of leadership development culminated with the appointment of Michel Sabbah, a Nazarene Palestinian, as Latin Patriarch in 1987.

As the highest-ranking Roman Catholic Church leader in Palestine, Patriarch Sabbah

has taken a leading role in developing a policy of support for the Palestinian national

cause. With the eruption of the *al-aqsa intifada* in autumn 2000, his position as

representative of the Roman Catholic Church and as the most visible and vocal Christian

leader in the country has been highlighted. The increasing scale of violence and the

concentration of attention on areas around Bethlehem and the towns of Beit Jala and Beit

Sahour in the West Bank (both boasting large Christian populations) during the *al-Aqsa*

intifada from the autumn of 2000 have highlighted the role of the Patriarch as a leader

and apologist for the national struggle.

Christmas 2000 saw the effective detention of Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat

in his Ramallah headquarters and an official Israeli ban on his travel to Bethlehem to

celebrate Christmas in solidarity with Palestinian Christians. Patriarch Sabbah made

public appearances and a high-profile visit to Ramallah, and contended, "The dignity of

President Arafat is the dignity of all of us. The occupation situation is unfair to the

Palestinians and they have to have their freedom. This is the message of Christmas."[77] A

gesture of solidarity between all of the churches and the Palestinian Authority ensued, as

official celebrations at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem were cancelled. Since

that time official celebrations have been low-key. In December 2001 while Yasser Arafat

remained a virtual prisoner within his compound in Ramallah, his hallmark symbolic

kaffiyeh headdress draped an empty chair.

Despite the papacy's involvement as advocate of ecumenism and elite negotiation in

matters of international negotiation, the indigenous church remains committed to the

protection of individual churches and their heritage. One episode that highlighted the importance of the protective instinct was the dispute over the construction of a mosque in Nazareth in late 1999. An Israeli decision to allow the construction of a mosque adjacent to the (Roman Catholic) Church of the Annunciation in early 1999 provoked strong outrage among clerics and parishioners alike. It angered the Vatican and the local hierarchs, represented by the Franciscan custodians, who saw the construction of a mosque in venerate the nephew of Crusade-era leader Salah ed-Din, as a cynical ploy by the Israeli government to foment intersectarian quarrels among Palestinians in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The area was originally set to become a pilgrimage plaza for the church dedicated to an influx of visitors in the year 2000 but Muslim claims to the land as the sacred tomb of Crusade era hero Shehab ed-Din made the construction of the square controversial. Protests staged by Muslims at the quarter staked out for construction amid demands that a mosque be placed on the site sparked inter-sectarian tensions and scuffles. The intensification of the debate resulted in the polarization of the community between Islamists, represented by the Islamic movement led by Salman Abu Ahmed, and secularists and Christians led by Nazareth Mayor Ramez Jeraisi and the church leadership. In hopes of minimizing the impact of inter-sectarian discord, the Israeli authorities imposed a compromise solution: the mosque would be built on one-third of the land. The compromise, however, was not acceptable to the churches, all of which denounced the move as an attempt to assuage Muslim Israeli Arabs. Alarmed by the precedent, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church called for a two-day closure of the churches in Israel and the Palestinian Territories in protest.[78] Ongoing pressure from

the Vatican in the buildup to the Papal visit scheduled for March 2000 laid an uneasy

backdrop to the pontiff's visit to Nazareth and gave the Palestinian Authority an

opportunity to enhance its neo-millet ties with the Church to ally itself with the Vatican in

the instance.

The Roman Catholic Latin Patriarchate took the most assertive stance. Latin Patriarch

Sabbah called for a complete closure of all churches in the Holy Land on November 22,

1999. The move threatened an upcoming papal pilgrimage and highlighted the dispute as

a case of multifarious challenge to Christendom in the region. What was significant was

the united front adopted by each of the major churches in tandem with the Latin

Patriarchate. The Palestinian Authority weighed in with support for the Christians,

advocating acquiescence to Christian control over the construction area as against the

stand of the local Islamic movement, in turn causing an emotive response by Israel to stay

out of the affair. The patriarch admitted openly the connection between the continued

support of the Church for the Authority and the support of the PLO over the mosque

issue. Sabbah was quoted saying that Arafat took this seriously, and had warned

Islamists, "If you win in Nazareth, we lose in Jerusalem."[79] A neo-millet relationship

between the patriarch - and the papacy - and the Authority was clearly indicated. Perhaps

as a result, the politicization of the construction of the Shehab ed-Din mosque has

continued. In December 2001, construction of the mosque was going ahead without

official building permits, causing the Israeli Security Cabinet to order a halt to

construction and launch inquiries into the issue.[80] The issue threatens to form a sectarian

wedge and as such has been decried by both secular-minded and Church leaders.

The ensuing visit during the papal millenium pilgrimage brought the pontiff to symbols

of both Palestinian and Israeli plights: the Deheisheh Refugee Camp in the West Bank

and the Hall of Remembrance of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. In preparation

for the former, he recognized that the "torment" of the Palestinians had "gone on too

long", and in the event, the pope shared that he remained "close to the Palestinian people

in their sufferings".[81] The latter brought reiterated words of the "sadness" of the Church

over the holocaust. The strength of the comparison of Jewish and Palestinian plights was

not lost. The pilgrimage, meant as an apolitical journey, had this significant meaning:

the Church recognized the rights of both Israeli and Palestinian authorities in the land of

Palestine, with sympathies toward a Palestinian homeland. The trip displayed an attempt

on behalf of the Vatican to maintain cordial relations with both Palestinian and Israeli

sides, while clearly portraying both as victims and legitimate authorities in their

respective jurisdictions. The Vatican's support remains for an elite-negotiated solution

that provides maximum freedom for Church activity within either a Palestinian or Israeli

state.

The Protestant Churches and "Christian Zionism"

Perhaps ironically, the strongest formulations of Christian solidarity with the national

movement appear to have come as a reaction to dogmatic assertions by foreign Christians

that the two are incompatible. The nature of religious friction over control over the

territory of Palestine has made for a somewhat complicated division among Christians,

within Israel and Palestine, but also with regard to Christians throughout the outside

world. In the past, international pilgrims to the Holy Land tended to prioritize peaceful and universal access to sacred sites without particular regard to the Palestinian national struggle. What is more, the involvement of Christian groups in the politics of Western nations and their particular doctrinal differences with those of the Middle Eastern churches should not be overlooked. These distinctions arise in stark contrast when one compares the activity of Protestant groups, in particular among evangelical Protestants. While Protestants remain few in number in the region, their importance to American foreign policy with regard to Israel cannot be dismissed, and as a result, they have served largely to set the agenda for Christian approaches to the Israel-Palestinian problem both domestically and abroad.

The intersection of two disparate movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought together conservative Protestants in the United States together with conservative Zionist elements in Israel. One of these was the evolution of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and annexation of the Golan Heights into a full-scale colonization effort. With a view to re-establishing former Jewish-majority towns and villages in the West Bank as well as reinforcing a Jewish presence in the corridor between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the Israeli government began building activity at locations in the West Bank. Beginning in the mid-1970s, clandestine activity sponsored by conservative Zionist groups to establish settlements in the occupied territories, known as *gush emunim* ("bloc of the faithful") were later sponsored and defended by the Israeli government. Furthermore, conservative politicians in Israel remained supportive of the settlement efforts throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The founding of scores of these towns

throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip remains one of the chief points of contention between Palestinians and Israelis.

During the same period, the adoption of a more radical form of dispensational premillenialism among conservative religious elements in the United States took root. Encouraged by the massive success of eschatological imagery contained in works such as the bestselling *Late Great Planet Earth*, the premillenial viewpoint became *de rigeur* among evangelical groups in North America, and proceeded to make a strong global impact upon related movements abroad, particularly in western Europe. Although dispensational premillenialism is a literal and fundamentalist movement that strongly urges conversion of all societies, it specifically stresses the necessity of a future day of reckoning between the Jewish people and God. Taking a cue from Biblical prophetic predictions of a restored Jewish state, many modern interpreters of dispensational premillenialism (among them prominent American ministers such as Jerry Falwell) encourage believers to look forward to the establishment of an idealized and grandiose Israel as the promise of God. This was the impetus for a Christian Zionist movement that developed among the awakened Christian religious movements in America during the 1980s.

While dispensational premillenialism attaches itself to Zionism through an eschatological zeal, other theologies that spurred the "religious right" in the United States also looked favourably upon the Zionist project as a result of their adherence to a "dominion theology" centred upon an idealized national theocracy and Jewish traditions established during the Old Testament period. The rise of these two groups of religious

conservatives: the Moral Majority movement developed under the leadership of Falwell and the strong Presidential bid presented by Pat Robertson in 1988 (that later evolved into the "Christian Coalition"), brought the conservative Jewish lobby and Christian Zionists into close interaction both in the United States and abroad. While the prospects of such conservative movements have waxed and waned over the years since their inception, they remain staunch defenders of Israeli statehood and in general, avowedly opposed to Palestinian national rights. Calling for a rally in favour of Israel in July 2002, Christian Coalition president Roberta Combs denounced Palestinian terrorism and stated, "You can have a Palestinian state or you can have a Jewish state; you cannot have both."[82] Not surprisingly, the movement has been noted for an uncritical support of Israeli actions and little sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

The establishment of a Worldwide Christian Zionist movement and the "International Christian Embassy" in Jerusalem in 1980 was clear evidence of the confluence of the political projects affirmed by the two groups. The "Embassy" was conceived in 1980 as a response to the removal of the embassies of 13 countries out of Jerusalem in protest at the unilateral Israeli annexation of the eastern portions of the city of Jerusalem.[83] However, while the Christian Zionist movement has its most important defenders in the United States, the leadership of the international movement tends to be eclectic. The founders of the International Christian Embassy were largely drawn from European millenarian movements, and as such it has not been closely associated with the Christian Zionist movements coming out of North America, with which it has however found common cause.[84] The Embassy retains a high local and international profile but its work is

primarily directed toward publicizing the cause of Christian Zionism and sponsorship of

initiatives undertaken in support of Zionist organizations. Combined efforts of the

Christian Zionist movement have resulted in a series of four international congresses -- in

Basel in 1985, in Jerusalem in 1988, 1996, and 2001.

Indigenous Responses to Christian Zionism

The strength of the Christian Zionist movement emergent in the early 1980s became

an impetus for a more activist stance among indigenous Palestinian Christians who

questioned the theology of support for the state of Israel. The response took root in the

April 1986, when the Middle East Council of Churches responded directly to the first

international Christian Zionist conference, stating that it condemned "the misuse of the

Bible and the abuse of religious sentiments in an attempt to sacralize the creation of a

state and legitimate the policies of a government".[85] At the same time, some small-scale

organizations appeared abroad in conservative circles aimed at providing a counterpoint

to Christian Zionism, such as the interdenominational Evangelicals for Middle East

Understanding. In spite of this, politically active Christians in the United States and

elsewhere appeared increasingly to favour the Israeli state and its policies.   Palestinian

Christians feared being perceived as a potential fifth column of Western Christian groups

while at the same time being ignored by their coreligionists abroad in favour of Israeli

control of Palestine. The strategy that coalesced among Protestants in particular was the

creation of an indigenous theology of liberation.

Building upon the legacy of a strongly endowed and emplaced church that has been

agreeable to both Israeli authorities and to Palestinian activists, the Anglican church

became the centre of a newly vociferous Palestinian Christian movement in the late

1980s. Anglican churches were further empowered as a result of two phenomena: first,

the committed voluntaristic approach taken by its membership and leadership, and

second, a new commitment on the part of the leadership for integrating the church into

the Palestinian national movement through new institutions. Although the leadership of

the Protestant churches in the Middle East has long been supportive of a negotiated

solution between the PLO and Israel, its increasingly vocal role in the national movement

can be related to the ascension of a cadre of modernist leaders that came to the fore

during the period of the *intifada*. Perhaps the most important of these was Naim Ateek,

an Anglican canon and theologian who argued for the application of liberation theology

to the Palestinian case. His nascent calls for a Palestinian theology of liberation came in

1982, when in the course of his doctoral thesis he argued that

> It is my strong conviction that, in response to the Arab-
> Israeli conflict, the Episcopal Church in Israel is called to a
> two-dimensional ministry, namely a prophetic and a
> peacemaking one...The prophetic imperative means that the
> church should assume a prophetic role daring to analyze
> and interpret events theologically...The peacemaking
> imperative means that the church recognizes that it is called
> by God to be a catalyst of peace and reconciliation...The
> Episcopal Church should recognize that in order for the
> prophetic and peacemaking ministry to have the greatest
> impact on the country, it must be the joint work of all the
> churches together.[86]

As such, the gathering impetus of Ateek's work in developing a theology of liberation has

gone a long way toward centralizing the vision of Palestinian Christians for mobilizing

their coreligionists in the region and abroad. In hopes of developing an organizationally

united front for Palestinian Christian involvement in the national project, Ateek and a

coalition of leaders established the *Sabeel* Centre for Palestinian Liberation Theology in

March 1990 as a result of an international and ecumenical conference. The centre has

become an important voice communicating indigenous Palestinian Christian viewpoints

on the national struggle and Palestinian nationality, in addition to presenting a distinct

theological viewpoint on Israeli control over the territory of Palestine.

Sabeel organizes regular conferences, studies, and organized lobby efforts in favour of

the Palestinian national cause, albeit at arm's length from the Palestinian Authority and

resistance groups.[87] While the activity of the center has waxed and waned over time, it

remains an important factor, especially among religious conservatives. The *al-aqsa*

intifada and the continuing emigration of Palestinian Christians from the region have had

an impact, but *Sabeel* has maintained its support for the ideals of liberation throughout

the new uprising. Increasingly active chapters of the movement have appeared in North

America, Scandinavia, and Western Europe, networking with various external religious

organizations. Multidenominational groups have begun to meet annually under *Sabeel*

auspices, displaying public support for the Palestinian struggle, the first "international

solidarity visit" having taken place during the tense standoff in Bethlehem in April 2001

and providing an impetus for the involvement of many international Christian supporters

of the Palestinian cause. *Sabeel* groups and publications are conscious of their stand as a

direct response to the Christian Zionist movement, making direct references to the

incompatibility of Christian justice with uncritical eschatological support of Israeli

actions. Its upcoming 2004 conference has the reassessment of Christian Zionism as its

theme.

CONCLUSIONS

The Neo-Millet and Secularist Embrace of the National Movement

As in the case of the Church of the Nativity under siege, the status of Palestinian

Christians illustrates the relative resilience of the neo-millet model even under the strains

of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In spite of the internal division of indigenous Christians

among Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and other Church organizations, the intervention of

expatriates and foreign churches, and the increasing Islamization of politics in the region,

Christians tend to unite behind the banner of Palestinian national aspirations. The

historical development of the indigenous Christian churches has led to the division of

Christians among various sects. But the history of Palestinian dispossession and

dispersion in recent times has far more monumentally affected the Christian population,

leading to a dwindling population, emigration, and the bifurcation of their community

between the state of Israel, where they enjoy rights as full citizens, and the occupied

territories, where they are governed by military occupation. What is more, there remains

a mixture of orthodoxies among the Palestinian Christians, but there is clear evidence that

in large measure they support a nominal and deferential style of religious affiliation. At

points these beliefs contribute to the competitive neo-millet system that has usually

operated in a land rich in sects but with a fixed number of "holy places" to go around.

But more often at the mass level, individual Palestinian Christians are likely to eschew

religious identification in favour of a secular nationalist banner.

The Palestinian case marks the larger irrelevance of churches and official organizations in the face of what is perceived to be a struggle more important than spirituality – or of a physical struggle that has been given spiritual overtones. Among Christians, the Churches often find themselves eclipsed by the national movement and the development of many largely apolitical and pacifistic organizations. Many Churches choose to remain outside the political framework in hopes of maintaining shrewd neutrality between the Israeli and Palestinian political entities. Others seek a more assertive alliance with the national movement at the elite level (in the case of the Roman Catholic and Uniate Church) or at the mass level (in the case of the Protestant, and especially Anglican, Churches). For every studiedly neutral observation about the Palestinian struggle that comes from the churches, such as the need for international control over the holy sites in Jerusalem, there are more vocal calls for Palestinian rights. Sometimes this comes directly from the Church leadership, as during Michel Sabbah's campaign to have PLO Chairman Arafat freed to attend Christmas festivities in December 2001. Sometimes it happens in spite of the best efforts of the leadership to temper its support, as in the case of the outspoken Archimandrite Atallah Hanna. Sometimes it represents popular radicalism that reflects nothing of the religious convictions of those involved, as in the case of leftist radicals such as George Habash of the PFLP.

Palestinian Christians have embraced the national struggle and the national movement for a Palestinian state. The do not stand as a major impediment to the PLO. Their significant presence in the state of Israel as citizens of the Israeli state has left many Christians in a delicate position, balancing between the countries of their citizenship and

support for the struggle of their compatriots. Yet Palestinian Christians by and large are

close allies of the PLO and the national movement. The traditional churches prefer a

deferential style of association with the authorities, both Israeli and Palestinian. Both

national authorities have been satisfied to facilitate this through neo-millet recognition of

their importance under personal status laws and in administering the properties held by

Christian organizations. At times when the neo-millet system is threatened, as was

evident during the 2000 mosque dispute in Nazareth, the church hierarchy works against

the regime. Nonetheless, the overall neo-millet system is often strengthened in this way,

as the Palestinian Authority seeks to support Christian interests in Israel in hopes of

bolstering its own position both domestically (inside the Palestinian churches) and

regionally (among Israeli Arabs).

The emergence of a stronger establishment elite among the Protestant - and especially

Episcopal - churches has altered the terms of Christian solidarity with the national

movement, if not the fact. Many of these people have been integrated into the secular

national movement. This is not surprising given the irrelevance of Christian institutions

as a result of their sectarian and familial divisions and the popular secular nominalism of

Palestinian Christians. This has led most Christians into the secular national movement

and rendered the churches and other Christian organizations secondary to their choice of

political representation. Christians are thus far more likely to choose to relate with

institutions like the PLO and the Communist Party. But a rising voluntarist challenge

coming from within the Protestant churches and resulting from international links to

foreign agencies (not to mention a backlash against Christian Zionism) suggests some

metamorphosis within Christian groups. If it proceeds, this could enhance the

institutional representation of Christianity in the national movement. At this point,

however, organizations such as Sabeel remain marginal to the cause even as they support

it in a tertiary capacity.

[1] Nadia Abboushi, "The Intifada and the Palestinian Churches", in Naim Ateek, Marc H. Ellis, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *Faith and the Intifada* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 60.

[2] "Bethlehem: the Basilica of the Nativity", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, available http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAHOgsw0, cited 15 October 2002.

[3] An excellent account of the siege was related by Joshua Hammer, "Inside the Siege of Bethlehem", *Newsweek* 20 May 2002, 22-34.

[4] Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman J. Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 37.

[5] Bernard Sabella, "Socio-Economic Characteristics and the Challenges to Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land", in Michael Prior and William Taylor, *Christians in the Holy Land*, (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1994), 31-44.

[6] The marked decline is observed by Sami F. Geraisy, "Socio-Demographic Characteristics: Reality, Problems, and Aspirations within Israel", in Prior and Taylor, *Christians in the Holy Land*, p.48. Figures for 1995 come from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

[7] Sabella has estimated that 500 to 600 Christian Palestinians left each month during the early months of the *al-aqsa intifada*. Among a total population of approximately 50 000 this is obviously a dramatic number. Laurie Kassman, "Israel-Palestinian Violence Triggers Christian Arab Exodus", *al-Bushra Online*, available http://www.al-bushra.org/latpatra/holyland.html, cited January 7, 2002.

[8] Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Press Release: A New Report on the Old City, 23 July 2002, available http://www.jiis.org.il.

[9] Sabella, "Socio-Economic", 37-8.

[10] Timothy C. Morgan, "Jerusalem's Living Stones", *Christianity Today*, May 20, 1996, 62.

[11] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: the Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 243-61.

[12] Sayigh, *Armed*, 280.

[13] Sayigh, *Armed*, 545.

[14] Sammy Smooha, "Minority Status in an Ethnic Democracy: the Status of the Arab Minority in Israel", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13(3), July 1990, 389-413.

[15] Ori Stendel, *The Arabs in Israel*, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1996, 80-123.

[16] Elia Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 187.

[17] Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics Since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988).

[18] For example, see Don Peretz, *Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 83-118 or Yezid Sayigh, "The *Intifada* Continues: Legacy, Dynamics, and Challenges", *Third World Quarterly* 11(3), July 1989, 20-49.

[19]*Hamas* is the Arabic word for "zeal" and doubles as the acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al Islamiyya* ("Islamic Resistance Movement").

[20] For the rise of the *Hamas* organization in the late 1980s, see Hisham Ahmed, *Hamas: from religious salvation to political Transformation* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1994).

[21]Barry Rubin, *Revolution until Victory? The Politics and History of the PLO* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994), 86, 87.

[22] Rex Brynen, *Echoes of the Intifada: Regional Repurcussions of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 5.

[23]Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: the PLO in Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 196-7.

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[25] Rex Brynen, *A Very Political Economy: Peacebuilding and Foriegn Aid in the West Bank and Gaza*, (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2000), 201.

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[27]Barry Rubin, *The Transformation of Palestinian Politics: From Revolution to State-building* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), 88.

[28] Hillel Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood: Palestinian State Formation in the West Bank and Gaza* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

[29] Glenn Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State* (Bloomington, ID: Indiana UP, 1997).

[30] Robinson, *Building*, 187-8.

[31] For example, Rubin, *Transformation*, 45ff.

[32] Jacob M. Landau, *The Arab Minority in Israel, 1967-1991* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 98-130.

[33] *Report of the Secretary-General on Jenin*, available http://www.un.org/peace/jenin/index.html, cited 27 February 2003.

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[36] Charles H. Malik, "The Orthodox Church", in A..J. Arberry, ed., *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), 331.

[37] Daphne Tsimhoni, *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948*, (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 37-44.

[38] Chad Emmett observes that out of 139 Christian homes in Nazareth, 96% have some sort of religious markings identifying their religion. He adds that many stress common beliefs with Muslims while maintaining communal distinctions. Emmett, *Beyond*, 75, 251.

[39] Cited in Michael C King, *The Palestinians and the Churches, volume 1, 1948-1956*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 123.

[40] Larry Ekin, *Enduring Witness: the Churches and the Palestinians, volume 2* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985), 83.

[41] Ekin, *Enduring Witness*, 49, 56.

[42] Ekin, *Enduring Witness*, 77-8.

[43]Tsimhoni, *Christian Communities*, 47-53.

[44]Emmett, *Beyond*, 91-6.

[45] Stendel, *Arabs*, 124, 127.

[46]George Emile Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 1986), 87.

[47] Irani, *Papacy*, 6.

[48]Naim S. Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice* (Mayknoll, NJ: Orbis Books, 1989), 57.

[49]Irani, *Papacyt*, 57.

[50] Steve Rodan, "PA intensifying bid to control churches", *Jerusalem Post* 4 October 1998.

[51] Response of Fr. Labib Kobti, *Infopal* Online News Report, 4 October 1998.

[52] Response of Fr. Peter Madros, *Infopal* Online News Report, 4 October 1998.

[53] Robinson, *Building*, 66-93.

[54] Michael Dumper, "The Christian Churches of Jerusalem in the Post-Oslo Period" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31(2), Winter 2002, 53-55.

[55] Bethlehem Bible College Newsletter, Easter 2002.

[56] "Christian Arabs Relocate from Palestinian Territories", *Newsroom* On-line News Report posted on *Copts Digest* listserv, Nov. 5, 2000.

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[85]Quoted in Merkley, *Christian Attitudes*, 184.

[86]Naim S. Ateek, *Toward a Strategy for the Episcopal Church in Israel with Special Focus on the Political Situation: Analysis and Prospect*, Doctoral Dissertation, San Francisco Theological Seminary, August 1, 1982, 261, 269.

[87] For instance, at a recent appearance, Naim Ateek averred, "I don't have great

love for Arafat, but we need to be fair...Israel did not want to make peace...[It] used the peace process [to accomplish its goals]." Naim Ateek, Public Lecture, London, Ontario, 13 March 2003.

Chapter Seven – Conclusions: Ancient Crosses and Tower-Keeps

Tower-Keep Theology

Ancient Egyptian desert monasteries, the earliest Christian monasteries, have evolved over the years from simple cave cells to large complexes including agricultural plots, chapels, cloisters, and (today) bookstalls for tourists. But during the late Byzantine era, marauding bands of desert nomads would periodically target the monasteries, knowing that they housed food and provisions that could easily be looted. Under the ancient crosses of many of the monasteries, tower keeps were created to protect the monks within from just such occurrences. Accessed via upper-story gangplanks that would be removed to leave the keep free standing, the keeps would be furnished and provisioned for several days or even months' worth of evasion from marauders. The keep was one of the primary functions of the monastery and at these times it would become the centre of the settlement and a sort of symbol of the provision of God for the protection of His people. On occasion, dumbwaiter devices were used to placate invaders by offering them ransoms of food or valuables to leave the inhabitants alone. Marauders would typically be satisfied to take the ransom and leave the monks for plunder another day. The survival of the community was ensured.

Keeps were storehouses providing all that the Christian monks needed. They created definitive boundaries: inside the keep sat the faithful, outside were the besiegers. They even had specific features designed to regulate contact with the outside world like the dumbwaiters that provided conduits for the ransom. There is a clear analogy here to the survival of Christian religion and culture in Arab lands. Tower-keep theology has

dominated the traditional Churches in the Middle East, creating the boundaries and

provisions and modes of interaction necessary to allow the millet system, and later the

neo-millet system, to function. Church institutions and organizations, the maintenance of

personal status courts, and the submission of political representation to Patriarchs and

elites provide the mechanisms of community solidarity for modern tower-keeps. Such

institutions thrive in the neo-patrimonial and identity-based politics of the Middle East.

Yet in the modern era, tower-keep theology is breaking down as Western-style pluralism

gains a foothold and a sense of common identity in the Churches disappears as a result of

increasing nominalism and the introduction to Western religions and religious practices.

Nevertheless, tower-keep theology remains the fundamental belief structure that

characterizes Christian interactions with the state.

Overview: Religious Groups and Systems of Engagement

In this study I have sought to consider Christian groups in Middle Eastern politics as

both **religious** and **political**. The term "religious" recognizes the fact that groups are

directed and shaped by the religious beliefs, both conscious and unconscious, of their

members. The term "political" recognizes that the groups themselves contribute to the

nature of political activity that takes place in a given society. Christian groups cannot be

disconnected from their particular religious convictions, or more specifically, from the

convictions of individual believers that create them. Nor can we ignore the fact that they

exist in a specific milieu, defined by external actors and demographics that remain

outside of their control.

This study has been an attempt to reassess the status of Christian groups operating in

Middle Eastern societies that has been largely neglected by Middle Eastern scholarship.

Writing just over two decades ago, Robert Brenton Betts argued that

> [t]he Christian in the Middle East makes his presence felt in national
> politics through two divergent avenues: that of the ecclesiastical hierarchy
> whose interests are primarily those of the church establishment, and that of
> individual politicians from the various Christian communities whose
> activities are frequently unrelated to the politices of their churches and
> may or may not be in the specific interests of the Christian community at
> large.[1]

Betts's simplified observation is telling, because it reveals the dichotomy between

ecclesiocentric and non-ecclesial approaches, but it does not reveal the full nuances of

Christian participation, particularly in reflection upon the various types of groups in

evidence. The truth is that churches and parties coalesce and diverge at differing points,

one fading as another increases in relevance. Ironically, Betts later pointed to Lebanon

for hope in terms of ecumenical and interreligious understanding.[2] In retrospect, the years

that followed publication of his work proved him tragically wrong as church efforts at

ecumenism and dialogue fell before the aggressive self-preservation of Lebanese parties

and militias. Perhaps this reveals the difficulty in understanding the wide divergence

between the rhetoric of ecclesial groups and political organizations supported by their

coreligionists, since it was Lebanon's non-ecclesial political organizations that

participated openly in its civil war.

Fully aware of the need to dissect religious groups, in chapter three I mapped out four

various types of groups, classifying their popular and unifying beliefs by attitudes to

voluntarism and to the outside plural culture. The first type consists of **identity-**

nationalistic groups that thrive on non-volitional, nominal, and ascriptive forms of Christianity, combining these with a strongly critical attitude toward the plural culture of which they are a part. The second type, the **deferential** organization, develops hierarchical representation of Christians through cultivating non-volitional theology into strong communal solidarity, providing the organization opportunities to work in partnership with the state. The third type, the **evangelical** group, criticizes the prevailing regime but generally focuses upon transformations of the mind and heart rather than upon the institutions that govern it. Finally, the fourth type is the **establishment** group, which operates through voluntaristic application of Christianity to uphold the plural social order and to co-operate with the authorities to effect change and to represent their own interests.

The interaction of religious sensibilities and beliefs and the groups and institutions at work in a given country set the stage for systems of engagement. These systems of engagement fall within a spectrum from voluntaristic and cordial relationships between religious groups and authorities in a system of **pluralist social concern**, to a more hardened and sectarian environment in a **neo-millet** system, to the combative dissension that typically characterizes a **competitive nationalistic** system. Through each of the case studies we have observed the operation of many of these systems of engagement to varying degrees. However, the singular dominance of a non-voluntaristic conception of religion has been the most important finding among Christian groups operating in the Middle East. The strength of ascription and nominalism are the simplest explanation for the kind of religious systems of engagement observed among Christian groups in the Middle East. As a result, the Christians of the Middle East live by and large within neo-

millet systems that stress their communal solidarity, their common identity, and their

rights to independent regulation of their affairs within their own community even as

individual parishioners are detached from the majoritarian politics of their respective

states. Insertion of Christian communities into the politics of Middle Eastern states is

done through elite negotiation between the secular leaders of the state and the clerical or

political leadership of the Christian community. With minor exceptions, this neo-millet

system is destined to remain the norm for some time to come – but the ebb and flow of

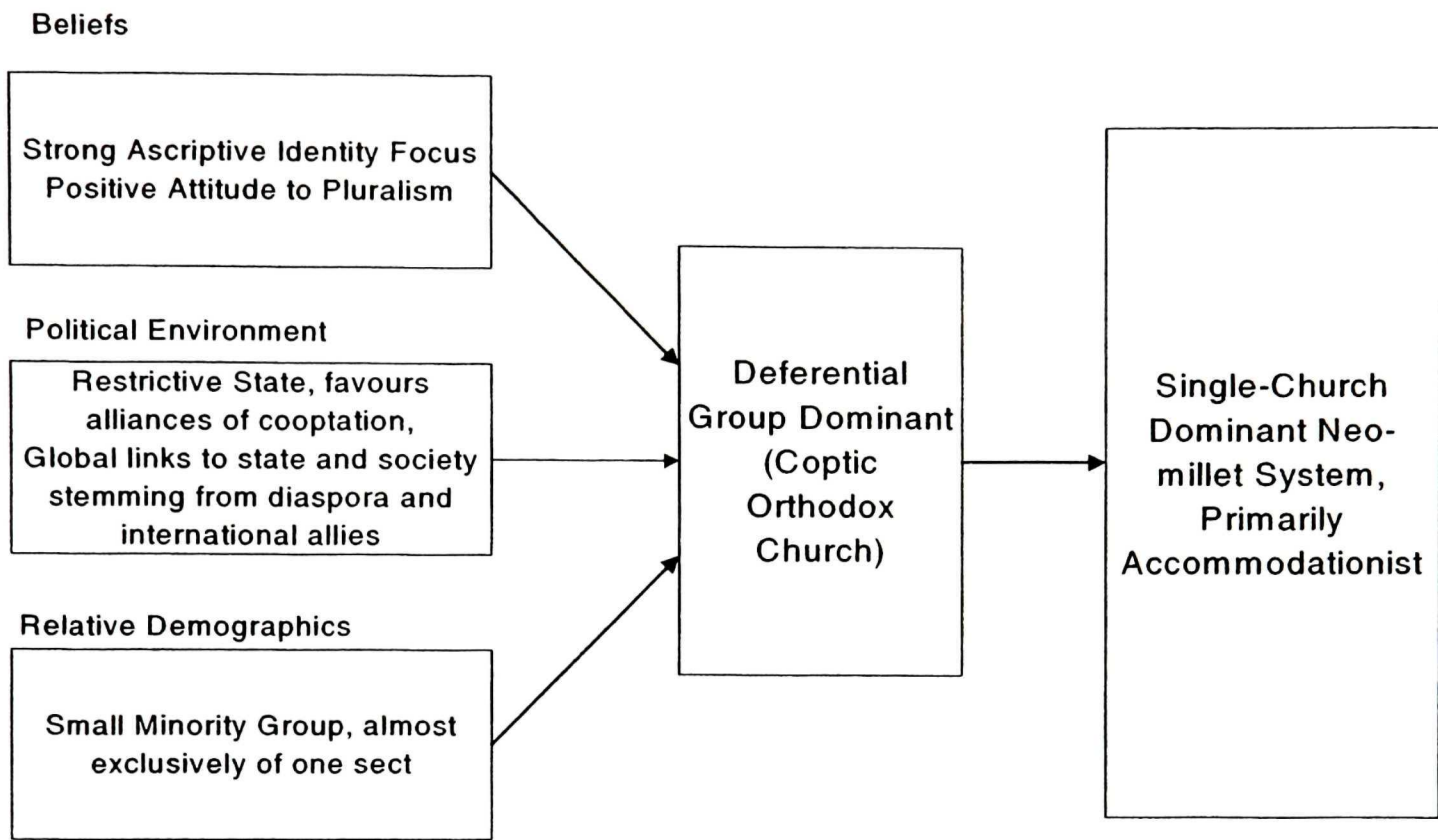beliefs does not rule out challenges coming from other versions of political engagement.

OVERVIEW: SYSTEMS OF ENGAGEMENT IN MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXTS

In the case of **Egypt**, a strong deferential organization, the Coptic Orthodox Church,

has controlled Christian political activation as a group. Flourishing on a generalized

consensus that the Coptic Patriarch represents the larger Christian community, Christians

have eschewed other common organizations such as political parties and independent

non-governmental organizations. The Coptic Orthodox Church has remained the single

most important peak organization among Christians, even among non-Orthodox groups.

The singularity of the Coptic Orthodox Church has allowed it to develop a relatively

stable neo-millet partnership with the Egyptian government, cooperating with it and

supporting it aside from occasional controversies when the government is no longer

perceived as responding to the desires of the majority of Christians.

Nevertheless, an interesting dynamic has arisen within the Coptic Orthodox Church,

partly affected by the success of evangelical visions in other denominations. Since the mid-20th century, the development of a more voluntarist spirit in the Coptic Orthodox Church coming out of the Sunday School movement and the reinvigoration of the monastic orders has created a Coptic renaissance, usually described the "renewal". As a result, adherents of the Coptic Orthodox Church have become more and more critical of their place in Egypt and more and more serious about Christian differentiation in the Muslim culture. In the diaspora, the process has only been accelerated as individual Copts are put in contact with more voluntaristic groups in countries of immigration. An increasingly assertive position taken by the Patriarchate in the past ten years is a direct result of internal agitation for the leadership of the church to take more pains to deal with endemic complaints made by the Copts. However, these movements have never gone so far as to challenge the basic pillars of the neo-millet system, the unique relationship between the Patriarch and the Egyptian government.

Figure 7.1:
EGYPT: Causes and Outcomes

Beliefs

Strong Ascriptive Identity Focus Positive Attitude to Pluralism

Political Environment

Restrictive State, favours alliances of cooptation, Global links to state and society stemming from diaspora and international allies

Relative Demographics

Small Minority Group, almost exclusively of one sect

Deferential
Group Dominant
(Coptic
Orthodox
Church)

Single-Church
Dominant Neo-
millet System,
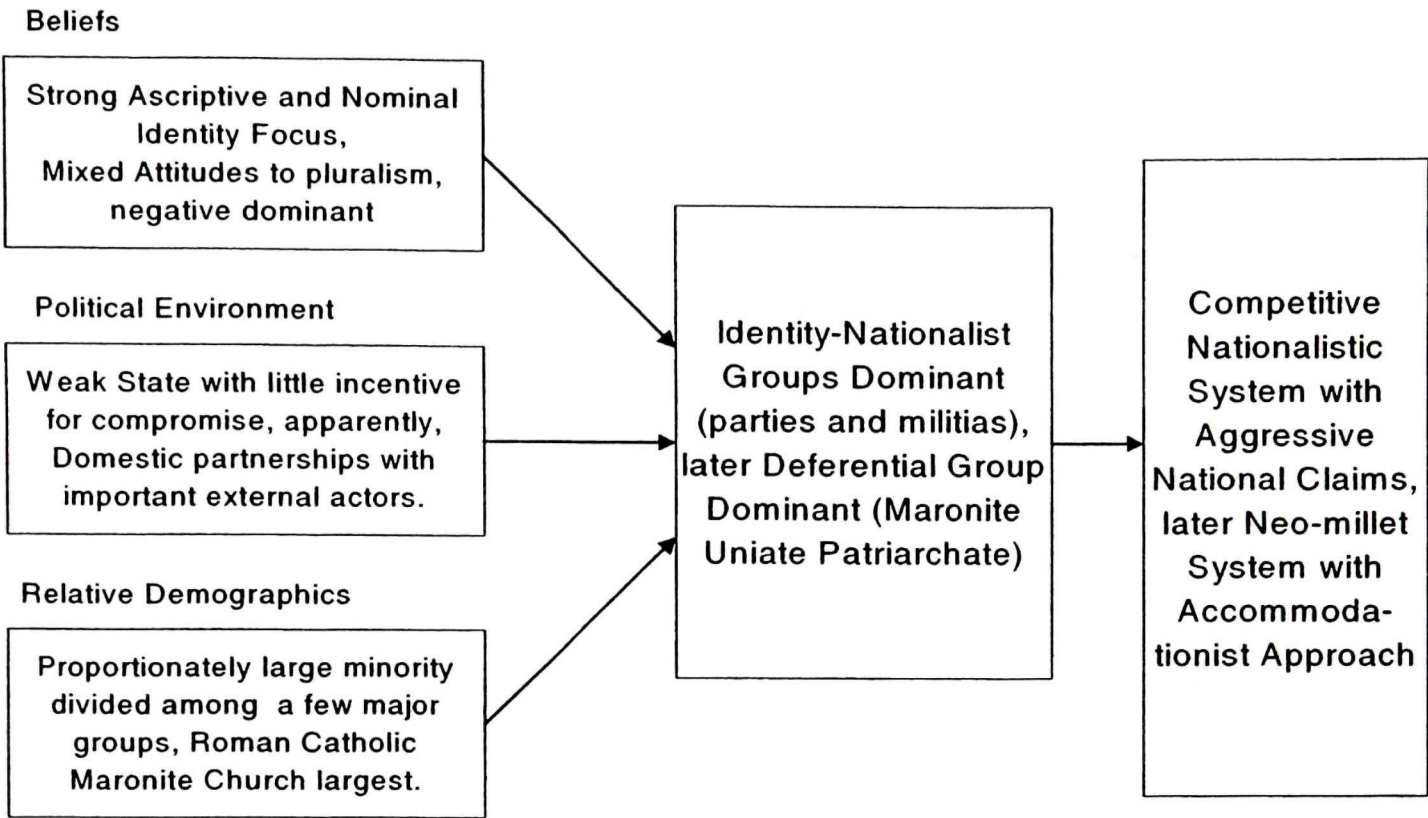Primarily
Accommodationist

In the case of **Lebanon**, the division of Christians between various sects is more pronounced, but the Maronite Uniate Church and its Catholic cousins remain paramount. The number of Christian groups originally provided opportunity for entrepreneurs to forge intersectarian consensus through the creation of Christian-dominated religious parties. These parties far eclipsed the local church hierarchies in the search for a Christian voice. With demographic and political pressures mounting during the civil war, these parties devolved into militias that defended their own conception of a specifically Lebanese (and ultimately Christian) identity throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The pyrrhic triumphs of the Lebanese Forces militia in concert with the Israeli invasion of 1982 appeared to lead the Phalange and LF leader Bashir Gemayel to power. But the

breakdown of civility, the erosion of public confidence in the militias, and the emergence of a counterweight in the person of Michel Aoun developed into a crisis that spelt the death knell for the Christian-dominated mass parties and militias.

In the wake of the end of the civil war and the conclusion of the Ta'if Accord, erstwhile identity-nationalist groups dominated by the Christians have declined and a new consensus has encouraged the rise of the Maronite Patriarchate as an interlocuteur for Christians. The result is a neo-millet style system of engagement and the gradual re-entry of Christians into the opposition without direct appeals to the identity-nationalist politics of the past. The continuing spate of criticism of the regime coming from Christian circles both in Lebanon and from abroad would seem to suggest that the nationalist movements of the past may only be in hibernation. But the simultaneous decline of the Christian population as a result of lower birth rates and emigration makes it logical to assume that such movements will never have the power that they once possessed.
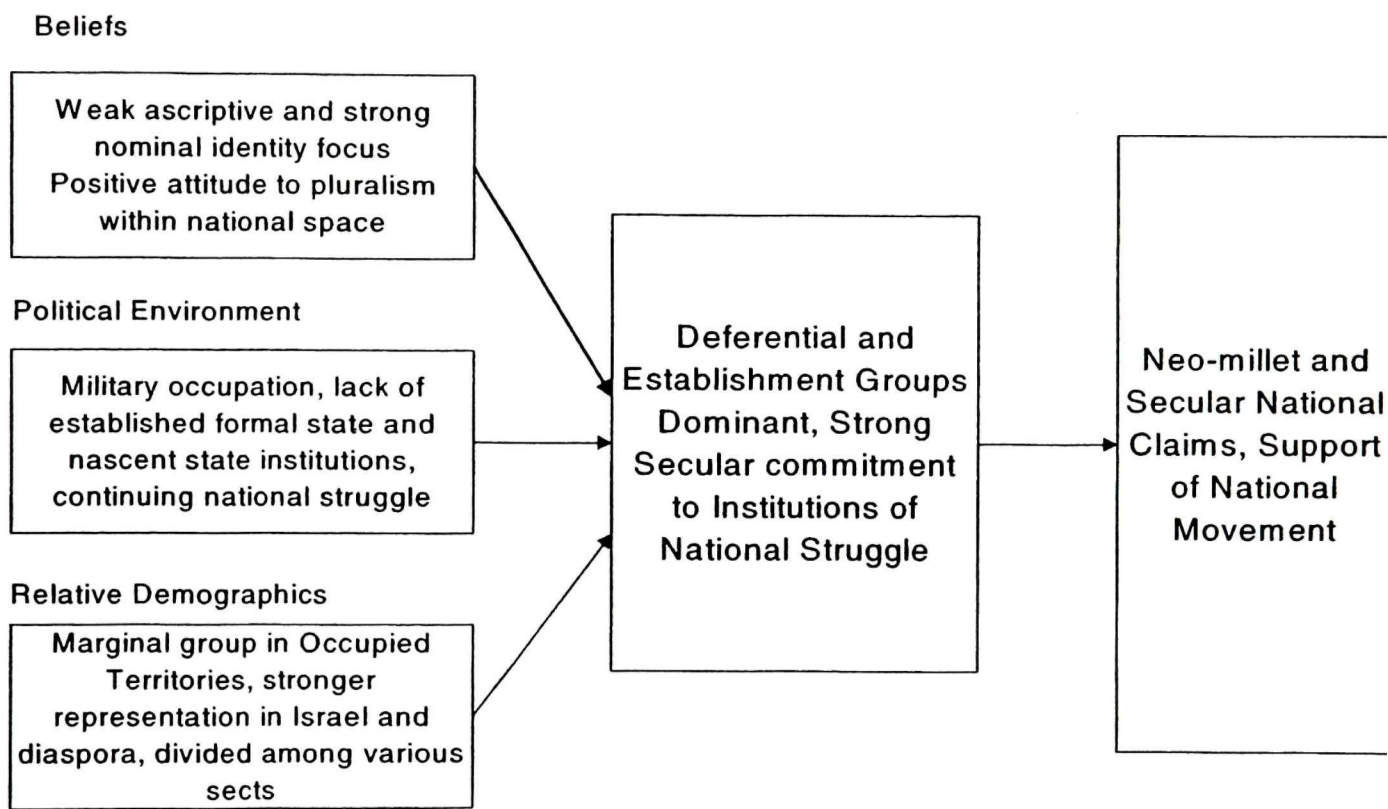
Figure 7.2:
LEBANON: Causes and Outcomes

Beliefs

Strong Ascriptive and Nominal
Identity Focus,
Mixed Attitudes to pluralism,
negative dominant

Political Environment

Weak State with little incentive
for compromise, apparently,
Domestic partnerships with
important external actors.

Relative Demographics

Proportionately large minority
divided among a few major
groups, Roman Catholic
Maronite Church largest.

Identity-Nationalist
Groups Dominant
(parties and militias),
later Deferential Group
Dominant (Maronite
Uniate Patriarchate)

Competitive
Nationalistic
System with
Aggressive
National Claims,
later Neo-millet
System with
Accommoda-
tionist Approach

In the case of **Palestine**, Christians generally display a neo-millet style deference to the involvement of the leadership of each of the major churches: the Roman Catholic Latin and Uniate Churches and the Greek (*Rum*) Orthodox. In turn, the leaders of the Roman Catholic and Uniate Churches have shown clear preference for the national movement and the Palestinian Authority while maintaining pacific ties with the state of Israel and with the Israeli occupiers in the occupied territories. Where neo-millet systems of engagement break down in the face of excessive nominalism and commitment to more voluntaristic versions of Christian faith, we see the development of evangelical and established alternatives in addition to the embrace of a fully secularized national movement. While the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church has been less visibly in favour of showing support for the national movement, individual adherents have been extremely

and often radically in support of it. What is more, despite the often pro-Israeli stance shown by their coreligionists abroad, Protestants among the Palestinians have created a vibrant pro-Palestinian alternative movement out of their own version of Liberation Theology.

Figure 7.3:
PALESTINE: Causes and Outcomes

Beliefs

Weak ascriptive and strong nominal identity focus
Positive attitude to pluralism within national space

Political Environment

Military occupation, lack of established formal state and nascent state institutions, continuing national struggle

Relative Demographics

Marginal group in Occupied Territories, stronger representation in Israel and diaspora, divided among various sects

Deferential and Establishment Groups Dominant, Strong Secular commitment to Institutions of National Struggle

Neo-millet and Secular National Claims, Support of National Movement

TRENDS IN THE CHURCHES

My emphasis on belief has been intended to minimize the relevance of sweeping generalizations where it comes to denominations and official doctrines. Nevertheless, some observations need to be made about the general tendencies one may observe among the major Middle Eastern churches.

The Greek Orthodox Church

Overall, the Greek Orthodox Church is an organization that relies on a high level of

deference and nominalism to maintain its position throughout Middle Eastern Churches.

Greek Orthodox adherents are the most likely to accept the ascriptive label of Christian

without concomitant commitment to church attendance or acceptance of the core issues of

faith. This high rate of nominalism coupled with the historic subordination of domestic

and local concerns to the whims of a largely expatriate leadership leads individual

Orthodox adherents to be more committed to secular nationalistic movements than to any

political role taken by the church. However, this does not overrule the importance of

individual Orthodox facilities and services, which often provide opportunities for

networking, education, and organization. As a result, Orthodox adherents are most likely

to engage in avowedly secular movements that are not officially tied to the Church.

Hence Orthodox Christians have been the most important bastions of the secular Arabist

parties such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon, the Communist parties of

Israeli Arabs, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and (elsewhere) the Ba'ath.

The Coptic Orthodox Church

The concentration of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt has limited the geographical

breadth of its effect even as it makes it the singular most important actor among Egyptian

Christians. The Church boasts small communities in Sudan and Palestine, among other

countries in the region, but these remain beholden to the central leadership of the Church

in Egypt. A high adherence to the core doctrines espoused by the clergy and a clear

association with the church through attendance at services and facilities maintains a clear

link between individual parishioners and the Church as their interlocuteur. This has been

an increasing trend ever since the "Coptic renewal" beginning in the 1940s and 1950s. In

turn, the leadership of the Coptic Orthodox Church maintains close and stable neo-millet

relations with the Egyptian regime. Individual Copts thus tend to subordinate their

political activity to the Church organizations or develop ties within the mainstream of

secular political activity where such opportunities are provided.

The Maronite Uniate Church

Similar to the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Maronite Church remains singularly

significant to Lebanon, with a small community remaining among the Palestinians.

However, unlike the Coptic Orthodox Church, a relatively low level of commitment to

the Church as the primary interlocuteur between individual adherents and the secular state

has often left the Church hierarchy somewhat disconnected with the national goals of

individual adherents, most of whom have preferred loyalty to non-ecclesial organizations

over the course of the past few decades. A minimal reformist spirit has thus opened the

door to a high level of nominalism in the Maronite community and the subordination of

the church leadership over the tumultuous days of the Lebanese civil war. Today, the

Maronite Church has seen a major resurgence. Its increasing importance has been

observed in chapter five. It remains to be seen whether a renewal movement of the sort

that transformed the Coptic Orthodox Church during the 1940s and 1950s will take place

in this church as well.

Other Catholics: the Uniate and Latin Churches

The Roman Catholic Church has undergone significant transitions over the past

three decades, from a staunchly deferential organization with a highly nominal

congregation of adherents the world over to a revived and more voluntaristic Church

boasting a conservative and activist leader in Pope John Paul II. The Church was long

influenced by a theology of sacramental leadership and dogma that set up the Roman

Catholic Church as the only legitimate representative of God on Earth. However, recently

the Church has followed a path toward challenging the institutional and asciptive

theologies of the past and has adopted a more modernist strategy encouraging

voluntaristic commitment. Vatican II and following encyclicals have displayed the

hierarchy's desire to reflect a democratization of Church discourse, increasing lay

involvement and an emphasis upon personal spirituality. To an extent, this is in reaction

to the movement toward a populist liberation theology that has emerged from the

subaltern hierarchy in Latin America and elsewhere. While accepting some of the

systemic criticisms raised by liberation theology, the leadership of the Roman Catholic

Church has changed course toward being a more voluntarist and establishment

organization. In one treatment, José Cassanova observes that Roman Catholic rethinking

of dogma has emerged to adapt the Church to a "modern hostile environment":

> The final Catholic recognition of the principle of religious
> freedom, together with the Church's change of attitude
> toward the modern secular environment, has led to a
> fundamental transformation of the national Catholic

churches. They have ceased being or aspiring to become
state compulsory institutions and have become free
religious institutions of civil society.[3]

The diversification of theology away from establishment and ascriptive themes toward

more voluntarist themes is a response to an evolving popular theology that took root in

the Roman Catholic Church throughout the period from the late 1960s to the present.

Thus a conservative and modernist Catholicism has tailored Roman Catholic policy in the

last two decades. While eclecticism and heterogeneity make it difficult to classify beliefs

that characterize the whole of the Roman Catholic Church short of the official moves of

the Vatican, there is clearly a more voluntarist spirit at work.

Certainly the Council of Vatican II transformed the Church into a much more

deliberative one, but there remain important elements of deference The Latin and Uniate

Churches of the Middle East show the effects of the developments occurring within the

international Church. There is an increasingly decentralized leadership and an increasing

emphasis on personal responsibility and commitment to the Church while at the same

time the Church has been more active in promoting the interests of its members. The

indigenization of the clergy, especially among Palestinian Greek Catholics and Latins, has

had an effect in making average Catholics more committed to the Church and provided an

outlet for political leadership outside the regular secular channels. The Latin Church

remains closely associated with papal authority and tends more toward foreign control

and the implementation of elite diplomacy involving the Vatican, to which we will return.

Thus, although there remains a strong nascent atmosphere of voluntarist activism

implicit in the activity of local groups, the overall vision of the Roman Catholic papacy

has been to back up its neo-millet strategy in Palestine and Lebanon, eclipsing other church communities by providing clear leadership for the local Christian community (in Lebanon and sometimes in Palestine) or by allying itself with the established regimes (most evidently in Palestine and elsewhere).

Protestants

Protestants in the Middle East are few in number and organizationally diverse. Perhaps the largest and most important group in this category is the Anglican church that has been established in each of the countries we have considered. Most important in Israel/Palestine and Egypt, the hierarchy of the Anglican Church in the region has been increasingly indigenized and active in political controversies. However, outside the Anglican Church, Protestants do not in large measure retain the hierarchical organization that characterizes the traditional churches, a distinction that proves to be both a strength and a weakness. Organizational diversity provides multiple opportunities for community activities and for alliances with external sponsors, both among coreligionists and non-denominational institutions. This has made the Protestant groups the most innovative and flexible of all the churches, involving them in social concern activities of varying sorts, from drug rehabilitation programmes in Cairo, to large-scale media programmes, to an orphanage in the Beqa'a Valley of Lebanon. At the same time, suspicion of their activities on the part of the traditional churches limits their ability to forge intersectarian alliances and to gain recognition as indigenous organizations.

Monastic Orders

Monastic orders that date back to the earliest centuries of Christendom have long been

an important component of Christian organization in the Middle East. Monastic orders

are intended to provide a life of far greater commitment to the principles and disciplines

of the Christian faith and straddle the line between a deferential and an evangelical style,

boasting both a commitment to a deferential order of the traditional past and a desire to

pursue change through separation from the prevailing culture. Monastic orders have been

formed in every one of the countries we have considered in this study. Each of the orders,

from anchorite monks of the Coptic Church to those of the Roman Catholic Churches in

Lebanon, follow a general trend that is consistent with the focus taken by their

denomination and the prevailing norms of Christian belief in the country in which they

reside. In Lebanon, we find the most aggressively nationalistic monastic orders, to the

extent that some high-profile monks were directly engaged in the Christian nationalist

project during the Lebanese civil war. However, it is notable that eventually the Vatican

and the Maronite patriarch disavowed this assertiveness such that the monastic orders

came into line with official Church policy and have remained on the sidelines since the

accession of the current Maronite Patriarch in 1987. Similarly, in Egypt monastic orders

have provided challenges to the leadership, most notably under the revivalist activity of

Father Matta el-Meskeen, but the monastic order has not gone so far as to become a major

rival to the authority of the Patriarchate, in particular since it is the pool from which the

hierarchy is chosen.

SHAPING A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The Role of the Political Environment

Beliefs have been the touchstone of this work, but it is clear that one cannot fully understand the operation of systems of engagement without consideration of the political environment in which a religious group operates. In short, while beliefs matter, political environment also matters.

For example, the Egyptian regime's preference for a controlled liberal state with limited democratic openings provides special opportunities for a single deferential group that is a clear interlocuteur with the state. Extreme pluralism presents challenges to the Egyptian regime that it is unwilling to deal with. Non-deferential groups would provide too strong a threat to the stability of the authoritarian structure of the state, either by challenging the accepted logic of ascription on which interreligious relations are based (in the case of evangelical or establishment groups), or by seeking redress of state institutions to overthrow the Egyptian state's reluctance to let Copts in (in the case of identity-nationalist groups).

Under conditions of mounting civil instability in the Lebanon of the 1970s and 1980s there was a certain inevitability to the rise of nationalistic movements dominated by Christians. Nonetheless it was the weakness of the traditional church hierarchies and the paucity of a tradition of personal commitment to religious fervour that tailored the nature of political action among Christians in Lebanon through that period. Rather than seek to create a desectarianized and secular Lebanese state, Christians sought continued national safeguards to protect their own community. With the rise of the patriotic movement of

Michel Aoun in the late 1980s there was some possibility that a more voluntaristic vision would emerge but both Christian nationalists and the traditional authorities of the *zu'ama* and the Church hierarchy militated against such an outcome. Under Syrian tutelage, Lebanon prefers a deferential Christian community similar to that of Egypt and for similar reasons, but especially to guard against the possibility of renewed conflict inspired by nationalistic irredentism among the Christian population reminiscent of the civil war.

Among the Palestinians, political activity has largely been subordinated to the national struggle, and the national struggle to the creation of Palestinian institutions in waves after the conclusion of the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian Authority has consistently sidelined dissenting movements while at the same time individual Palestinians have sought to maintain simple associational groups. The Palestinian Authority prefers an ally among the Christian population and has studiously maintained a secular discourse, thereby maintaining a wide front for its calls for national unity in resistance to the Israeli occupation. The last thing that the Palestinian Authority will accept is a strong challenger in the Christian population against which it would have to fight a rearguard action. Furthermore, a positive relationship with the Christian minority provides opportunities for indigenous Christian elements to present a positive front for Palestinians among Christians in the West. Christian identity is praised by the movement, which presents the nation as a union of the two major religious groups, Christian and Muslim.

Religious Belief and Political Action

How has the importance of individual and collective belief affected the operation of

groups and the development of systems of engagement? As we move along a spectrum from most to least voluntaristic, we find that groups are more likely to seek communal and separatistic approaches that will provide unique and special rights for the community as a whole. Voluntaristic groups are interested in directing their efforts at transforming individuals in a larger community while identity-based religious groups accept the outside community as a given and require it to provide them interior space to engage in their own in-group activities.

In Chapter Two, I observed that "inheritance and community" were far greater aspects of religion in Middle Eastern societies than they are in those of the West. As a result, voluntaristic groups are few and far between in the Middle Eastern context. Even so, they may be observed among evangelical and socially activistic movements of Christians. In Egypt, the Coptic Evangelical Church typically eschews direct political activity in favour of pluralistic social concern directed through independent community service organizations and CEOSS. More evangelical and establishment elements within the Coptic Orthodox Church pursue similar ends. Among the Palestinians, evangelical and establishment groups follow a similar line, although a more assertive streak appears in the form of the liberation theology movement that has taken aim at western-inspired Christian Zionism. In Lebanon, evangelical and establishment groups are least visible, and most qualified by their association with the deferential churches and resistance movements, yet there remain small social concern agencies that operate outside the sectarian communal structure. These voluntaristic groups tend to be more deliberate about their activities – and often more deliberately apolitical. Annual statements of goals

and statistics flow into this need for a more conscious application of belief. For a voluntaristic group, motivation and process tend to be important, and therefore all activities need to be explained and integrated within the doctrinal belief system that underpins it. Voluntaristic groups are typically committed to a key set of ideas about what and how must be done to cause societal change, with a high level of doctrinal and organizational cohesion that can occasionally lead to fanaticism. By contrast, deferential and identity-nationalist groups tend to be less concerned with doctrinal cohesion and more concerned with the maintenance of community structure.

Deferential identity-based groups tend to have a vested interest in the maintenance of the status quo since the outwardly plural culture is friendly to the continuance of the community and its traditional hierarchy. Thus they are associated with strong and stable neo-millet systems. These systems are unlikely to be characterized by interreligious violence or violent conflict taking place between the regime and the religious community. Yet when rival groups take up grievances of the group against the larger society, adherents of the deferential group may easily develop rival groupings characterized by more nationalistic aspirations. In this way, Lebanon's sectarian system saw the evolution of ostensibly non-sectarian parties into the conduits of identity-nationalist fervour absent a strong deferential organization in the Maronite and other patriarchates beginning in the 1950s and 1960s. It was only the erosion in the popularity and relative power of the identity-nationalist groupings that restored the more traditional approach that privileged the historic churches and created the neo-millet system that today obtains in Lebanon. Fears of this sort of evolution continually arise when interreligious discord erupts in

Egypt, as occurred with the more assertive stance taken by Pope Shenouda III during the late 1970s up to his internal exile in 1981.

By contrast with deferential groups, identity-nationalist groupings are immediately averse to established systems of governance and in favour of change that will recognize the demands of their particular identity group. The combination of demands based on group ascription and the denial of the legitimacy of the pluralistic environment of which they are a part makes these groups the most volatile of the religious movements we have studied. Not surprisingly, these are the groups most prone to engaging in acts of violence to maintain their position. In Upper Egypt, turns toward nationalistic competition between Islamists and Copts foster intercommunal violence such as that engaged in by both communities over the New Year 1999-2000. In Lebanon, identity-nationalist groups forged the various militias that became the forerunners to the LF, the major Christian protagonist during the Lebanese civil war. While the groups themselves were at times hijacked and controlled by individual *za'im* with their own familial and communal ambitions, the original formulation of their precursors remained the defence of a specifically Christian nationalism in Lebanon.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN BELIEF AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Ebb and Flow of Belief: Disarticulation and Diffusion

Prior observations provide a wide set of generalizations that describe the operation of the major Christian communities and groups that exist in the Middle Eastern context. However, there is a strong pattern of disarticulation within and among the Middle Eastern

Churches, leading to their division into various new sects. As a result, over time it has

been increasingly difficult for Middle Eastern Christians to form united fronts or alliances

within any given country. Disarticulation began early. The division of the Middle

Eastern churches began as early as the first controversies that divided the early Christian

church following the declaration of tolerance. The most important of these schisms, the

Chalcedonian division of the Church between Oriental and Western Orthodox Christians;

the "Great Schism" that divided the Eastern and Western Churches in 1057; and the

Reformation of the sixteenth century; have all had unique impact on Christians in Middle

Eastern contexts. Add to these the history of colonialism and the creation of new Eastern

churches, Uniate and Protestant, as a result of missionary and diplomatic activity, and the

various Middle Eastern Christian groups remain disparate and disunified in the extreme,

with age-old hostilities polarizing them and creating innate barriers between them. A visit

to any of the churches shared between the major denominations in the Holy Land or to the

desert monasteries where devotees of the ancient faiths maintain their sentinel existence

will bring the traveler in contact with the strong mutual suspicions that provide grist for

intersectarian bigotry. These divisions often come to the fore in high-profile

controversies and disagreements. No clearer evidence of these divisions has been

observed than during Pope John Paul II's millennial pilgrimage to the region in March

2000. Met at the Cairo airport by only Muslim and secular officials, the pope later had a

lower-profile meeting with the Coptic patriarch. Later, Greek Orthodox custodians of St.

Catherine's Monastery in Sinai denied entrance to the pope's entourage and refused to

pray with the pontiff. The abbot of the monastery adamantly averred, "it will be very

clear to everyone that the Pope is not the leader of non-Catholic Christians."[4] Equally,

distinctions between various groups have become the root of intersectarian conflict, such

as attacks perpetrated by the Maronite-dominated Lebanese Forces militias on neutral

Armenian groups in Beirut during the early 1980s.

Such divisions have an important impact on the coherence of Christian political

engagement. They lead to inherent weaknesses in the position of Christians. What is

more, they complicate the nature of systems of engagement. The existence of various

different sects and divisions between conservative, nominal, and traditional adherents

within sects militate against simplifying the nature of systems of engagement. For

example, the existence of a voluntaristic renewal movement within the traditionally

deferential Coptic Orthodox Church erodes the simple application of ecclesiastic neo-

millet subordination when modernist Copts demand more laic and associational

alternatives. The operation of the neo-millet system implies the recognition of a single

central authority, often complicated by the existence of various different churches,

occasionally possessing united institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Uniate churches

and their Latin counterpart.

The Generational Effect

In Chapter Two, I pointed out that belief is a contingent and changeable variable, and

that it is not static nor is it structural. Beliefs, and the organizations tailored thereby, are

subject to alteration and change over time. The clearest evidence of this is the

development of new directions as succeeding generations take control of existing

religious groupings and create new sects and subdivisions. We have observed this generational effect in various locales through the entry of new age cohorts into the leadership of the groups in each country. In Egypt, the entry of a new modernistic and reformist group of leaders to the Coptic Orthodox Church inspired the development of the Sunday School movement, the energizing of the monastic orders, and the eventual transformation of the leadership into a more activist – and in many ways, less deferential – mode. The final outcome of the historical transformation of the Church is still to come, but there are signs that it is taking on both more aggressively nationalistic and more ardently evangelistic forms. In Palestine, the maturation of a secular nationalism among Christians in the 1980s through the period of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the first *intifada* produced a newly active generation of Christian leaders, most important among them Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Anglican Canon Naim Ateek, and lay people such as Hanan Ashrawi. The result has been a more and more public participation among Christian organizations in the Palestine question and the emergence of a unified Christian consensus in favour of Palestinian rights, defended by the upper echelons of the Church leadership. What is more, it has sparked the development of a popular theology of liberation and the *sabeel* movement. In Lebanon, the emergence of a new generation of leaders in the Christian-dominated political parties marked the ascendence of a more nationalistic group of Christian leaders intent on marking Lebanese territory to their own profit. Later, the ascendence of a more active patriarch in the Maronite Church in Nasrallah Boutrous Sfeir also marked the introduction of a public attitude friendly to the idea of a neo-millet partnership with the state. The development

of new movements over time is clear evidence of innovation in belief and the

diversification of churches, organizations, and parties based on religious beliefs over

time. Each of these cases displays patterns of disarticulation of organizations, the

elimination of others, and the evolution of new groups and organizations out of the old.

The disarticulation of the past and the present among Christian groups in the Middle

East is bookended by thousands of years in which identity and deference defined

Christianity with relatively little innovation. Many Western visitors are thus struck by the

feeling entering a Church in the Middle East that one has stepped back in time, observing

Christianity as it existed at the beginning of this era, and in fact many Christians in the

Middle East are truly proud of their fidelity to an ancient heritage. However for the

Churches the unfortunate truth of the matter is that present disarticulation as a result of

spreading nominalism and voluntarism contributes to three various outcomes, summed up

by Naim Ateek as "emigration, politics, and religion".[5] Politics and religion continue to

challenge the status of the traditional Churches. "Politics" has brought with it

secularization of Christian activity – the desertion of the Churches in favour of nominal

involvement, if any, in the work of the Church, and growing interest in the secular

nationlist projects represented by governments, pan-Arab and other political movements,

and the Palestinian resistance. "Religion" has often meant the conversion of Middle

Eastern Christians either to Islam or to the modernist and evangelical Christian groups

that have slowly grown in number over the past century. The impact of "religion" has

also made itself felt in the traditional Churches themselves, where the diversification of

the Churches leads to internal reformist movements. Reformist and modernist groups

unable to find a place within the Churches search for new places and outlets for their activity, creating flanking movements such as media groups, "thinktanks", and interreligious fora. While the established religions of the Middle East occasionally appear to creak on their ancient foundations, religion remains strong through the dymanism of believers and their movement through dissent from contentment to discontentment and back.

The first outcome identified by Ateek, emigration, is the choice of those who no longer find a place in their erstwhile host societies. By all counts, emigration has been one of the greatest threats to the maintenance of a remnant Christian population – but even more, emigration has meant the implantation of diaspora communities abroad that remain attached through family, business, and sentiment to their homelands. The process of emigration has transformed both these communities and their political action in their homelands, both by providing new opportunities in new political environments and by accelerating the pace of reformism among Middle Eastern Christians such that they embrace new activist evangelical and establishment orientations. While international connections have always been important to Christian political involvement in the Middle East, these connections are inexorably moving from traditional patron-client relationships toward more truly global interactions.

The Tower-keep Goes Transnational

The growing transnationalization of politics has been an important observation in the last ten years, from Eickelman and Piscatori's "changing political geography" to Susanne

Hoeber Rudolph's "transnational space".[6] What is the evidence for the spread of Middle

Eastern Christian political movements beyond the region? In fact, they have been

variously affected by international and regional influences on their presence in Middle

Eastern states since the early development of their religion. In the past, the association of

each of the major Church families with one external power made bilateral ties the most

important structural dimension of internationalized politics. French colonial powers

favoured dealing with the various Roman Catholic hierarchies. Russian authorities

patronized Eastern Orthodox denominations. British imperial offices worked more

closely with both Protestant and secular Muslim groups. In some cases, alliances with

external groups serve to bolster the national presence and activity of domestic groups. In

other cases, these alliances tend to fragment internal alliances and relationships, providing

destabilizing momentum, or strengthening an otherwise marginal element within the

country of origin, or (perhaps more likely) providing a wedge within each organization to

accelerate a process of internal reform or evolution. These erstwhile alignments have

survived in one form or another, with specific associational ties remaining strong between

the Middle Eastern Churches and the Churches of their patrons. But with the eclipse of

the old imperial actors, new ties have come to replace the old bilateral associations. To

some extent, bilateral associations can still be observed between American mainstream

and conservative religion and conservative and Jewish elements in the Middle East.

However, a growing diaspora community and the effects of globalization are leading to a

more interconnected network of associations that follow a more transnational pattern.

The character of international links may also be understood through the lens of group

ambitions. As a result, one may observe the tendency for like groups to approach the international arena in similar ways. Deferential groups tend to stress regional involvements with like associations that will not challenge their basic role in neo-millet accommodations with Middle Eastern governments, specifically overseas extensions of their own hierarchies. More voluntarist organizations have closer relationships with coreligionists of varying stripes abroad. Patterns of diaspora settlement and external remittance shape the evolution of these networks. As a result, official patronage of the important Church hierarchies has declined in significance over time while the emigration of expatriate Middle Easterners and their contacts with coreligionists in the West has increasingly shaped the extraregional focus of Christian activity.

With more than a thousand years of involvement in the politics of the Middle East both as a principal and an observer, the Roman Catholic Papacy is arguably the most time-honoured international Christian organization active in the Middle East. Representing the larger part of Christendom and boasting organized churches in almost every corner of the globe, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is - at least symbolically - a force to be reckoned with. Although the level of influence possessed by the Church varies from locale to locale, its soft power is recognized by many the world over. This has especially proven true in countries with a strong Catholic tradition and an authoritarian rejection of religious institutions. Papal visits in states such as Poland in 1979 and Cuba in 1998 have acted as a pole for open opposition to the regimes -- a theme that the Pope has promoted even as others have minimized its role.

The emigration of Christians of Middle Eastern origin to Western countries in large

numbers provided impetus for extraregional and global links. Patterns of settlement have channeled them into particular concentration in specific cities and states of North America, Europe, and Oceania. One report published by the Arab American Institute in 2000 found that 77% of Arab Americans identified themselves as Christians.[7] In Australia, Coptic Orthodox and Lebanese Christians have congregated in areas of New South Wales: Census Data from 1996 revealed a total self-identified Christian population in Australia of about 42 000.[8] These communities are being transformed and remade, sparking external lobbies in exile and throughout the diaspora as they are put in contact with ideological and religious allies in their new contexts.

No less affected by the impact of modernist and evangelical pulls in the West are the external hierarchies of the Middle Eastern Churches. With the movement of diaspora groups of Middle Eastern Christians into settler societies and other areas of Europe and the New World, the historic churches have established new dioceses and hierarchical organizations. For the Coptic Orthodox Church, this has meant the appointment of bishops for France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, South America, the United States, Canada and Australia. For the Maronites, it has meant the integration of Maronite congregations into the Roman Catholic dioceses already in existence, despite the creation of small Maronite community churches in places such as Argentina, Australia, California and New York, Canada, and various centres in Europe. Among other churches, the establishment of external bishoprics and levels of hierarchy has proven a challenge, as enclaves of coreligionists abroad are so small as to make it impossible.

While hierarchies in the diaspora are beginning to attach themselves to a more

establishment or evangelical style, other groups have made a clearer break from past adherence to deference. Associations with evangelical and other groups in the diaspora have posed significant challenges to the received wisdom of following neo-millet strategies of elite negotiation within their countries of origin. Certainly the challenges coming from the diaspora have become the clarion call for a more activist hierarchy and a deviation from elite negotiation to mass mobilization at the domestic and global levels. However, the activities of diaspora groups themselves have proven more effective and more vigorous.

The movement into exile has proven the only means of life support for various opposition forces dominated by Christian factions. Assyrian opponents of the Ba'thist regime in Iraq have long been a mainstay of its exiled opposition forces. Assyrians are so established a community in Western nations that their connections are well developed and organizationally complex – having created various parties and social organizations – yet their lack of concentrated numbers and long history of assimilation into host societies has mitigated against their becoming a major force. Similarly, Lebanese opposition groups exiled since the advent of the Ta'if regime controlled mainly by Maronites, has remained a force in exile. Most significant of these include Michel Aoun, the ousted former prime minister, and his Free Patriotic Movement. Occasional arrests of Aounist demonstrators in Lebanon in addition to public pronouncements of the regime against the Aounist phenomenon speak to the legacy of the last days of the civil war. A return of Aounist power in Lebanon is not a likely possibility, but the activity of Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and the pro-Aoun World Lebanese Organization abroad continues to mobilize

Lebanese Christians in secular nationalist overtones. Its impact remains implicit in increasing calls for the end of sectarian constitutionalism among Lebanese Christians. Other leaders of identity-nationalist Christian organizations have used exile as a means of shelter and have found restoration a possibility under new deals with the government. Raymond Edde of the National Bloc remained in exile until his death in 2000 but in late 2000 former Phalangist President Amin Gemayel was able to return to Lebanon with only minor criticism from the regime. Yet even more nationalist leaders have had to move toward a secularist vision for Lebanon, advocating Western and non-sectarian democratic principles for the future development of the Lebanese state.

While exiled groups have remained somewhat active in the diaspora, it is the emergence of new and unestablished groups that has been the more remarkable phenomenon in new environments. Christian organizations in the diaspora are not limited solely to the exiled religious and secularist parties dominated by Lebanese Maronites. For several decades, the emigration of eastern Christians of all sorts and the construction of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the countries of settlement, have composed the core of cultural and political movements for national restitution and justice. Although small in number, Assyrian and Chaldaean Christians originating in northern Iraq and eastern Syria have continued to maintain a global organization. There have been Assyrian Orthodox lobbies in the United States as far back as the 1968 founding of the Assyrian Universal Alliance. Of more significant note is the Coptic community, among whom there has been the most active lobby calling for change among the diaspora beginning in the early 1980s. Since that time, small-scale American and other lobby

organizations that galvanize wider support through alliances with other Christian groups and through widespread use of new media have gained an increasingly high profile.

Such groups and alliances are not immune from conflicts of interests over their position on Arab liberation and independence movements. They often run aground on contrary views regarding the liberation of Palestine and the status of Israel, with conservatives supporting the Israeli position and traditionalists from the historic churches supporting more friendly relations with the Palestinian national struggle. In fact, the challenge of Christian Zionism has galvanized Arab Christians in a fight to bring an Arab voice to international Christendom. This movement is the impetus for a growing interdenominational and ecumenical movement in solidarity with Palestinians, but in favour of Social Justice rather than pan-Arabism.

Regional Developments

As a regional presence, Christians are clearly a tiny minority within Middle Eastern countries, comprising at most eight-ten percent of the population of the Arab *mashreq*. Along these lines, the Middle East Council of Churches estimates that Christians in the region number approximately 12 to 14 million.[9] Leaving out major concentrations of Christians in Egypt and Lebanon, this number dwindles to less than five percent.[10] Subregional concentration -- specifically in the areas of Egypt, north-central Lebanon, and central Palestine -- and the inability to form a strong regional presence outside the *mashreq* weaken attempts at developing major regional organizations. Add to this the complexity of Arab Christian denominationalism and doctrinal disputes, in addition to the

continual dwindling of the Christian population of the Middle East, and there is relatively little to convey a strong regional integration of Arab Christians.

Regional groupings have long been hampered by official and doctrinal controversies among the Eastern churches. The erosion of church membership from the Eastern churches encouraged by Western missionary movements and the Roman Catholic Uniate movement also forged a legacy of mistrust among many of the denominations, harming efforts at ecumenism. Combined with secular controls on regional mobilization, there has been a low level of region-wide initiatives among Middle Eastern Christian groups. Nonetheless, external partnerships have spurred on the development of region-wide links among evangelical and establishment groups. The pattern of mobilization represented by independent Christian networks is strong and promises to transform the nature of Christian action in the Middle East. The success of these groups outside the traditional Churches has led them to pursue new and more innovative strategies in turn, many of which are regional in scope. Responding to the challenges to their own relevance stemming from rivalry with other types of groups and dwindling numbers, deferential groups have thus begun to develop regional entities.

Official controls on civil society limit regional action in various locales, constraining the development of regional organizations. Prior to the 1970s, Lebanon served as host and entrepot for regional initiatives. The onset of the Lebanese Civil War forced many of these groups originally based in Lebanon to relocate to various parts of the region, but by far the larger majority of regional groups decided to establish headquarters in Cyprus. With liberal rules governing non-governmental organizations and unfettered links with

most Middle Eastern countries, Cyprus provides a safe home from which to create and nurture regional Christian initiatives. Among the groups based in Cyprus (with branch operations in other nations) is the Middle East Council of Churches and the SAT-7 satellite station controlled by a consortium of modernist Christians of varying sectarian backgrounds.

Aside from regional ecumenical and *ad hoc* efforts to build regional networks, there has been little intraregional activity. Countervailing trends of subregional concentration and the dispersion of small networks of specific denominations impede the development of regional hierarchies and dioceses among important groups, including the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches. For example, whereas the Eastern Orthodox Church maintains a presence throughout the Middle East, the division of Orthodox faithful in enclaves throughout Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan, tends to limit interactions to the level of annual ecumenical events. Add to this the inability of the established churches to maintain levels of enthusiasm that have strengthened more modernist churches, and the development of regional efforts is significantly curtailed.

Scenarios for the Future: the Viability of Tower-keep Theology?

General models have provided an important contribution to our understanding of the operation of Christian systems of engagement with their larger cultures in the Middle East. These systems of engagement are not unique to the Middle Eastern context, but they do have unique qualities that set them apart from other nations. I have used the term

neo-millet system for a specifically Middle Eastern (or Arab) model that is analogous to a corporatist approach in other contexts where the history of previous imperial rule did not consign religious communities to self-contained autonomous rule. Other systems of engagement, however, would require little refinement in order to be applied in different contexts. They seem likely to shed some light on the activity of Christian groups in other comparative fields where Christians form a minority within a plural religious environment. As such, this study provides an early template for such a rethinking of religious movements around the world, beginning with Christian groups in similar contexts.

No such template is fully useful without some predictive power. The models applied in this study provide an important snapshot of Arab Christian groups in the present, but they also provide guidelines to understand where these movements are likely to go in the future. Future trajectories, based on the current state of relations between Christian groups and their political environments, fit into four basic categories.

1. Competitive-Nationalistic Revisionism

First, there is the possibility that Christian groups in Arab societies would move toward a more aggressive and militant competitive-nationalistic system along the lines of the Lebanese civil war. In situations where Christian privileges and independence of action is threatened, and a strong identity focus remains in place, defensiveness can quickly turn to competitive nationalistic activity. The most obvious potential for this remains in Lebanon, where the history of Christian privilege and the sectarian system

remain foundations for revisionism, quelled strongly by the power of an external power

broker in Syria. However, threats of a new nationalistic approach to addressing the

political system are often cited in Egypt when the Coptic Orthodox Church (and more

importantly, lay groups within the Church) begin to move into more assertive postures.

With the onset of a new American interventionism in the Middle East starting with the

invasion of Iraq in early 2003, a potential reversal of fortunes could be perceived among

some of the marginalized Christian communities. But three general trends seem to

militate against this scenario. First is the dramatic lesson demonstrated by the failure of a

particular Christian vision during the Lebanese civil war of the 1980s. Second is the

general decline in numbers among Christians, making militant action among Christians a

bad wager. Third is the general distrust Christians now hold for secular-based

nationalistic parties of the past and the ephemeral nature of Western guarantees of their

own safety and security should they opt for such a strategy.

2. Elimination through Erosion and Emigration

Second, considering the drastic decline in numbers of Arab Christians in the region,

there is the possibility that Christians will virtually disappear in their countries of origin.

Palestinian Christians have chosen emigration at a crisis rate. Egyptian Christians are

declining in number as a result of a combination of emigration, a low rate of natural

increase, and through conversion to the majoritarian Islam. The proportion of Christian

Lebanese has declined relative to other groups, but emigration has also taken its toll on

the population.

To many, this scenario seems to be the most plausible. The number of Christians in Arab contexts will not increase, and it is likely to continue to decrease. Certainly the long-range trends appear to argue for the eventual extinction of Arab Christians, or their eventual integration into Western societies coterminus with their disappearance in their countries of origin. Ancient communities of Turkish and Assyrian Christians in some areas of the Middle East are far more advanced in this sense over and above those we have studied in this work. However, the simple observation that Christians are declining in number is insufficient to describe their political activation both now and in the near future. It is possible, and in many cases likely, that they will hold their own for several years and eventually see some sort of resurgence. One must consider other possibilities, at least in the interim.

3. Battening Down the Hatches

A third possible future scenario sees the indefinite extension of the ecclesiocentric neo-millet system into the years ahead. Such a future creates definable spaces for Christians to maintain their faith and to interact in regulated manners with the external political environment. It builds upon the stable neo-millet systems obtaining in these countries and matches the nominal but strong attachment many have to their traditional religion. It also provides hope for them to integrate with a culture that is both friendly to an identity-based conception of religion and tolerant of communal differences so long as they are wedded to the religious status quo. What is more, it plays into the hands of traditional elites and the hierarchical leadership of the established Churches that date back

into antiquity.

4. Adaptation to New Forms of Belief

A final possible trajectory is the transformation of Arab Christians from nominal and identity-focused approaches to more voluntaristic establishment and evangelical visions. These approaches are clearly foreign to their traditional attachments, but they are increasingly reverberating with established and newly emergent Churches that are seeking to adapt their styles to a modern age. This is being done through educational initiatives such as the Sunday School movement in Egypt, through the provision of new social concern networks through the regional organizations such as the Middle East Council of Churches, through the local churches in drug rehabilitation centres, development initiatives, orphanages, and schools, such as those cropping up in Lebanon and Egypt, and through partnerships with international non-governmental organizations abroad, such as the network of Sabeel branches in various western societies, through ecumenical groups such as the Middle East Council of Churches, and through *ad hoc* initiatives such as the Sat-7 satellite channel project. To some extent, this vision is adopted to counter the trend toward declining numbers and loyalties of adherents, and it provides the strongest challenge to the status quo.

To conclude, it seems most likely that a combination of models three and four point the way to the future. The path to a competitive nationalistic system, though remaining a temptation, seems doomed to failure to such an extent that most Arab Christians now

dismiss it out of hand. The continued viability of Christian groups in the Middle East is a point of some concern to Christians and others alike, with many observing the continuing trend of dwindling Christian populations in the region. However, outside the Palestinian case the decline in numbers of Arab Christians is not so precipitous as to spell the immediate demise of their communities. It is in the maintenance of their traditional communities, in the tower-keeps of old, that Christians are most likely to take shelter. Yet there is a tendency for this theology to stagnate, and the establishment and evangelical visions of new movements among Christians seems to point to a way that renewal will occur. In each of the case studies, I have highlighted some tantalizing visions of how these new approaches are taking hold.

Clearly, tower-keep theology was effective through the years of Muslim domination when emigration was infeasible and conversion was treason. It is not so clear that tower-keep theology adapts well to the modern age. In Lebanon, it came to be associated with a negative reaction to innovations in the status quo that led to civil war, and only after the ravages of war did it return to equilibrium with the acceptance of a more traditional neo-millet system of engagement. Throughout the crisis, Christian emigration and the inexorable pace of demographic change in the mountain republic led to the erosion of any notion of a "Christian" Lebanon, and later served to suggest the eventual disappearance of Christianity itself in the decades to come. In Palestine, the continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and the politicization of religion have also led to massive emigration on the part of Christians, to the point where they are measured in diminutive numbers comparable to that of fringe elements. In Egypt, the decrease in relative

numbers has been less marked, but the tendency for many to convert to Islam and their

patterns of emigration have also been a matter of much concern to the indigenous

Churches. Staving off the transition from neo-millet tower-keeps to oblivion will require

some innovations or reformulations of Christian systems of engagement toward more

evangelical or establishment visions.

Hence a clear challenge to tower-keep theology comes from modern reformists within

the traditional churches. The growing desire to implement Western style rites and

practices and the increasing commitment of individual Christians to understanding and

integrating faith into their everyday lives is a direct challenge to the traditional authorities

of the past. Put simply, although the neo-millet system is stable vis-a-vis the satisfaction

of the larger Arab and Muslim cultures, it is crumbling under the weight of new

developments within the churches. In the past, adaptations tended toward the acceptance

of Roman authority or the creation of newly formed Protestant Churches. In the future,

this process could accelerate and take on new forms. Neo-millet sentimentalities belong

to an era when religious groups could be compartmentalized and divided on the bases of

labels: Orthodox, Catholic, Uniate, and Protestant. Modern religious practice makes this

increasingly problematic.

It seems apparent that tower-keep theology is no longer sufficient to maintain and

defend Christianity in the region. Churches and religious institutions of all sorts have

come to such a conclusion. As a result, many have turned to alternative modes:

ecumenism, new theological visions, new styles of worship and evangelism, political

lobbying both internally and through external ties, and the expression of religion through

the use of new media and consciousness-raising. Egyptian Copts combining modern musical forms with age-old liturgies, Palestinian Christians developing seminars and international solidarity visits to draw upon the ancient tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and Lebanese Christians forging international linkages with the emigrant communities in the West are all demonstrating the adaptive approach that might transform Christian activity in the Middle East. It is possible that such modern approaches have come too late to the Christians of the Middle East, or if the application of these approaches leads to the revival of the faith in the region or accelerates reactions against it, providing even more lethal threats to its survival. Certainly the pace at which Christians have been adapting has accelerated and the sophistication of their institutions has begun to match that of the twenty-first century, which provides some hope for the future. It is by no means a certain cure, but for the Christians of the Middle East to remain and thrive, their ancient crosses and tower keeps must continue to adapt to and withstand the challenges of new beliefs and new environments.

[1] Robert Brenton Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, revised edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978.

[2] Betts, *Christians*, 219.

[3] José Cassanova, "Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a 'Universal' Church", in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 136.

[4] Nadia Abou El-Magd, "In the Footsteps of Moses", *Al Ahram Weekly*, 2-8 March 2000.

[5] Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 59.

[6] See Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), 136-64, and Rudolph and Piscatori, eds., *TransnationalReligion*, 9-12.

[7] Arab American Institute, *Arab Americans: Issues, Attitudes, Views* (Washington, DC: Arab American Institute, 2001), 2.

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[10] These are my own estimates based on my previously cited estimates of ten percent of the Egyptian population, thirty percent of the Lebanese population, in addition to around three percent under the Palestinian Authority and in Jordan, and approximately five percent of the Syrian population.

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