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Political reading of the right to vote by the

Lebanese abroad

By

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Christine G. Nasrallah

Abstract

Human migration is the act of movement by people from their home land to a foreign state with the intention of settling in better living conditions. Lebanese migration started back in the 1845. Over the years Lebanese people migrated in different waves to different places and for different reasons. Migrants have always supported their home country Lebanon morally and economically. In return, Lebanon, represented by its government, has tried to keep the migrants involved in the political life. Many demands were raised to allow immigrants to participate in the Lebanese parliamentary elections from abroad to enable them to be a part of Lebanon's decision making's process. Granting the immigrants this right through a legislated law became one of the main political issues in the country. The motive behind this thesis is to gain a better understanding about the methods, causes, and results of implementing such a law. The main aim is to determine the sectarian figures that benefit the most from the participation of the expatriates and those that were against applying such a law. In order to clearly prove the main arguments and make the results more reliable, this thesis used data collected from previous researches made in this topic. Also, this thesis presents the public statements of different Lebanese politicians from various parties representing the Lebanese sects during the sessions of the committee of Administration and Justice held in August and September of the year of 2008 to discuss this issue. Based on the collected data, this thesis will analyze the positioning of the Lebanese sectarian figures towards enabling the right of immigrants to vote from abroad.

Keywords: Lebanon, Immigrants, Lebanese Parliamentary elections, Diaspora, Government, Political parties, Sects.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Human migration is the act of voluntary or involuntary physical movement from one place to another in order to settle down with better conditions and life standards. There are generally two types of motives that lead a person to leave his country, the push and the pull factors. The former describes the conditions inside the home country that drive the person to leave his country. The latter has to do with the better living conditions of the receiving country. During the early 1990s 25-30 million individual moved across different countries (Raad, 1998). Therefore, Migration has always been considered as a worldwide phenomenon.

Wendy Pearlman, an Assistant Professor of Political Science, and author of "Competing for Lebanon's Diaspora: Transnationalism and Domestic Struggles in a Weak State", in which she stated that "Leaving the country is as Lebanese as apple pie is American". Indeed, the act of migration has always been common in the Lebanese society due to the many struggles they have been facing since the early 1800s. Lebanon's migration is one of the oldest, most widespread, and undertaken on individual initiative. According to Dr Philippe Hitti, a Lebanese American scholar who studied the Arab and Middle Eastern history, the first known Lebanese immigration was in 1845, when Antonios Bachaalany from Salima migrated to the United States of America. It was due to this incident that the Lebanese migration kept increasing. Studies also have shown that one of the first Lebanese migrations was when the companions of Youssef Bek Karam followed him when he went into exile in Italy, and they left to Brazil after his death. In 1910, the migration of women increased which led to the establishment of families and settlement in the receiving

countries. However, until this day, Lebanon has been unable to make official statistics about the number of migrants who still hold their Lebanese citizenship or those that relate to ancestors with Lebanese citizenships (Hallak, 2006). Thus, the Lebanese migration is an old and large phenomenon which can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century.

Since the establishment of Greater Lebanon, the Lebanese governments have tried to keep the migrants attached to their countries through establishing organizations and always demanding for their return. The Lebanese politicians have always demanded the participation of the migrants in the Lebanese elections. However, the participation required the immigrants to be present in their home district. Allowing immigrants to participate in the parliamentary elections from abroad wasn't legislated until 2009 and was supposed to be implemented in the 2013 elections that were postponed twice. This thesis aims to present the process this law underwent until it was legislated. Who was with and who was against the implementation of such a law will be presented. But first we should mention that any political issue in Lebanon should be studied from a sectarian point of view since the majority of the ruling parties represent the four essential Lebanese sects; Shia, Sunni, Christians and Druze; and there is a lack in the presence of independent and secular parties. The main goal is to present an analysis to show which sectarian figures worked towards allowing immigrants to vote from abroad and which figures were against it along with the reasons behind each positioning. Our analysis is validated through the public statements and positioning of politicians in regards this issue. Also, we will present the relation between allowing immigrants to vote and the law of restoration of citizenship.

This thesis will start by describing in this chapter the waves of the Lebanese migration since 1845 and until this day. Then we will be presenting in details the relation between Lebanon and the migrants.

1.1 Waves of migration:

Moreover, it was difficult to identify the Lebanese migrants before 1920 since the data collected on departure and on arrival are incomplete and inaccurate. Additionally, the Lebanese current borders were specified and declared in 1920. Therefore, at that time, the Lebanese migrants were called Ottoman or Syrians. According to estimations 350 000 Syrian- Lebanese migrants left from the cities of Beirut and Tripoli between the years of 1860 and 1914 (Thibaut, 2009: 46-47). During the First World War the Lebanese migration decelerated due to the famine which led to the death of one third of the population of Mount Lebanon. Additionally, the sea blockade over Lebanon halted the migration for three years. After the year 1920 the Lebanese migration increased rapidly, between the years 1923 and 1926 the number of migrants was around 11 000 to 16 000 each year most of them from Greater Lebanon (Thibaut, 2009: 51). During this wave the number of Lebanese female migrants increased and this led to the establishment of families in the receiving countries (Fersan, 2010). Throughout the 1960s a new wave of migration was directed toward the oil rich Arab States. The last wave of migration started during the Lebanese civil war around 900 000 migrants left between 1975 and 1996 (Thibaut, 2009: 148). The Lebanese migration still continues with different proportion. Moreover, around 500 thousand Lebanese migrated and the largest part lived in America (99401 migrants), Saudi Arabia (99241 migrants), then Australia, Canada, and Germany. The number of migrants in 2013 rose to 683 thousand, from which 124 thousand are youth between the ages of 15 to 24. America is still the first

receiving country with 126 thousand Lebanese migrants followed by 96 thousand migrants in Australia, 87 thousand in Canada, 67 thousand in Germany and then 57 thousand migrants in Saudi Arabia (Al Choufi, 2016). This shows that the destination of the Lebanese migrants is widespread all around the world. We should mention that some of those migrants returned to Lebanon.

The "Al Moughtareb" magazine, using the information available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Emigrants, stated in its first issue in June 2006 that the number of Lebanese migrants is more than 10 million. These Lebanese migrants are spread around the world, and most of them do no longer hold the Lebanese citizenship. However, more realistic estimations show that the number of Lebanese migrants is around three to four million. (Verdeil et al, 2007: 34)

1.2. Lebanon and the migrants

Throughout the years, the migrants tried to stay connected to their homeland. In 1908 several Lebanese intellectuals, exiled to Egypt, established a union and demanded for the independence of Lebanon according to its natural borders (Thibaut, 2009:61). Additionally, some migrants established many organizations to support their country of origin. One of the most known organizations was the "Pen League" established in 1920 by a group of elite writers led by 'Gebran Khalil Gebran'. Moreover, born in Cuba in 1909 to Lebanese parents, Dr Natalio Chidiac established the first international organization, gathering the Lebanese communities abroad under the name of "The Union of American Organizations" on the 31st of January 1959 (Al Funun, 2013). Consequently, this shows that the Lebanese migrants are attached to their lands even when they are far away.

On the other side, the Lebanese governments throughout the years have always tackled the migration situation. It started by the first migrants' conference at

the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, with the presence of The Lebanese President Fouad Chehab. This led to establishing the Lebanese Universal Union, which was later called "Lebanese Cultural Union in the World". Its main goal was to strengthen the relationship between the migrants and their homeland. Moreover, there are many organizations and associations in Lebanon that deal with the Lebanese migrants like the Maronite Foundation in the World, whose main mission is to help the Maronite regain their Lebanese identity and citizenship, and to facilitate their return to their roots. Nowadays, due to the development of the telecommunication, it is easier for the migrants to stay updated with the Lebanese news. In addition, it became easier for the politicians to state their opinions worldwide, and to reach all of the Lebanese non- residents.

The Lebanese presence in foreign countries established prosperity for Lebanon on two aspects: moral and material. Lebanon has become increasingly dependent on remittances, which have turned into a source of income. The migrants played a crucial role in strengthening the economy that is still standing due to the large sum of remittances sent by the migrants to their families. Lebanon is ranked the 8th country in the world in what corresponds to the incoming transfers from the migrants. The country received seven billion dollars, representing 17 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2013 (Al Choufi, 2016). This proves the important role played by the Lebanese expatriates in the development of the economy. Furthermore, The Lebanese migrants are considered in general well-educated, rich and very influential in their country of residence. Some of them have reached senior positions on different levels: politics, scientific, and literary. Therefore, many politicians wanted to keep them attached to their country of origin, in order to benefit the most from them.

Therefore, one of the most important ways to keep the migrants connected to their homeland, Lebanon, was to allow them to vote and grant them a role in the Lebanese political decision-making process that affects the well-being of their country. By making these migrants involved in the decision-making of their country of origin, they will stay interested in it. This will lead them to invest in Lebanon and help in its development.

For the past few years, and especially after the departure of the Syrian army from Lebanon, the need for a new electoral law was raised. Some of the modern suggestions to the law were lowering the voting age, having smaller electoral districts or proportional representation and most importantly was allowing the migrants to vote. Moreover, this issue has always been proposed, but never implemented. Furthermore, this topic was a reason for arguments and disputes among the politicians of different sects and parties. Despite all the demands, Lebanese migrants are still unable to vote from their host countries. Even though the Lebanese parliament passed the law for allowing the migrants to vote during the 2013 parliamentary elections, the election was postponed twice.

Moreover, giving the non-residents the right to vote in the Lebanese embassies and consulates raised many questions. Which political party will benefit the most from implementing this new law? Are the migrants still interested in the Lebanese political situation? And how much will these votes impact the current Lebanese democratic system? Lebanese parties and sects have different and controversial opinions regarding this matter. Our thesis will present a detailed review of the position of the Lebanese political forces who grant the right to vote to the Lebanese abroad.

The main questions of this thesis will be: which political party supported this law, and which party opposed it? What were the main reasons behind each party's position and are they sectarian reasons? Additionally, in this thesis we are going to study the different positions of the Lebanese political parties regarding the law, allowing the Lebanese non-residents to vote. The aim of this thesis will be to show the way political parties dealt with this issue, which political parties supported and worked to implement this law, and which ones had restrictions over allowing the non-residents to vote.

Most studies assess the reasons for the large Lebanese migration and their effect on the economic sector. Although many scholars studied the Lebanese migration from different angles, very few discussed the political reading and the new alliances that were made in order to support the implementation of this new law. Therefore, in this thesis we attempt to fill this gap by analyzing how this law was first introduced, the controversy around it and the development process it underwent until it was voted on in the parliament. In terms of timeframe, the thesis will be restricted to the period after the Taef Accord of 1989, since the Lebanese politics transformed drastically after this stage.

Another issue we aim to tackle in this thesis is the impact of this law, not only on the Lebanese sects, but also on different politicians in Lebanon. More specifically, we are going to analyze how allowing Lebanese abroad to vote might affect independent and feudal families, who compete with political parties. Can independent politicians compete with Lebanese parties on this level and win in the parliamentary elections?

Furthermore, the law for the restoration of citizenship is directly related to the one allowing the migrants to vote. By implementing the former law, the number of

non-residents eligible to vote might increase. The aim of this thesis is to show that those who rejected the law of restoration of citizenship are those who opposed the law allowing the non-residents to vote. Additionally, the analysis will prove that the Christians political forces are demanding for both laws to be implemented in order to increase their numbers and not to risk losing the 50/50 formula of sharing the power with the Muslim sects.

Consequently, this thesis is divided as follows the first chapter will briefly explain the international migration and its causes then about the Lebanese migration and the different waves. Subsequently, the first chapter will show the main question of this thesis and the reasons why this topic is important. In the second chapter, the literature review, will give several examples of how migrants in different countries can participate in the election process. Afterward, we are going to give a detailed overview about the situation in Lebanon regarding allowing the immigrants to participate in parliamentary elections. Additionally, this chapter is going to clarify which districts will be highly affected by the participation of the migrants. The third chapter represents the methodology and all the primary and secondary sources used in this thesis to validate the arguments in order to answer the main question of this thesis and make it more credible. The historical overview, the fourth chapter of this thesis, is divided into two main parts before the Taef Agreement and after it. This chapter will present a detailed explanation about the history of the Lebanese migration since before the Lebanese independence until recently. Additionally, the fourth chapter will explain how migration affected on the demographic changes in Lebanon and how the results of the only official census were affected by the numbers of the migrants. Furthermore, the historical overview will show the relation between the migrants, the government, and the various Lebanese political parties. The last

part of this chapter explains about the law of restoration of citizenship which is an old demand for the Lebanese Christians. Later on the fifth chapter, the result analysis, starts by stating which category of migrants is eligible to vote. Afterward, this chapter is divided into several parts showing every Lebanese section and their views regarding allowing the Lebanese migrants to vote. The last chapter presents a conclusion about all the discussed topics of this thesis.

Chapter Two

The law of allowing the Immigrants to vote from abroad

Allowing the expatriate to vote is an international notion and many countries have studied this issue carefully before declining or accepting it. Each state had its own concerns regarding this issue and dealt with it accordingly. Therefore, the laws allowing the expatriates to vote from abroad are different in each country. Some states allow them to vote in the presidency elections, and some others allocate a specific quota to the expatriates. Moreover, the first documented experience of casting votes from outside the national territory preceded the era of modern democracies. The Roman Emperor Augustus permitted senators in newly founded colonies to send their votes for the city offices of Rome by mail (Lafleur, 2013: 17). Nowadays, the increased human mobility resulting from new transportation technologies like the faster and cheaper air transportation, and the development of new communication technologies like email, mobile phones, electronic social networks, and others have allowed immigrants to connect more frequently and sustainably with their relatives, other states, and non-state actors in their home countries. This helps the migrants to be always updated with the political situation of their country.

To implement the law allowing the expatriates to vote, each state must study the registration process. Therefore, the first step in abroad elections is registering immigrants who would like to participate in the elections. Registering voters abroad may be either passive or active. Passive implies that all citizens abroad identified by home country authorities as qualified external voters are added to the voter registries

of an election automatically. Active means that citizens abroad must request registration. Lebanese officials must be careful not to make the mechanism for registration abroad too bureaucratic in order to make it easier for migrants to register.

Additionally, there are mostly two identified political variables that lead to higher turnout among the expatriate voters. The first variable is the presence of political parties in the receiving countries through meetings with expatriates or advertising in local media. Second, the closeness of an election and the strong competition among the different parties would encourage the immigrants to vote because they have greater weight (Lafleur, 2013: 111). According to the Lebanese case both variables are highly present since each political party have its own offices in different receiving countries and the politicians meet the migrants frequently during dinners and conferences in the hosting states. Additionally, there is a strong competition during the parliamentary elections in Lebanon and the results of the elections are always tight.

We can identify three types of external voting. The first type is voting in home districts that require expatriates to travel to their country of origin in order to vote. The second type is to vote abroad for home district. In this case expatriates can vote in polling stations abroad but the votes are counted as if they were resident in an electoral district within their country of origin. The third type, voting abroad for direct representation, expatriates elect their own representation in legislative elections.

2.1. Situation in different countries

Many countries allow their immigrants to vote using different types of external voting. In 1946 in France, "L'Assemblée Nationale" used to appoint three immigrants in the senate council. Nowadays, the immigrants vote for 12 senates who

affect the French presidential election (Farchakh, 2006: 60). In Portugal the immigrants have a direct representation, they vote for four MPs out of 230. However, in Italy, which has one of the largest immigrants population around the world, expatriates were allowed to vote for 12 MPs out of 630 and six senators out of 315. In Spain, Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, the immigrants and the residents vote for the same candidates. (Farchakh, 2006: 78)

The external voting rights of citizens living abroad raise sensitive issues regarding State-Diaspora relations. In 2006 both Mexico and Italy, two historically large emigration states, allowed their migrants to vote from abroad for the first time. Over a million Italian emigrants participated in the elections which led to serious accusation of fraud. However, due to the extremely bureaucratic external voting mechanism, very few took part in the Mexican presidential election (Lafleur, 2013). Furthermore, some countries put some restrictions on allowing the citizens abroad to vote, such as how long they have been away and whether they want to come back or not. Each country has different conditions for their migrants to vote. For instance, France reserves seats in the parliament for citizens who live abroad. One of the determinants for allowing the migrants to vote is the ratio of immigrants' number according to the population's. Another determinant is the economic dependence of the government on the migrants (Collyer & Vathi, 2007). Moreover, it is becoming unusual for the Lebanese living abroad not to have the right to vote according to international context. Currently, there are 119 states that allow their migrants to vote such as Mexico, Italy, the Dominican Republic, and many other countries with high migrant rates. This includes 31 African nations, 17 North and South American countries, 20 Asian countries, 10 Pacific countries, and 41 European countries (Lafleur, 2013:19). Therefore, the Lebanese government must learn from the

experience of those countries while studying the process of implementation of the law allowing expatriates to vote.

2.2. Situation in Lebanon

Lafleur, in his book *"The Transnational Political Participation Of Immigrants: A Transatlantic Perspective"*, raised several questions concerning the Mexican immigrants voting, which could be used in the Lebanese case. Should the proportion of representation to population be the same for Lebanese at home and abroad? Would migrants be divided into geographic regions across the world to elect representatives in the Lebanese parliament?

Moreover, every Lebanese political party has a migrant administrator and offices in different receiving countries in order to keep in touch with the migrants. The Lebanese leaders constantly visit the receiving countries and meet with the expatriates in order to keep them involved and updated with the Lebanese situation. In these meetings, the expatriates present donations and funds to support their political parties. In addition, there is a strong competition in the Lebanese elections, which might encourage the immigrants to participate in large numbers.

Therefore, we must ask about the role that the political parties have played in attracting those immigrants in large numbers in the parliamentary elections. This should not be simplified by saying that the main reason for the return of those migrants was only the presence of political money, even though it was a very important factor. What is certain is the important role and strong presence of the political parties in attracting the new immigrants or even those who left after the civil war, and in keeping them updated with the political situation in Lebanon (Tabar, 2011).

The Lebanese election law has always presented a major issue in Lebanon, especially now since it allows one of the two leading political movements - 8th and 14th of March, to get the majority of the parliament. This majority affects the formation of the government and the presidential elections. Therefore, both movements were pushing for the election law that best suits them, and allow them to have the maximum number of MPs. On the other hand, Lebanese immigrants are close to their families in Lebanon. They send large amounts of remittances which lead to prosperity and the development of the middle class. The diaspora also formed lobbying groups to pressure the host countries into supporting all of the Lebanese issues, especially the one concerning Lebanese sovereignty.

According to a study done by Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, while there are about 4 to 6 million Lebanese, immigrants have significant impact on the politics, economy and cultural life in Lebanon. The Lebanese government has never had a diaspora policy to strengthen the immigrants' relations to their homeland. Therefore, the Lebanese diaspora communities have called for restoring their Lebanese citizenship and acquiring the right to vote (Hourani, 2007). However, some think that allowing migrants to vote has many drawbacks, such as the high cost of such operation, the difficulty in planning for such elections, the eligibility of abroad citizens to interfere and change the political situation in Lebanon, and many others. Nonetheless, many arguments can be given to defend the participation of these immigrants in the elections such as their economic contributions.

According to MP Ghassan Moukhaiber, when referring to the preparation for the 1996 elections, there are four main arguments to disallow the immigrants to vote in Lebanon. First, the overseas Lebanese do not pay taxes. Second, giving the

expatriates this right is only applicable for the Christians. Third, the immigrants are unaware of the political situation in Lebanon, which may lead to hasty decisions. Fourth, there are many technical, logistical, and legal obstacles that make it even harder for Lebanese overseas to participate in the elections. Nevertheless, Moukhaiber rejected these points and criticized them by saying that not allowing the expatriates to vote is undemocratic since paying taxes is not a precondition for voting, and if this is the case, most Lebanese in Lebanon are unqualified. Moreover, Moukhaiber regards the second argument as unacceptable, since the Christians are no longer the majority of the expatriates. According to Labaki, recent immigration has been mostly constituted of Lebanese Muslims (Labaki, 1997). Furthermore, Christians and Muslims are represented equally in the parliament. Moukhaiber is not convinced with the third argument - the ignorance of the expatriate in what concerns the Lebanese political situation – due to the development of the tele-communication technology, such as TV and social media, and therefore the immigrants can follow closely the Lebanese political situation just like the residents. Concerning the fourth argument, Moukhaiber suggests that a strong coordination between the Lebanese government and the overseas missions would ensure the overcoming of this problem.

Dr. Hassan Krayim, supervisor of the project "Supporting the Elections" executed by the Ministry of Interior, claims that the planning for the first elections will be time-consuming, however, the planning for the second one will become much easier. The preparations for such exercise need hard effort, however, it becomes easier and cheaper during the second elections. Krayim gave the example of the Iraqi experience and stated that the first election cost 100 million USD. However, the cost decreased to only 20 million USD in the second election that was done outside Iraq. What is more, only the non-residents whose names are on the electoral list are

entitled to vote, which are around 1 million voters. Krayim calculated the number of Lebanese potential voters, according to which he considered that there are 3.7 million Lebanese on the voter rolls. Around half of them vote and approximately 700,000 abstain. The rest are considered to be non-residents. (Lubnaniyoun, 2013)

According to an article by Al Akhbar newspaper titled "Lebanese Expats: Tilting the Delicate Balance", the Christian politicians have made two false perceptions. First, they assumed themselves as the majority of the Lebanese immigrants, and allowing them to vote will restore the political balance. However, this assumption is false because most of the Christians migrants do not hold the Lebanese citizenship due to being the descendants of the earlier waves of migration. The second perception among the Christian politicians of the 14th of March camp is that the Christian immigrants, who left during the Syrian army's occupation of Lebanon, are supportive of the "Cedar Revolution". Therefore, by allowing them to vote, the 14th of March Christian politicians will benefit.

In the 2009 Lebanese parliamentary elections, districts of Zahleh, Zgharta, Batroun, Dunieh, and Koura that represent 18 seats in the parliament witnessed a large participation of returning migrants. The competition in those districts was very strong and the difference between the winners and the losers were minimal. Therefore, the votes of the returning migrants were decisive in the final results. We should also mention that the overall difference between the two leading movements was only 14 seats (Tabar, 2014). Accordingly, allowing the migrants to vote will lead to an internal struggle among the Christians, especially in Zgharta, Koura, Metn, Keserwan, Batroun, and Jbeil and will be ineffective in districts like Tripoli, Baabda, and Akkar (Koussayfi, 2012). Consequently the Christian MPs will be highly affected by the implementation of the law and by the votes of the expatriates.

Over and above that, Abdo Saad, Director of Beirut Center for Research and Information, in his book *The Parliamentary Election Of 2009 Reading And Analysis*, used the voting of the election coordinators. The latter voted just few days before the election on the 7th of June, to analyze the effect of the migrants' vote on the national elections. According to Saad, all the employees who organize the elections are the perfect example of the Lebanese residents who live and work in Lebanon. He doesn't disregard the possibility of a political influence on the employees' voting, but he is using them since they represent the Lebanese residents. The result of their votes showed a similar one to the statistics done before the election, which showed a slight progress for the 8th of March over the 14th of March, with a difference of two to three deputies in most of the competitive districts. The outcomes of the election showed completely different results from what was expected. 14th of March won over the opposition with a difference of 14 deputies. Also, the analysis of the results of the 2009 parliamentary elections showed an increase in the proportion of voting in competitive districts like Zahleh, Metn, West Bekaa/ Rachaya, Koura, Keserwan, Jbeil, Zgharta, and Beirut 1 (Saad, 2009). Therefore, according to Abdo Saad's analysis, the migrants will have a strong effect and might change the expected results in districts like Zahleh. However, their votes will have no effect on districts with a ruling party, like Beirut 3, Akkar, and the districts in the South.

As a result, the large number of Lebanese migrants who came to Lebanon to vote in the 2009 elections should be taken into consideration in this thesis. For the first time, two types of Lebanese voters participated in the elections, the residents and the migrants. In general, the election law for the non-residents is a major issue for any country. This law could cause major disputes among different political forces since implementing it might lead to a drastic change in the results of any election in

any country. Therefore, in this thesis, mainly the fourth chapter will present a study of the positioning of various Lebanese parties and politicians with regard to allowing the large number of non-residents to vote abroad. In the fifth chapter, the results of chapter four will be analyzed to show how opposing political parties allied to implement abroad elections, and how parties of the same movement didn't support each other's decisions.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This thesis tackles the political aspect of the right of the Lebanese abroad to vote as it is the case in many countries. Even though Lebanon has one of the largest numbers of expatriates, it was only very recent that a law was passed to allow immigrants to vote. However, despite the legislation of the rights of immigrants to vote abroad they were unable to vote so far due to the extension of terms of the parliament. Additionally, the ministry of interior was unable to put a plan that allows the implementation of this law.

The main aim of this thesis is to show which sects and political party worked to get the law implemented and which ones made obstacles in order not to allow the immigrants to vote. There will be no field work to validate the arguments; however this thesis will rely heavily on the data available by Lebanese newspapers, academic journals, and books. This is as well as, depending heavily on the information extracted from the parliamentary documents of the meetings conducted by the parliamentary committee discussing the implementation of this law.

3.1. Primary sources:

The arguments presented in this thesis will be defended using reliable information from different primary and secondary source; one of the main and primary sources of information would be the sessions of the Committee of Administration and Justice to discuss the law of granting the immigrants the right to vote held in August and September of 2008 the year when this law was seriously introduced to be implemented. In those sessions, different political party representatives argued about this law and stated all their concerns and opinions. The

Minister of Justice Ibrahim Najjar, the President of the Committee of Justice and Administration Robert Ghanem, and members of the parliament Neemtallah Abi Nasr, Antoine Zahra, Boutros Harb, ElieAoun, Amine Cherry, and Bahij Tabbara, representing most of the parliamentary blocs and sects gathered in order to discuss the implementation of the new law. Another primary source of information is the report 301/ w sent by the ministry of foreign affairs to the ministry of interior on 11/9/2008, in which the mechanism associated with the voting of the Lebanese abroad was entitled. This report represents the answers to the questions posed by the ministry of interior regarding the preparation for allowing the Lebanese immigrants to vote from the embassies of their host countries. The main points of this report were mainly about the readiness of the embassies to conduct the elections, the technical and logistical obstacles that might affect the execution of the elections, and the numbers of expatriates in different countries.

3.2. Secondary sources

The secondary sources of information are the articles from the Lebanese newspapers and magazines especially Al Akhbar, and Al Moughtareb. The articles retrieved would be starting from the date the law of allowing the immigrants to vote was first seriously introduced in order to be studied and applied, this means from the year 2008 onwards. Al Moughtareb, a magazine that tackles different topics related to the Lebanese immigrants and studies their issues and problems, is considered one of the most important sources. In this magazine several interviews were made with different politicians to discuss their opinions regarding allowing the immigrants to vote, and the right of restoring the Lebanese citizenship. The latter topic is related directly to allowing immigrants to participate in the Lebanese elections from abroad; therefore a part of this thesis will address this matter. In addition to Al Moughtareb,

Al Akhbar newspaper wrote several articles concerning this thesis' topic. Those two sources were chosen in specific due to the large amount of articles they dedicated for this subject. Moreover, Al Moughtareb magazine, in several issues, tackled this matter in depth and gave the readers an insight on the opinions of different politicians regarding this subject. Likewise, Al Akhbar newspaper, which is regarded affiliated with the 8th of March movement, wrote several articles to analyze the position of various political groups and how they might be affected in case this law was implemented.

An important part of this thesis addressed the historical background of the Lebanese emigration which started in the 1800s. Moreover, Guitta Hourany, the Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, and Dr Philippe Hitti, a Lebanese American scholar, made several researches concerning the evolution of the Lebanese emigration. Furthermore, the history of migration was used to clearly identify the sects and political parties that were highly affected and analyze why they worked hard to get the law of voting abroad implemented.

The historical overview chapter presented the ways different Lebanese governments used to deal with the issues of immigrants, starting from the first government after independence during the era of President Bechara El Khoury and Prime Minister Riad Al Solh. This chapter also tackled the establishment of the ministry of immigrants which was later transformed into a directorate. This was used to show that most of the governments over the years identified the importance and the benefits of the expatriates and always pursued the help of the Lebanese migrants whether economically or politically.

Another source of information would be the books written by several scholars regarding the topic of this thesis. We used two books written by Jean Michel La

Fleur, Associate Director of CEDEM, and Research Associate at the Belgian Fund for Scientific Research, concerning the right of the diaspora to vote from abroad, and the experiences of different states regarding allowing their immigrants to vote. Additionally, Laurie Brand wrote a book entitled: *"Emigration and the state in the Middle East and North Africa"*, in which she explained the case of the Lebanese migration, and the right of the Lebanese migrants to vote from abroad. Furthermore, some of the information of this thesis was retrieved from Julian Thibaut who wrote a paper regarding the Lebanese nationality and the legal right to restore the Lebanese citizenship. Likewise, Thibaut wrote a thesis entitled *"The Lebanese state and its diaspora religious issues, political and economic dynamic uses"* in which he explained the Lebanese migration and the role of the state in keeping the Lebanese diaspora attached to their home country.

One of the most important points that this thesis tackles in order to come up with a persuasive result, is the change in the demography in Lebanon which led to an alteration of the sectarian political power before and after Al Ta'ef Accord in 1990. Moreover, Wendy Pearlman explained in her article *"Competing for Lebanon's Diaspora: Transnationalism and Domestic Struggles in a Weak State"*, the way the sectarian list in Lebanon changed through time. Pearlman also explained the effect of the only official census done in 1932 on the distribution of the political shares according to sects. Her article shows that the Christians were considered as the largest sect because the migrants were involved in the census. However, their numbers decreased and in order to compensate for their loss the Christian leaders are trying to seek the help of the migrants and demand their involvement in the Lebanese political realm.

Furthermore, the analysis of Abdo Saad, Director of Beirut Center for Research and Information, and writer of *"The Parliamentary Election of 2009 Reading and Analysis"*, was used to show how the return and the large participation of immigrants in the last parliamentary elections in 2009 affected the expected results of the elections. Additionally, Saad's analysis presents a detailed review regarding the districts that were highly affected by the return of the expatriates. Therefore, which sect was remarkably influenced by the participation of the immigrants depended on Saad's analysis.

Based on all these resources, this thesis will show the experiences of different countries concerning allowing the immigrants to vote. It will also show the evolution of the Lebanese migration since the 1800s. Furthermore, one of the main points in this thesis would be the change in the sectarian line-ups in Lebanon, and the Christians losing their status as the largest Lebanese sect. Additionally, an examination of how the Taef Accord removed the power of the Lebanese president will be presented, empowered the government and the Sunni Prime Minister. Through using all these sources, and analyzing the points previously mentioned, the common points of views of all Lebanese sects and parties regarding allowing immigrants to vote will be shown. Moreover, an examination of the position of the Shia's main parties regarding allowing the migrants to vote from abroad will be given, especially that the main Shia political party Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organization in many foreign countries in which there are many Lebanese expats.

Chapter Four

The sectarian evolution and its effects on the political system

Immigration has always been an important issue in the political and demographic evolution of Lebanon. The Lebanese authorities made several attempts to integrate expatriates in the Lebanese affairs. The migration history in Lebanon preceded the independence in 1943. Migrants have always been involved in several Lebanese matters such as the economy, the politics and the demographical changes. Since a large number of Christian Lebanese left the country over the years this sect lost its dominance and its status as the largest sect in the country. Thus, the Christian sect lost its dominance over the political power after the Taef accord in 1990. Additionally, we are going to present in this part of our thesis a historical overview targeting how the Lebanese demography changed drastically due to the migration and how this change was reflected in the policies adopted towards migrants. Also we are going to tackle the relation between the governments and the expatriates that preceded the Taef agreement in the 1990s, which was a breaking point in the Lebanese political life ending the civil war that lasted over fifteen years. In the last section, we will present how the relation with the migrants evolved after the 1990.

4.1. Prior to 1990

4.1.1 Evolution of the sectarian political system

In Lebanon, any political decision opted for is based on the sectarian calculations. Therefore, there is a need to tackle the evolution of political sectarianism in Lebanon, due to its major influence on the political decisions including the right to vote of the Lebanese citizens abroad, which is the topic of our

thesis. The Christian population in Lebanon, which was one of the major sects before independence, suffered a large decrease in number due to different waves of migration. Between the years of 1860 and 1900, one fourth to one third of Mount Lebanon's predominantly Maronite population migrated, and continued at different rates until the First World War.

The rise of Greater Lebanon:

In the 1st of September 1920 General Gouraud declared the establishment of the Greater Lebanon. New territories with Muslim majorities were added to Lebanon. This led to a decrease in the number of the Christian population in the country. Therefore, General Gouraud in 1921 reorganized the administrative and political system in order to benefit the Christians at the expense of the Muslims. Additionally, after less than one year of the declaration of greater Lebanon, the General organized a census of the Lebanese population. The Muslim leaders called for boycotting the census which led to unreliable results. Additionally, the migrants who paid taxes in Lebanon were added to the 1921 census. Moreover, 82.48 % of the migrants who paid taxes were Christians therefore the Sunni and the Shia were underestimated (Thibaut, 2009: 89). Later on, The French high commissioner in Lebanon, Henry de Jouvenel, proposed to detach Tripoli and the Bekaa valley from Lebanon in order to keep the demographic Christian majority. However, the Maronite patriarch opposed the plan because it threatens the economic independence and food self-sufficiency of Lebanon (Thibaut, 2009: 87). The French mandate led to a political cleavage between the Christian elites and their Muslim counterparts.

The census of 1932:

Some of the Muslim deputies demanded for a new official census instead of the previous unreliable census of 1921. In order to compensate for their loss,

Christian leaders turned to the diaspora to strengthen their position internally, and asked to give the expatriates dual nationality. This might be the very first involvement of the immigrants in the Lebanese political situation (Pearlmen, 2014). Therefore, the Christian politicians have always looked at the Christian migrants as a solution for their internal political problems.

The 1932 census was disorganized, most of the Muslim leaders asked their followers to register. However, Mohammad Beyhoum called for the Shiites and the Druzes to register as Sunnis. Additionally, after the release of the results the Maronite Patriarch opposed the registration of Allawites as Sunnis and the Iraqis, Syrians, and Palestinians as Lebanese. On the other hand, the Muslim leaders opposed the registration of Armenian refugees (Thibaut, 2009: 92). Conjointly, Christian politicians pushed for including the expatriates in the official censuses done between 1922 and 1932. The migrants were registered separately in the 1932 official census. The results were that 58.5 percent of the Lebanese were Christians, 18 percent Sunni Muslims, and 16 percent Shia Muslims. This census obviously does not show the actual demography in Lebanon because it clearly does not show the numbers of the residing Lebanese. Nonetheless, the consociation system, which favored Christian over Muslim on a ratio of six to five, was based on the official census of 1932. Over the years, the gap between the last official census of 1932, and the real demography in Lebanon widened due to emigration and increasing fertility rate among Muslims (Pearlmen, 2014). Migrants were registered in the official census of 1932 due to pressure from the Christian religious and political forces. The number of Christian population in Lebanon was higher than that of the Muslim.

Table 1: the categories of the emigrants in the official census of 1932

Confession	Residents		Emigrants					
	Total	%	Left before 30 august 1924		Left after 30 august 1924		Total	%
			Paying taxes	Not paying taxes	Paying taxes	Not paying taxes		
Sunnis	178 100	22, 5	2 653	9 840	1 089	3 623	17 205	6,75
Shia	155 035	19, 5	2 977	4 543	1 770	2 220	11 510	4,51
Druze	53 334	6,7	2 067	3 205	1 183	2 295	8 750	3,4
Total Mslm.	386 469	48, 7	7 697	17 588	4 042	8 138	37 465	14,7
Maronite	227 800	28, 7	31 697	58 457	11 434	21 809	123 397	48,4
Greek Cath.	46 709	5,9	7 190	16 544	1 855	4 038	29 627	11,6
Greek Orth.	77 312	9,7	12 547	31 521	3 922	9 041	57 031	22,4
Protestants	6 869	0,9	607	1 575	174	575	2 931	1,2
Armen. Orth.	26 102	3,3	1	60	191	1 718	1 970	0,8

Armen. Cath.	5 890	0,7	9	50	20	375	454	0,2
Syr. Orth.	2 723	0,3	6	34	3	54	97	0,04
Syr. Cath.	2 803	0,4	9	196	6	101	312	0,1
Chald. Orth.	190	0,0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0
Chald. Cath.	548	0,0	0	6	0	19	25	0,0
Total Christ.	396 946	50, 0	52 066	108 443	17 605	37 730	215 844	84,7
Jewish	3 588	0,5	6	214	7	188	415	0,2
Anonymous	6 393	0,8	212	758	59	234	1 263	0,5
Total	793 396	100	59 981	127 003	21 713	46 290	254 987	100
Male	394 100	50, 0	44 749	72 447	16 578	26 246	160 020	62,8
Female	399 296	50, 0	15 232	54 556	5 135	20 044	94 967	37,2

Source. from *official Journal*, n° 2718, 10 octobre 1932.

The distribution of the parliamentary seats between the sectarian sections is based on the composition of the electorate as a result of the census of 1932. Therefore, 14 of the 25 seats of the 1934 parliament were for the Christians (Thibaut, 2009: 99). Later on, in 1943 Ayoub Tabet was designated by General Catroux as the head of state to organize the parliamentary elections. Tabet included all the migrants who demanded to retain their Lebanese citizenship as voters during the elections.

Furthermore, he allocated 32 parliamentary seats for the Christians and 22 for the Muslims. This led to a large political crisis in the summer of 1943 and the Muslims threatened to boycott the elections. Most of the Christian Leaders and the Maronite Patriarch Arida refused any concession over the right of migrants to vote (Thibaut, 2009: 105).

Table 2: Residents, migrants and the parliamentary seats according to Ayoub Tabet in 1943

<i>Confession</i>	<i>Residents</i>		<i>Migrants</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Deputies</i>	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>by electors</i>
Sunnis	225 594	20,8	4 913	3,1	230 507	18,5	10	23 051
Shia	200 698	18,5	9 367	5,9	210 065	16,9	9	23 341
Druze	71 711	6,6	4 863	3,0	76 574	6,2	3	25 525
Total Mslm	498 003	45,9	19 143	12,0	517 146	41,6	22	23 507
Maronite	318 201	29,3	91 278	57,2	409 479	32,9	18	22 749
Greek Cath.	61 956	5,7	13 272	8,3	75 228	6,0	3	25 076
Greek	106	9,8	33	21,1	140	11,3	6	23

Ortho.	658		655		313			386
Armen.	58	5,3	66	0,04	58	4,7	3	19
Ortho.	007				073			358
Minorities	41	3,8	2	1,4	43	3,5	2	21
	596		159		755			878
Total	586		140		726			22
Christians.	418	54,1	430	88,0	848	58,4	32	714
Total	1 084	100	159	100	1 243	100	54	23
	421		573		994			037

Source. from J. CHAMI, J., 2002, t. 1, p. 15.

In order to settle the political crisis the Egyptian Prime Minister Nahas Pacha, the General Spears, and the Colonel Catroux negotiated with the Lebanese Leaders. As a result the parliamentary seats became 55 divided on a ratio of 6 to 5, 30 Christian deputies and 25 Muslim deputies (Thibaut, 2009: 107). However, as a compromise of giving the Christians a bigger share in the parliament, Christian migrants were excluded from voting to establish an equitable division of power between Christians and Muslims (Tabar & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2010). The ratio of 6:5 remained the same over the years even when the number of deputies was increased until the Taef agreement in 1990.

4.1.2. Relation between Lebanon and the migrants

Emigrants:

In 1973, Lebanese emigrants in Americas demanded the Lebanese president, Suleiman Frangieh, to give them the right to be represented in the parliament through

elections, or in the cabinet through appointing a Lebanese emigrant. Also, the Secretary General of the World Lebanese Cultural Union, Mr. Fouad Ghandour, demanded giving the emigrants the right to participate in the decision making of their country, by allowing them to vote in Lebanese elections from their country of residence. In 1992, Lebanese emigrants residing in Katalonia, Spain, demanded the Lebanese government to allow the emigrants to vote abroad through embassies and consulates (Raad, 1998: 41).

Political parties:

In return, Lebanon made several attempts to include the migrants in the Lebanese political realm. First, we are going to discuss the various attempts by these parties to integrate migrants in the decision making. These parties were usually formed with a sectarian character. Lebanese parties have always been an essential part in Lebanon's political life. Even prior to 1990, parties tackled the issue of immigrants and their rights.

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), led by Antoun Saadeh, and the Maronite Phalange Party (Kataeb) of Pierre Gemayel, were the first two political parties who expressed interest in expatriates during the 1940s. The SSNP's interest in the Lebanese expatriates was not based on confessional terms, but rather on the belief that the immigrants are able to support national Lebanese causes. On the other hand, in September 1945, the leader of the Phalange Party, Pierre Gemayel, called for a conference to discuss how Lebanon should structure its relation with its absentees. The conference was held in Zahleh and the Phalange Party demanded to: create an emigrants' ministry, grant the Lebanese citizenship to the immigrants who sought it, facilitate their participation in the political Lebanese life through amending the

electoral law, encourage the immigrant's investment in the country, and take measures to stop the increasing migration. (Brand, 2006: 140-141).

Governments:

Numerous governments realized the important role of the immigrants, and were concerned with maintaining good relations between Lebanon and the Lebanese expatriates. Their main goals were to encourage tourism, investment, and creation of a Lebanese lobby that can put pressure on the host countries in critical occasions to benefit the country.

Since the Lebanese independence in 1943, the immigrants are mentioned in almost every ministerial statement. We start by the very first government of Riad El Solh during the reign of Bechara El Khoury, in which El Solh stated that the government will connect with the immigrants because of their support and generosity. Furthermore, in 14 December 1946, the 6th Lebanese government formed by Riad El Solh added the word Migrants to the ministry of Foreign Affairs. Henry Pharaon was the first minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Migrants. Prime Minister Abdallah Al Yafi, who formed the 11th government, stated in his ministerial statement that the government will take care of the best interests of the Lebanese outside Lebanon, and will make its best to connect the Lebanese in foreign countries with their home country Lebanon. PM Al Yafi was followed by Sami El Solh who also promised to do the best in order to connect with the migrants. The issue of the diaspora was repeated in the era of President Kamil Chamoun; the government thanked the immigrants for their continuous economical support, and urged them to return to their home country. The same paragraph related to the migrants was repeated in both ministerial statements of Saeb Salam (April 30, 1953), and Abdallah Al Yafi (August 16, 1953) governments stating their pride in the Lebanese migrants'

achievements. In the era of the president Fouad Chehab, only the government of Saeb Salam (May 20, 1961) mentioned the immigrants seeking for their trust and support. Prime ministers Hussein Aouni (1964), Rashid Karami (1965), and Saeb Salam (1972) supported the 'Lebanese Cultural Union in the World'. Moreover, PM Shafiq Al Wezzan, along with President Amine Gemayil demanded the return of all migrants to Lebanon. (Al Moughtareb 2011, 20: 20-22). Consequently, it is obvious that most of the governments after the independence were aware of the importance of the Lebanese diaspora and the many benefits they can provide the country with.

4.2. The period after 1990

4.2.1. Taef Agreement

The Lebanese Civil War, which lasted fifteen years, ended with a national reconciliation after a series of negotiations carried out in Taef, Saudi Arabia. This led to the Taef Agreement, or what was known as the “Document of National Accord” that resulted into a series of constitutional changes. Many Christians opposed this agreement and asked for other Christian politicians to boycott the negotiations in Saudi Arabia. However, the decisions of the agreement were soon implemented and the civil war ended.

This part of the thesis will focus on the changes made regarding the political shares of each sect. Before the Taef, the parliament was composed of 99 deputies on a basis of a 6 to 5 ratio favoring Christians. The Maronite president had the right to dismiss ministers along with the approval of the parliament; the speaker was subordinate to both the prime minister and the president with a term of one year. After the Taef, the number of parliamentary seats was increased to 128. Christians share in the parliament was equal to that of Muslims. The power of the Shia speaker was enhanced and its term was extended to four years instead of one year. The

parliament was given the authority to dismiss the ministers in case of lack of confidence (Raad, 1998: 47). The Taef agreement limited the power of the president and the Christians were the sect that lost most of its powers to the other sects.

Presently, despite the lack of official statistics, it is known that the Muslims outnumbered the Christians, and the Shia are the largest sect in Lebanon. Following this agreement, the parliament is divided equally between the Christians and the Muslims. However, the power is equally shared among the different sects. Regardless, the Lebanese voters can elect any candidate within their constituency; a Muslim voter can vote for a Christian candidate and vice versa (Thibaut, 2006).

4.2.2. Relation between Lebanon and the migrants

The first three governments after the Taef accord did not mention the immigrants in their ministerial statements. On the 31st of October 1992, PM Rafic Al Hariri established the first ministry of immigrants that Rida Wahid took over. Rafic Al Hariri's government in the era of president Elias Al Herawi assured the continuous support towards the ministry of Foreign Affairs and Migrants. However, in the era of President Emile Lahoud, Prime Minister Rafic Al Hariri canceled the ministry and changed it to a directorate attached to the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Later on, Fouad Al Sanioura's governments in the era of presidents Emile Lahoud and Michel Suleimen stated that it's very important for Lebanon to stay connected with its diaspora in order to benefit from the immigrants' help internationally in what concerns the Lebanese and Arabic causes. Also, the 69th government whose PM was also Al Sanioura, focused on maintaining a good relationship with the immigrants, which helped to convince them to invest in their home country Lebanon. Sanioura's government perceived globalization and the development of the communication and transportation technologies an important

factor that will help the government to stay connected to the migrants at the economic, cultural and patriotic levels. Additionally, the 70th government led by PM Sanioura was committed to enforce the relation between the Lebanese residents and the diaspora. This government called the Lebanese migrants to register their names in the embassies and consulates of Lebanon of their hosting countries. The government will try its best to connect the immigrants to their home land, and benefit the most from their support to defend Lebanon's causes in the international forums. Most importantly, Al Sanioura promised to give the immigrants a way to exercise their rights and to participate in the Lebanese elections, through providing the needed mechanisms (Al Moughtareb 2011, 20:20-23). Consequently, even after the Taef accord the Lebanese governments were aware of the importance of the diaspora and were attentive to approach them in each governmental statement in order to remind them that they are not forgotten by the Lebanese state.

The relation with the immigrants never stopped, especially since many of the expatriates still have strong connections with Lebanon. Nowadays, many Lebanese migrants live in the near Arab countries and often visit Lebanon. Many other reasons made the political parties seek the support of migrants by meeting them abroad, and organizing events in the receiving countries. The political parties, during election seasons, increase their activities and offer expatriates plane tickets or money to cover the expenses of their visit to Lebanon (Tabar, 2014: 18).

As mentioned before, in the past 10 years, all parties ostensibly agreed on the need of a new electoral law that would do justice to all Lebanese. Therefore, in 2005, the national unity government of Fouad Al Sanioura formed the "National Commission for a New Electoral Law" headed by Fouad Boutros, a legal expert and a previous minister. This commission was known as the Boutros commission, its job

was to propose changes to the current electoral system (Khoury, 2008). This commission proposed, in May 2006, a law that allows the non-resident absentees to vote according to their districts in Lebanon. The law was approved by the parliament in 2008 (Thibaut, J: 315).

The Lebanese immigrants have always maintained a link with their families and villages. Additionally, the diaspora have donated money to different parties during the war. The votes of the immigrants have a strong effect and influence on the results of parliamentary elections in Lebanon. In 2009, during the parliamentary elections, the two political movements in Lebanon brought members of the diaspora to vote for candidates especially in the highly competitive districts like Batroun, Koura, and Zgharta. Therefore, the Lebanese political parties and all the political leaders give the immigrants huge importance and attention. They also travel to the host countries to meet the Lebanese in Australia, Northern and Latin America, Europe, and the Gulf (Tabar, 2009). Additionally, the political parties have founded offices in different host countries to keep up with all the Lebanese immigrants and to keep the expatriates updated on the Lebanese situation.

Moreover, supporters of the law of allowing the non-residents to vote, mainly the Christian politicians, claimed that the opponents' justification was neither convincing nor democratic. They considered it their duty to allow the involvement of the non-residents in the Lebanese politics, by giving them their right to vote, and to choose their representatives. Therefore, they pushed further their demand and worked on implementing the law that allows the immigrants to vote in the nearest elections.

The parties supporting this law thought that, by allowing the non-residents to get involved in the Lebanese politics, they are going to become more attached to

their country, and consequently increase their investments in Lebanon. The Patriarchal Synod for Lebanon stated that it is important to deal with the Lebanese diaspora and especially the Christians, and put a mechanism to connect with them in order to maintain their relation with their hometown. The Maronite Patriarchy and a large number of rich Maronite established the Maronite Foundation in the World. Its main goal is to register a large number of Christian immigrants in the embassies and consulates. The Maronite Foundation started its work in 2006, and opened offices in different receiving countries; the foundation tried to reach 300 thousand Christian migrants, and after just one year, 10 thousand migrants applied for registration in Australia alone. Also, the foundation made several campaigns to target the recent migration that started after the 1950s, because those immigrants are still connected to Lebanon. However, as for the head of the Foreign Relations in the Foundation, many migrants haven't registered their marriages and births in the official Lebanese department. In case these immigrants were registered as Lebanese and had citizenship, the percentage of Christians would have increased from 38% to 48%. (Al Moughtareb, 2011:20, 34-36)

It is believed that most of the immigrants are Christians, therefore the Christian MPs in general, and the Free Patriotic Movement politicians in particular, were the politicians who were strongly calling for this law to be executed. Additionally, the former Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir supported this idea, and encouraged the immigrants to vote during all his meetings with them. Therefore, the Patriarch and those politicians are strongly supporting this law in order to increase the number of Christian voters and restore the balance of the electorate, by making the number of Christian voters equal to the number of Muslim voters. However, the perception that Lebanese Christian migrants are more than Muslim migrants might

be inaccurate. This is due to the fact that Muslims of all sects migrated during and after the Lebanese Civil War, thus their number in foreign countries rose quickly. Moreover, most of the Christian migrants and their descendants do not hold the Lebanese citizenship for many reasons including but not limited to their migration during the first waves of migration and before the Civil War in 1975.

Moreover, the National Unity Government, established in 2009 with Saad Al Hariri as Prime Minister, disclosed in its ministerial statement: to amend the constitution and apply the articles 104 till 114 of the electoral law in order to lower the voting age, and to enable the Lebanese non-residents to exercise their electoral right in foreign countries (Lubnaniyoun, 2013). This was a major step forward for implementing this law. The expatriate voting was finally approved in spring 2012, and should have been implemented in the 2013 parliamentary elections. However, due to the lack of publicity and organization, few expatriates registered to vote (Pearlmen, 2014).

4.3. Restoration of citizenship:

The law of Restoration of Citizenship is an old demand strongly attached to allowing the non-residents to vote. In 1920, with the establishment of Greater Lebanon, many Muslims were added to the Christian majority in Mount Lebanon, and this meant that the Christian majority in the larger entity was tenuous at best. Therefore, the Christian political leaders assumed that by passing the law of the Restoration of Citizenship, many Christian expatriates will regain their citizenship rights, and would be able to vote during the parliamentary elections. They emphasized the maintenance and restoration of the Lebanese citizenship to immigrants, in order to restore the confessional and political balance in Lebanon. The independence and the introduction of the law (1946) allowed anyone of

Lebanese origin living abroad, who had not yet chosen Lebanese citizenship, to reclaim their citizenship upon his or her definitive return to Lebanon. Nonetheless, very few Lebanese exercised this option, perhaps because they were unaware of the benefits of home country citizenship (Brand, 2006).

The Deputy Ne'emtallah Abi Nasr suggested a law to achieve this demand on the 10th of September 2003. Moreover, MP Elie Keyrouz, Member of the Lebanese Forces, along with MP Alain Aoun, representing the Free Patriotic Movement, presented on October 27, 2015 a law to restore the Lebanese citizenship. These MPs demanded this law to be effective for several reasons. The first reason was that the Lausanne Treaty (30th of August, 1924) was unfair to the Lebanese migrants, because it considered them as Ottoman unless they chose the Lebanese citizenship. On the other hand, this treaty considered all the residents in Lebanon as Lebanese regardless of their origin unless they demanded the Turkish citizenship or that of another country, which was part of the Ottoman Empire. The second reason was that, the Lebanese citizenship is only transmitted through "Jus sanguin" and not through "Jus soli" according to the Lebanese constitution (Neemtallah Abi Nasr's law). This implies that whoever is born of a Lebanese father, is a Lebanese citizen, even if he or she acquires the citizenship of another country of residence. Lebanese women do not have the right to transfer the Lebanese citizenship to their children (Brand, 2006).

During the inauguration of the first Lebanese Diaspora Energy Conference held on the 30th of May 2014, the Foreign Affairs Minister Gebran Bassil, who is also a member of the Free Patriotic Movement, demanded to give the migrants citizenship, voting, and political rights. However, many Orthodox Deputies objected this law and among them the Vice President of the Parliament MP Farid Makary,

who said to Al Akhbar newspaper that this law will deprive many Orthodox living in regional countries from getting the Lebanese citizenship. This is also applicable to the Armenian sect. Furthermore, the Member of the Parliament Antoine Saad, member of the Walid Jumblat Bloc, gave the example of Rachaya, West Bekaa, and explained that many Orthodox in Rachaya that moved to Damascus still have relatives in the town, and are more rightful to reclaim the Lebanese citizenship (Chawki, 2015). Additionally, an Orthodox source explains that, with the decrease in the number of Maronite due to migration, and if the Syrian and Palestinian Orthodox were able to regain the Lebanese citizenship, a major change in the balance of the Christians will occur (Choufi, 2015). However, this objection was refused by the constitutional council on the 8th of January 2016.

Chapter Five

Political Analysis

This thesis presents a political reading of the right of the Lebanese expatriates to participate in the elections. The previous chapters have presented an overview of the history of Lebanon with the migrants before and after the Taef Agreement in 1990. This chapter aims to show who the defenders of the right of immigrants to vote are and who their opponents are through analyzing the search results presented in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter will be organized as follows: first, it will introduce which category of immigrants is allowed to vote abroad. Then, it will briefly present how the democratic system in Lebanon would benefit from implementing the law of allowing expatriates to vote. The third part, which is considered the core of this thesis, will present an analysis of opinions of different politicians towards allowing expatriates to participate in the elections. The significance of this part lies in answering the main question of this thesis: Which political force supports allowing immigrants to vote and which force rejects it? The analysis of the thesis will be supported by public statements made by politicians. A contrast will be drawn between two groups of politicians based on their public statements regarding the law allowing immigrants to vote. Additionally, this thesis is supported through the remarks and comments of the ministers and deputies during the meetings of the administration and justice committee.

5.1. Immigrants allowed to vote

The Lebanese migration goes back to before the independence, and due to the different waves of migration, the Lebanese migrants are divided into three types. As

shown in the previous chapter, the category of immigrants allowed to participate in the elections affects the positioning of some Lebanese politicians involved in the elections. Therefore, in this section of this chapter, the different types of expatriates will be presented. Furthermore, their eligibility to vote abroad will be explained. The first category of immigrants is made up of those who descend from Lebanese ancestors, and do not hold the Lebanese citizenship. Second, there are immigrants who are registered in the Lebanese registry lists and still hold the Lebanese citizenship. The third category represents those who are still Lebanese, but have neglected the registration process in the Department of Personal Status regarding marriages, divorces, or births. According to the law number 25, article 104, every non-resident Lebanese is entitled to exercise the right to vote in embassies and consulates of Lebanon in accordance with the provisions of this Law. This is feasible when the expatriates' name is on the electoral lists, and when there is no legal impediment preventing him/ her from voting.

5.2. Why allow Expatriates to vote?

Allowing the Lebanese immigrants to vote has always been a controversial issue due to the important effect it might have on the results of the elections. This section aims to briefly present some of the political and economic benefits which Lebanon can earn through the implementation of a law that legislate the participation of expatriates in the Lebanese elections.

The Deputy Neemtallah Abi Nasr, member of the Change and Reform Bloc, suggested in November 2003 a law that allows the immigrants to vote for their own deputies, by having a quota of 13 immigrant deputies. This would lead to a parliamentary bloc representing the immigrants. Ten deputies from different political

forces such as Ahmad Fatfat, member of the Future Movement, Fouad Al Saad, considered as Jumblat's Christian ally, Ali Bazi, Ghazi Zeaiter, Yassine Jaber, members of Amal movement, and Ghassan Al Achkar, member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, signed this draft law. However, it should be mentioned that the political parties and movements of the signatories doesn't completely support this law (Thibaut, 2009, p.297). Deputy Ibrahim Kanaan, also a member of the Free Patriotic Movement, supported Abi Nasr's suggestion. This proposition would allow the immigrants to have a direct influence on the political Lebanese situation. Consequently, by not being affiliated with a particular local Lebanese parliamentary bloc, immigrants' opinion would be autonomous and it would simultaneously affect the Lebanese system. The expatriates' bloc can independently affect any project of law in the parliament (Al Moughtareb issue23: 30-34). For example, and based on their democratic experience in their hosting countries, they can put more pressure on the Lebanese government to disallow undemocratic decisions, such as extending the terms of the parliament and prohibiting the void of the head of state in the Lebanese Republic. Another example would be the law that allows women married to non-Lebanese to give their children the Lebanese citizenship since many expatriate women, regardless of their political and religious views, consider this to be a right and would vote for it.

However, some deputies refused this quota suggestion. For instance, Deputy Elie Marouny, representing the Phalange party, considered that giving the expatriates a number of pre-defined seats would make them just another sect separated from Lebanon (Al Moughtareb issue28: 42-45). Furthermore, deputy Khaled Zahraman, member of the Future parliamentary Bloc, considered that giving the non-residents the right to participate in the elections based on a pre-defined quota would prevent

them from interacting and being integrated in their home county's society. In addition, Deputy Kamel Al Rifai, representing Hezbollah, refused allowing the expatriates to have a separate parliamentary bloc. The Lebanese political forces want to allow immigrants to vote to benefit from their support. On the contrary, they do not want to give them authority and power. The choice of these three deputies as a primary source is significant since they represent three of the main Lebanese political parties (Al Moughtareb issue28: 42-45). Additionally, the Lebanese minister of justice, Bahij Tabara, who is considered close to Rafic Al Hariri, refused this law. Tabara had some strong reservations against this law proposition because it opposes the article 24 of the constitution about the distribution of the parliamentary seats according to different sects and districts. Rafic Al Hariri's Christian ally, deputy Nabil De Freij, also opposed Abi Nasr's proposition. De Freij considered that the immigrants are unaware of the Lebanese political situation and this might lead them to vote for unrealistic decisions such as the removal of the Syrian army from Lebanon (Thibaut, 2009, p. 303). Even the deputies who signed Abi Nasr's proposal and who are considered allies to Rafic Al Hariri, such as Ahmad Fatfat, later on presented their constitutional reservations. From the afore-mentioned, it can be fairly concluded that the suggestion of giving the expatriates a quota in the parliament does not align with some of the objectives of the ruling parties. Therefore, those parties want the expatriates to participate in the elections, but they want to use their votes to gain more power and to avoid losing it to another party or parliamentary bloc.

5.3. Political analysis based on the Lebanese sects

The electoral law that shall be implemented in Lebanon has been a matter of political dispute for the past few years. It is considered crucial for all of the Lebanese political forces to maintain their strong presence in the political life. Therefore, new

enhancements have been proposed to be added to any electoral law implemented; to illustrate, two such enhancements include lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 and allowing expatriates to participate in the Lebanese parliamentary elections. To further study the latter law, the Committee of Administration and Justice held several sessions in August and September 2008 in the presence of MPs and ministers representing all the Lebanese political movements. During the deliberations, the Minister of Justice, Ibrahim Najjar, who was invited to attend the sessions, stated that this is a constitutional right and it is one of the most important items in any improved and developed law (Session of 15/09/2008). In addition, the deputies admitted that allowing immigrants to vote is a step forward towards democracy. For instance, MP Elie Aoun, member of Walid Jumblat's bloc, considers integrating the diaspora in the elections as an improvement to any electoral law adopted. As for him, this amendment should be treated with a higher priority than any other item (Session of 15/09/2008). However, some parties, especially Hezbollah and Amal movement, would not benefit from this law for different reasons. The first reason is because Hezbollah is considered to be as a terrorist organization in many hosting countries. The second reason is that many foreign countries that host a majority of Shia immigrants, African countries, do not have Lebanese embassies. These reasons will be further developed later on in this chapter discussing how the opponents of this law obstructed its implementation. Nevertheless, the law was legislated by the parliament in 2009 and immigrants were supposed to vote in the 2013 elections that was postponed.

During the sessions, the attendees discussed the ability of the Lebanese embassies to accept registration for voting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that there are 70 embassies and 15 consulates around the world covering a large part of

the Lebanese abroad (Session of 15/09/2008). Therefore, this clarifies that most of the Lebanese expatriates can be presented with a feasible opportunity to vote while they are abroad. Additionally, the availability of a large number of embassies and consulates proves that it is easier for all the expatriates to participate in the elections.

Furthermore, the Committee of Administration and Justice posed several questions while studying the different angles concerning the implementation of this law. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by the Amal movement's minister Fawzi Salloukh, responded to these questions in its report 301/w and stated that there is not any accurate statistics regarding the number of Lebanese immigrants all over the globe. The number of family files registered at the Lebanese diplomatic missions, according to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, is 448244. However, those are not specific due to unregistered marriages, divorces, deaths, and births. Also, a large part of the immigrants, whose names are present on the electoral lists, no longer hold their Lebanese passports or Lebanese Identification Cards. Therefore, the number of expatriates eligible to vote is inaccurate and the ministry of foreign affairs must create new statistics to clearly determine the right number of expatriates who still hold their Lebanese citizenship and whose names are still available on the electoral lists.

Moreover, Lebanon has a complicated demography due to the fact that the country is made up of more than 18 sects. The demographic divisions play an essential part in the political life. The political power was divided between four essential religious groupings: Shia, Sunnis, Christians, and Druze. Therefore, in Lebanon, any political issue must be tackled from a sectarian point of view. This part of the chapter will analyze how the main Lebanese political parties, which represent different sects, dealt with the introduction of the law allowing the immigrants to vote.

Every Lebanese political party claim that they represent and advocate for their sects as well as Lebanon. Therefore, the categorization in this part will be done as follows: Christians, Shia, Sunni, Druze, and politically independent politicians. Finally the analysis of the result will be presented.

5.3.1. The Christians political leaders:

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Christian powers were aware of the importance of the immigrants and the supportive role they can play; they understood the political, economic, and other gains immigrants would contribute to the country. Therefore, they pushed to include immigrants in the official census in order to increase their numbers and acquire power. On the other hand, the Lebanese civil war which lasted fifteen years ended with a national reconciliation after a series of negotiations done in Taef, Saudi Arabia. This lead to the Taef Agreement which changed the power-sharing formula from a 6 to 5 ratio, favoring the Christians, to a 50:50 ratio divided between Christians and Muslims. Even before the Taef agreement, when Christians had more power, they did not legislate a law to allow the expatriates to vote. They did not need more votes to extend their authority since the head of the state was a Maronite president with strong executive powers, and they had a ratio of 6 to 5 deputies in the parliament.

After the Taef, the parliament has been divided equally between the Christians and the Muslims. Regardless, the Lebanese voters can elect any candidate within their constituency. This means a Muslim voter can vote for a Christian candidate and vice versa which explains why even though the parliament was divided equally between both sects, the voters can still choose any candidate that they prefer regardless of their religion (Thibaut, 2006). Therefore, the Muslim voters

in some districts can have a strong effect on the results of the Christian deputies and vice versa.

Nowadays, despite the lack of official statistics, it is known that the Muslims outnumber the Christians, and Shia is the largest sect in Lebanon. The Christians forces and the Christian religious establishments were pushing for this law to be implemented, along with other rights that could benefit the Christian sect in Lebanon for the sake of compensating their loss. Moreover, the demand of the Christians to include the migrants in the electoral elections is a way to protect their share from the Muslims, gain more votes in the competitive Christian districts and win over their rivals, and to be able to elect all their deputies by themselves without the influence of the Muslim voters. Likewise, the Christian politicians are afraid that they might lose their 50/50 share of power with the Muslims due to the decrease in their numbers. Additionally, the Christian sect has many competing leaders and Christian political parties unlike the other Lebanese sects. The Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces, the Phalange party, and the Marada are all trying to get a larger number of supporters and thus a larger parliamentary bloc in order to have a more influential decision in the parliament and the government. Therefore, they will do their best to attract the expatriates and gain their votes. Furthermore, the Muslim voters in mixed districts are influencing the results for Christian candidates; therefore, the Christians are seeking the participation of Christian expatriates to reduce the impact of Muslims. Although the parliamentary seats are divided equally between the Christians and the Muslims, the Christians have continuously demanded to allow the expatriate to vote from abroad. They are clearly seeking different benefits of the impact of the migrant vote on the results of the elections. The Christian leaders are well aware of the large change in the Lebanese demography since the last official

census and they understand that they are not the largest sect in Lebanon. Therefore, their demand to allow the expatriates to participate in the elections guarantees that in the future, no demand to tip the balance of representation in favor of the Muslim sect will threaten them. Additionally, the expatriates' vote is a technique used by Christian parties to win against other Christian parties in the highly competitive electoral districts like Zahleh. Furthermore, the expatriate vote could be used as a way to minimize the effect of Muslim voters in determining the results of Christian candidates in mixed districts. Moreover, some Christian parties are asking for the implementation of the quota for the expatriates; in this case, Christian representatives are seeking the support of a new parliamentary bloc.

Christian politicians and church leaders called for boycotting the first general elections after almost 15 years of civil war in 1992. The Maronite leaders casted serious doubts regarding the credibility of the elections and called for postponing the elections until after the withdrawal of the Syrian troops. As a result, the Christian candidates elected were the ones who were supported by Syria; hence, the Christian MPs did not represent the Christian community (Butt, 1992). Afterwards, in 2005, a radical change happened in the Lebanese politics. This change was represented by the departure of the Syrian army that occupied Lebanon. Christians considered this as a victory. Thus, they were more involved in the political life by participating in the parliamentary elections in 2005. They also formed blocs of influential Christian political parties such as the "Lebanese Forces" which is formed of 8 MPs representing the Lebanese Forces party led by Samir Geagea. Another such bloc is the "Change and Reform" bloc representing the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun made up of 19 MPs.

Since then, the Christian sect had more power and started demanding the restoration of their rights. This was presented by the Christian politicians pushing for restoring the Lebanese citizenship which is considered as one of the major steps for Christians to restore their power. In 2005, both the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement, two competitive Christian parties, presented a law to restore the Lebanese citizenship which is considered as an alliance to serve the benefits of the Christian sect in Lebanon. This law would allow many Lebanese immigrants to regain their rights as Lebanese citizens. One of these rights is directly related to the topic of this thesis which is the right to participate in the elections whether abroad or in the immigrants' home country. Therefore, the restoration of citizenship law is directly related to that of allowing expatriates to vote. Furthermore, both parties allied in order to implement both laws in the upcoming elections.

Even earlier, General Michel Aoun, founder of the Free Patriotic Movement, and one of the most influential Christian Leaders, in his 'Return from Exile' speech, spoken on the 7th of May 2005, demanded to emphasize the important role played by the Lebanese Diaspora around the world to raise the voice of Lebanon that has been silenced at home. He considered that the expatriates took the Lebanese cause to the highest international forums, yielding today its independence, freedom and sovereignty. Aoun considered that for this reason the government should give the immigrants the right to vote, as is the case in all democratic countries. (Orange room, 2005). Furthermore, the Electoral Law was tackled in the memorandum of understanding by Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement signed in the 6th of February 2006 by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and General Michel Aoun. In clause 3, part D of the memorandum, both parties acknowledged the right of immigrants to

participate in the elections and demanded the Lebanese government to take all the needed measures to enable the voting abroad process:

"Memorandum of understanding by Hezbollah and Free patriotic movement

3 – The Electoral Law

The reform and systematization of political life in Lebanon require the adoption of a modern electoral law (in which proportional representation may be one of its effective variations) that guarantees the accuracy and equity of popular representation and contributes in accomplishing the following items:

A- Actuate and develop the role of the political parties in achieving civil society.

B- Limit the influence of political money and sectarian fanaticisms.

C- Make available equal opportunities for using the various media channels.

D- Secure the required means for enabling the expatriate Lebanese to exercise their voting rights.

We demand the Government and Parliament to commit to the shortest possible deadline to enact the required electoral law."

Additionally, it can be assumed that Christian parties perceived the immigrants as a solution to maintain their status as one of the leading sects in Lebanon regardless of their political views and alliances. They made several attempts to include the immigrants in the elections.

This part starts with the several attempts of Neemtallah Abi Nasr, a Christian Deputy and a member of the largest Christian parliamentary bloc, Change and Reform bloc, who has always demanded to allow expatriates to be involved in the political life. He invited the expatriates to register for the elections in the embassies. He considered that if only twenty percent of the expatriates had voted the first time the elections were held abroad, the law would have been one step ahead. He assumes that the second time around will be much better with a bigger number of immigrants participating in the elections (Session of 15/09/2008). Furthermore, Neemtallah Abi

Nasr stated to "Al Moughtareb" that if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates fulfilled its duties and secured the required mechanism, the expatriates will participate in the elections, but to a certain extent. This is due to the lack of confidence in the government which has also lost its credibility. For this reason, Abi Nasr called for the need and the necessity of a strong declaration in this regard, and noted therefore that the state has to confirm and prove its credibility in relation to the involvement of expatriates in the elections. As for Abi Nasr, the appropriate law that satisfies and meets the aspirations of the expatriates must allow expatriates to have candidates abroad. Also, he believes the election of deputies of expatriates must be equal between Muslims and Christians. Additionally, Abi Nasr claimed that it is possible to conduct partial elections abroad which precede the elections in Lebanon by ten days, hoping that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will do its best conducting fair elections since there is negligence of the expatriates' rights to this day. (Al Moughtareb, issue 23: 23).

Ibrahim Kanaan, member of the Parliament and of 'Change and Reform' bloc, representing the Free Patriotic Movement, submitted a proposal in 2009. This latter was to give expatriates the right to participate in the ballot. It was adopted, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Interior was asked to start the preparation of mechanisms for the application of this law. However, the problem lied in the neglect of successive governments of the subject, as this law should have been discussed with the relevant ministries. The proposed law was presented to the government; it was demanding the allowance of expatriates to elect their deputies from overseas, and to have their own electoral district. As for Kanaan, the goal was to allow the expatriates to participate in the political life in the foreseeable future. Therefore, he urged for the follow-up of the issue by the Lebanese officials and the expatriates. He

also called the Lebanese living abroad that have not been registered yet in embassies to claim their right. (Al Moughtareb, issue28:44)

Another Christian deputy, MP Antoine Zahra, representing the Lebanese Forces party, stated during one of the sessions that allowing immigrants to vote is a constitutional right granted to them. As for him, hundreds of thousands and maybe a million of immigrants would like to participate in the Lebanese political life, and this is their chance to express their opinion. (Session of 15/09/2008).

Some of the Christians supported the law with some constraints. For example, MP of the Kataeb Party Bloc, Fadi Haber, stated to the "Al Moghtareb" magazine that significant efforts are being made by the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and the majority of members of the parliament to support the involvement of expatriates in the upcoming parliamentary elections, but the difficulty lies in allowing expatriates to vote for the first time. He expressed his disbelief in the administrative process of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and municipalities, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants. He was also concerned that there is no demand from expatriates to participate in the voting process because of the long distances and the fact that consulates and ministries involved did not accomplish their role for several reasons. In addition the lack of seriousness in the process due to living in a state of instability and permanent concern disrupts the majority of internal administrative projects at the level of the residents and the tourists, and affects the administrative process of the state and the fulfillment of its obligations towards expatriates.

Another perspective is given by Elie Al Marouny, member of the Kataeb, who stated to "Al Moghtareb" that Lebanese immigrants constitute the main support for the economic sector in Lebanon. The Lebanese expatriates support the Lebanese

residents at all levels: the political, economic, financial, and moral. Therefore, it is our duty to urgently seek to give them the Lebanese citizenship, to give them their right. The role of expatriates should not be exclusive to the support of economics and tourism of their home country, but they should be granted as well the right to express their opinion and be able to choose their representatives in the Lebanese parliament. As a conclusion, Marouny stated that the Kataeb are with giving the expatriates their full rights, particularly the right to restore their citizenship. He notes that this matter should not be opposed from a sectarian perspective (Al Moughtareb issue28: 43).

From what was presented above, it can be concluded that all the Christian forces support the restoration of citizenship and the right of immigrants to vote. They depend on the diaspora to restore the power they have lost after the Taef. Also, the Christians' number is decreasing compared to the Muslims'. Therefore the Christians are always afraid to lose the political share they have. To legislate the power allocated to them, they always demand including the immigrants in the Lebanese political life considering that the majority of the diaspora is Christian. The Free Patriotic Movement deputies presented laws to legislate this matter. They also allied with the Lebanese Forces in the concerns of the restoration of citizenship which enlarge the number of immigrants allowed to vote especially Christians. As for the deputies representing Al Kataeb, they had some minor reservations regarding the suggestion of the expatriates' parliamentary quota.

5.3.2 The Shia political leaders:

The Shia political leaders had some restrictions with regards to allowing immigrants to vote. Hezbollah is considered as a terrorist organization in several western countries, where there is a large Shia diaspora, would negatively affect the immigrants supporting this party. Neither the Lebanese Shia would be able to vote

for the Hezbollah deputies, nor the Shia deputies are going to be able to present their electoral campaigns in countries like the US and Australia. Nowadays, it is impossible for the Shia living in the Arab and Gulf countries to vote for the Hezbollah deputies due to the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. On the 11th of March, the Arab foreign ministers, during their meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, considered Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. In its turn, Saudi Arabia announced on the 13th of March that it would severely punish anyone related to and supporting Hezbollah. It would be impossible for Shia immigrants in the Arab countries to participate in the elections and vote for Hezbollah. (Al Jazeera, March 12, 2016).

The member of the parliament Amine Cherri, representing Hezbollah, stated during the session on the 2nd of September 2008 that as a candidate he cannot present his electoral campaign in some of the hosting countries; however, other candidates can do it easily. He also said on the 19th of September, 2008 that there is no transparency in the elections outside Lebanon.

The Hezbollah and Amal deputies were not the only ones pointing to the fact that the Shia immigrants won't be allowed to vote in the hosting countries. Also Deputy Nicolas Fattouch, during a meeting for the Committee of Administration and Justice on August 20th 2008, said that it is possible that a state interferes in the elections and puts pressure on the voters in order to elect a candidate that they find suitable. However, on September 2nd 2008, Fattouch questioned if the supporters of Hezbollah were prohibited from voting in the US, in which case the question would be: what is the expected reaction from the government? Fattouch was seeking to get the support of Hezbollah through presenting his reservation to allowing immigrants to vote. He is also considered to be an independent politician who always does not

belong to any political party. Therefore, he does not have the ability to compete with political parties in what concerns lobbying the immigrants in his favor. Also, Fattouch competes in Zahle, a district that witnesses the most competitive elections influenced by different sects; therefore, he needs the support of a political party to be elected.

On the other hand, the two leading Shia parties, Hezbollah and Amal Movements, were pushing for lowering the voting age to 18, as it would benefit their constituents. Although allowing expatriates to vote was approved by the parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Fawzi Salloukh, who represents Amal and Hezbollah, delayed the study regarding the mechanism and readiness of the Lebanese embassies to allow the non-residents to vote. This is due to the fact that Christian MPs did not agree on lowering the voting age to 18 (Pearlmen, 2014).

The former minister of Foreign Affairs, Fawzi Salloukh, pointed that this is not a straight-forward operation, and any discussion related to allowing immigrants to vote should take into consideration many aspects such as the logistic, material and human sides. This means that the costs of such operation should be studied and calculated; the embassies estimated the cost of the elections to be around two million dollars, as well as the number of staff members and policemen needed to provide security and organize the elections abroad. For instance, Argentine wants Lebanon to pay for the policemen to secure the elections. Also, Salloukh notes that a study should be made on how to distribute the ballot boxes in the hosting countries. Salloukh considers that the immigrants in the US, Canada, and Australia have already acquired the citizenship of their hosting countries, and are no longer interested in the Lebanese elections. The Minister of Foreign Affairs drew attention to the difficulty of abroad elections due to the fact that Lebanese immigrants do not

reside only in the capitals of the hosting countries. On the contrary, many of them live in districts far away from the center of the country in which they live. He gave an example of the United States of America, which has 50 states, and it is not easy for Lebanese immigrants to travel from one state to another in order to participate in the election. The same applies to Canada and Nigeria. Furthermore, Salloukh stated that many countries have given a positive answer when asked about their opinion regarding the abroad elections of the Lebanese immigrants. However, other countries expressed their worries about the Lebanese political conflicts spreading to the hosting countries (session 17/9/2008).

The Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ministry led by Fawzi Salloukh, was supposed to form, within a maximum deadline of one year, a detailed study regarding the polling mechanism and the readiness of embassies for the Lebanese non-residents to vote. In that context, a Lebanese team met with Iraqi officials to discuss their experience regarding allowing immigrants to vote from abroad. Unlike Salloukh's concerns, the costs of allowing immigrants to vote were low (Lubnaniyoun, 2013).

According to the law number 25 articles 104-114, the non-residents should register in embassies or consulates. The Shia' political representatives were pushing for lowering the voting age to 18. This was to their benefit since it helps them compensate their loss in case the law of allowing immigrants to vote from abroad was implemented. But the amendment of lowering the voting age was rejected at the parliament. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants led by the Shia minister Fawzi Salloukh delayed taking the steps needed and missed its 2009 deadline to prepare a study on the mechanisms of non-resident voting (Pearlmen, 2014).

The Shia deputies claimed to support the law, but they had some reservations. For example, deputy of the Development and Liberation Bloc Qassem Hashem stated to "Al Moughtareb" that it is normal to allow expatriates to play a key role in political decision-making in Lebanon because of their important patriotic role and contribution on all political, economic, and other levels. They are perceived as the voice of Lebanon abroad. When asked about the most appropriate electoral law for expatriates, Hashem said that there is only one law that meets the ambitions of the expatriate in specific, and the Lebanese in general, which is the adoption of Lebanon as one district according to the proportional system. This makes it easier for expatriates to participate in the election process. Regarding the low turnout of expatriates to register their names in embassies and consulates, Hashem unfortunately relates this to the fact that expatriates, for many years, did not have this right. First, the government needs to re-establish contact and communication with immigrants, and make them aware of the importance of their roles, as well as to reach an electoral law that would facilitate their participation process in the ballot. The complexity of the electoral process and the method of registering expatriates in embassies brought the expatriates to mishandle the electoral process. Another statement to "Al Moghtareb" was that of the deputy of the Development and Liberation bloc, Abdul Majid Saleh representing Amal Movement who stated that the expatriates' votes constitute an essential national need due to the fact that "Lebanon Emigrant" is greater than "Lebanon Resident". Therefore, there must be a re-national link between them. Consequently, he states that the participation of expatriates in Lebanon's political life is a return to roots, and there is a national consensus on it. However, it is necessary to speed up the elaboration of an electoral law that meets the aspirations of the Lebanese people. He believed that the simple act

of starting research on this subject is a positive step. Saleh considered that electing six deputies abroad is «a small quota» for expatriates who outnumber residents in Lebanon, but this matter has not yet been decided on.

Regardless of the supportive public statements of the Shia deputies, other deputies had reservations. MP Kamel Al Rifai, representing Hezbollah, stated to "Al Moughtareb" in its 28th issue that they are keen on allowing the immigrants to participate in the elections through voting, or as candidates, since Lebanon cannot breathe without both "its lungs": the residents and the expatriates. It is the right of expatriates to participate in the elections from their country of residence and to choose and elect their representatives. Therefore, the number of deputies that represent expatriates in the parliament should be increased within the existing blocs. Also, Ali Hassan Khalil, a deputy representing Amal Movement, during the meeting of the Committee of Administration and Justice on the 19th of September 2008, mentioned new constraints that should be considered before approving the law. He asserted that there is no voting equality among the migrants because there are only 70 embassies and consulates for 193 countries. He added that, due to the absence of representatives for the candidates, there is a fear that the results might be faulty. Hassan Khalil confirmed that in Lebanon they do have the power to coordinate the elections; however, it is going to be different in the receiving countries. The deputy, during the 17th of September 2008 session, stated that some of the embassies that are considered impartial by one movement might be regarded as biased by the other. The Deputy Ali Bazzi, member of the Amal Movement, stated on the 2nd of September 2008, that it is unjust to allow the Lebanese living in the US to vote and disallow those in Africa, where there are a large number of Shia voters, due to the absence of embassies.

Additionally, the Shia immigrants had some concerns. Ali Nazer, president of the migrants in the Amal Movement, asserted that the participation of the migrants in the election can transfer the Lebanese disputes from inside Lebanon to the outside. He also stated that some countries don't allow the electoral political campaigns on their territory like the Gulf countries. Additionally, there are countries, like Mexico, which disallow the dual nationality that negatively affects the Lebanese immigrants. (Al Moughtareb, 23).

According to what was presented in the above part of this chapter, it can be fairly said that the Shia representatives did not deny that allowing immigrants to vote is their democratic right; however, they had several serious reservations regarding this law. Shia immigrants won't be able to practice their democratic rights in many of the hosting countries since Hezbollah is considered to be a terrorist organization. Also, putting restrictions on Shia immigrants' votes will increase the Sunni-Shia tension. In addition, many countries that host a majority of Shia immigrants do not have embassies which prevent immigrants to cast their votes. Therefore, if this law was implemented, the Shia's main political movements won't be able to compensate their loss by lowering the voting age to 18 due to the fact that it was not legislated.

5.3.3 The Sunni political leaders:

The Taef Agreement disempowered the Christian president and empowered the Council of Ministers. The executive power of the Christian president was limited and a big part of it was transmitted to the cabinet. First, the president is no longer entitled to propose laws or name the prime minister and the ministers without consultations with the deputies. He also lost the voting power during the cabinet meetings. Additionally, after the Taef accord, the president is obliged to coordinate

with the prime minister before negotiating international treaties. Furthermore, the president was able to resolve the parliament before the expiration of its mandate, but, after the Taef Accord, he must ask the cabinet to dissolve the House of Representatives in specific cases only, and the Council has the authority to reject his demand. Therefore, the Sunni sect, represented by the Prime Minister, benefitted from applying the Taef agreement (Al Boustany, 2015).

Sunni became a stronger partner in the Lebanese politics and in the decision making process. Along with the Shia and Druze political leaders, the Sunni sectarian figures legislated several electoral laws to their benefit. None of these laws took into consideration the right of immigrants to vote because it wasn't beneficial to all political authorities that emerged after the Taef accord. However, when a law was proposed to grant the immigrants the right to participate in the elections, the Sunni considered it a rightful request. Deputy Bahij Tabbara urged to give all non-residents the right to participate in the elections (Session of 18/09/2008). In his turn, the member of the parliament Khaled Zahraman representing the Future Movement Party stated to the "Al Moghtareb" magazine in the 28th issue that he supported the expatriates' voting right since they make up the main supporter of the Lebanese economy. He confirmed that the immigrants should be given the right to participate in political life in their home country for it is the least that Lebanon can do to them. Zahraman accused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of impeding the registration of expatriates in embassies due to the fact that there is a hidden opposition of this law. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Zahraman had some constraints, especially in what concerns giving the expatriates a parliamentary quota since this will prevent them from interacting with their home country and their community. Zahraman also stated that there is great enthusiasm among expatriates in all countries of the world in

terms of participation in the voting process and desire to interact with the political life in Lebanon. However, they blame the politicians and accuse them of not putting any effort in this direction. Another restriction was presented by the member of the Future Movement Mohamad Al Hajjar, who considered the law of restoration of Citizenship to be sexist, distinguishing between men and women, because it disallows women from giving the nationality to their children (Al Afkar, 2015). The MP in the Future Bloc Hadi Hobeish pointed that he supports any fair electoral law, which provides an impartial representation on the conditions that it does not include any sectarian prejudices such as the Orthodox electoral law. He believed that the majority of the laws rose in the recent period does not fully meet the aspiration and hopes desired. Regarding the low turnout of expatriates to register their names in embassies and consulates, Hobeish pointed out that expatriates are not completely confident that Lebanon will hold elections. He considers that Lebanese political powers should show immigrants that they support their participation in the election by urging the immigrants to register their name for the voting process. He pointed out that some believe that the participation of expatriates will change the equation as well as the results of the elections, but the number of expatriates who can participate is not as great as the Lebanese believed it to be.

Only the immigrants that have the Lebanese citizenship will be allowed to vote, therefore, restoring the citizenship is considered directly related to granting immigrants the right to vote. Rafic Al Hariri recorded his opposition to the project when he refused the recommendation of the conference done by the immigrants' parliamentarians from Lebanese origin in 1994. The Restoration of Citizenship law was legislated by the Lebanese parliament on November 12, 2015, in the presence of

the Future Movement deputies, in exchange for a package of financial laws that the Future Movement was keen to pass (Choufi, 2015).

As a conclusion, the Sunni politicians had some minor restrictions to the implementation of a law that allows immigrants to vote, however, they did consider it a right that should be granted to the Lebanese diaspora abroad. Although Rafic Al Hariri was against the restoration of citizenship law, this law was legislated by the parliament in the presence of the Future bloc. The Sunni politicians will benefit from the restrictions that foreign countries put on Shia voters, especially with the competition and conflicts between these two sects in the Lebanese political life.

5.3.4 The Druze political Leaders:

The Druze sect is considered the smallest of all the previous sects, and it benefits the most due to the electoral law signed in 1960. In particular, Druze leader and head of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) Walid Jumblatt, intends to stay impartial, on the basis that the "1960 Law" will be valid if another is not agreed upon. This law is best suited to the interests of Jumblatt and his party's leadership, since it allows the PSP to include approximately six Christian MPs in its parliamentary bloc, while the "Orthodox" proposal will likely only afford Jumblatt six Druze MPs out of the possible eight allotted to this sect in parliament (Hajj, 2013). Deputy Elie Aoun, member of Walid Jumblat's bloc, confirmed to "Al Moghtareb" in its 28th issue that they support the broad participation, voting and representation of expatriates. For him, the Lebanese living abroad must have the right to participate in the voting process. He considers that only six deputies for expatriates is a small number, and they must be allocated at least 10. He stated that the ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs must study this subject seriously in case of any violation recorded in the elections it should be challenged. Aoun preferred to

call the immigrants as "Lebanese living abroad". He pointed that the possibility of the participation of expatriates in the elections of the deputies of the Lebanese parliament has not yet been studied.

Additionally, and as mentioned earlier, on November 12 2015, the Lebanese parliament adopted the Law of Restoration of the Lebanese Citizenship. The Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces considered the adoption of this law as victorious for the Christians. However, Member of the Parliament Walid Jumblat, and his parliamentary bloc challenged the law before the Constitutional Council. Their objections were based on the fact that this law disallows those who acquired the citizenship of a country that was part of the Ottoman Empire, after the Lausanne Treaty from demanding the Lebanese citizenship. Moreover, they considered that hundreds of Syrian and Palestinian Druze families, who are related to Lebanese families, are more rightful to get the Lebanese citizenship than those who live in foreign countries (Chawki, 2015). Akram Shehaib, member of the Walid Jumblat's parliamentary bloc, stated to "Al Akhbar" magazine in its 2768 issue, that the immigrants have the right to restore their Lebanese citizenship, however the proposed law is favoring one group of immigrants over the other, which is unfair. He also considers that the law is designed in a sectarian way (Choufi, 2015).

To summarize the above, Druze political representatives publically announced their support for the law that allows immigrants to vote, however they were against the restoration of the Lebanese citizenship and challenged it. Jumblatt, the most powerful Druze leader, intends to maintain a parliamentary bloc of significant number that allows him to maintain his power in the political life. The Christians are represented by seven deputies in the districts of Aley and Shouf, Druze sect has two seats and Sunni sect have one. All the deputies elected in these two

districts belong to Jumblatt's parliamentary bloc. This means that Druze represented by Jumblatt dominate other sects' votes. They cannot afford any factor that will negatively affect their power such as the immigrants' votes.

5.3.5 The independents:

In Lebanon, political parties have the biggest share in the parliament. These parties are divided into those that support the 8th of March movement, and the others that support the 14th of March movement. However, there are also a number of independent Lebanese politicians that do not belong to any movement of sectarian group.

Some of these independent political figures were against allowing the non-residents and the immigrants to vote. For instance, the former Prime Minister Salim El Hoss opposed this law. Al Hoss's public arguments were based on the fact that those immigrants are not paying taxes and that they are mostly not interested in Lebanon in general or Lebanese politics in particular (Hajj, 2013).

Other independents considered it as a sacred right. MP Robert Ghanem, Chairman of the Committee of Administration and Justice, said the Lebanese government is not in the process of giving this right, it already exists and it is sacred (Session held on 20/08/2008). As for the deputy Boutros Harb, he adheres the right of anyone holding the Lebanese citizenship to choose his deputies and participate in the election, whether he was a resident or not (Session of 15/09/2008). By stating their support, the independents will maintain their democratic figure and therefore benefit from the support of immigrants.

Regardless of the independents' opinion and public statement, we need to ask whether allowing the expatriates to vote will have negative effects on the

independent politicians, for they rely on the votes of their families and regions. Additionally, are they able to reach the immigrants and interact with them as the large political parties? Is allowing immigrants to vote would make independent politicians belong to, or integrate with a political party in order to be elected? If yes, what about their independent state? All these are questions that should be asked related to the situation of independent politicians in case the law of allowing immigrants to vote was implemented.

5.4. Result Analysis Outcomes:

As mentioned earlier in our work, any political reading of a Lebanese issue should take into consideration its sectarian figure. The positioning of any Lebanese political force, regarding any issue, comes from the need of each sect to restore their lost power, or to maintain the control they gained. Therefore, we divided our reading regarding allowing immigrants to vote according to the different sects. We also posed many questions that can be considered as future work in what concerns the independent politicians.

First, the Christians leaders want to restore their power and keep their 50:50 share with the Muslims, regardless of their decrease in number. Therefore, they rely on the immigrants to maintain their status as an essential part in the government.

Second, the Shia political leaders want to maintain their presence in the Lebanese political life. Also, as stated in this chapter, it will be hard for the Shia to exercise their political right as candidates or voters in various foreign countries. Therefore, the Shia politicians have many reservations towards implementing a law that allows immigrants to vote abroad.

Third, and based on the Sunni-Shia conflict, the Sunni might benefit from the fact that the Shia are disallowed to exercise their political rights in foreign countries. Therefore, implementing a law that allows immigrants to vote will come to their favor. However, Sunni were against restoring the Lebanese citizenship law.

Fourth, any electoral law, other than the 1960's, would not come to the interest of the Druze. They were against the Restoration of Citizenship law and challenged it before the Constitutional Council. Therefore, they have many constraints towards implementing a law that allows immigrants to vote since they might lose their dominance.

Finally, the law was legislated even though there were obstructions towards applying it, it is surely going to be implemented in the future, and in the process it is going to be highly contested to suit the narrow interest of each sect.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this thesis, the introductory paragraph, I gave a general summary regarding the human migration and its reasons. Later on this thesis continued by giving a summary about the different waves of the Lebanese migration and its reasons. Afterwards, this thesis explained the important role played by the immigrants regarding their home country and how the successive governments tackled the issue of Lebanese migration. The second chapter of this thesis, the literature review, discussed mainly how other countries dealt with allowing the migrants to vote and the different laws they implemented. Subsequently, this chapter explained the Lebanese situation by stating both arguments regarding allowing the Lebanese expatriates to vote. Additionally, this part clarified how the results of the parliamentary elections might be affected by the participation of the expatriates. Moving on to the following chapter, the methodology stated all the primary and secondary sources that were used in this thesis.

The next chapter gave a detailed review regarding the historical evolution of the sectarian political system. It is very important to show the relation between the migrants and their home country. Therefore, this chapter demonstrated how the relation between the Lebanese government, the political parties, and the migrants evolved over the years. The last chapter, the political analysis, revealed which category of immigrants is allowed to vote and participate in the parliamentary elections, and then this part highlighted the importance of allowing the immigrants to vote on the Lebanese democracy. Afterward, a review was given about each sect in

Lebanon and their status regarding allowing the immigrants to participate in the elections.

Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in terms of land surface and population, however it has a long history of migration. Lebanese's diaspora is the one of the largest and most widespread around the world, the first wave started during the early 1800s. The Lebanese emigration is still increasing and at one point the number of immigrants almost outnumbered the residents. The diaspora is considered now as an economic and social support for Lebanon. The foreign remittances were one of the main reasons to maintain the economy during the 15 years civil war and even after it. This thesis tackled the topic of allowing the immigrants to vote from their hosting countries.

The main objective was to show which political party was working to implement this law. Even though the law was voted at the parliament however so far it hasn't been implemented due to extending the terms of the parliament. Additionally, the government hasn't done any study regarding the mechanism of the voting process. We should as well mention that the Shia politicians voted for this law however they have many restrictions regarding the ability of the Shia to vote for Hezbollah from foreign countries. It is obvious that the Christians were the first sect to push for the implementation of this law, for the reason that the Christian sect suffered a high migration rate. However, after the civil war and the Taef accord the Muslim migration increased and their numbers in foreign countries augmented. Therefore, this law could also benefit the Muslims.

We can fairly say that Lebanon's democratic system will improve just by allowing the expatriates to vote. Transparency, honesty and fairness, electing

candidates based on their electoral campaign can be enforced. The elected deputies will have to commit to their electoral campaign and will be held accountable for their acts. Another positive side of the expatriates votes can be reducing the political feudality and having new faces as deputies. On another side, the expatriate deputies can put pressure on their hosting countries to support Lebanon. The participation of the immigrants in the elections will help disallowing undemocratic decisions, such as extending the terms of the parliament and the void in the Presidency of the Lebanese Republic. Also by forming electoral lists and having deputies among them in the Lebanese parliament, the expatriates will affect any project of a law related to the international relations and affairs such as allowing woman married to non-Lebanese to give their children the Lebanese citizenship.

Also, a political reading was presented in this thesis showing how this integration of the immigrants in the elections affects the political Lebanese situation. Based on our analysis, we concluded that the elections, even if it promotes one political movement over the other, none of them will have enough majority to rule alone without settlements. The Lebanese governments successively tried to keep strong relations with the expatriates through establishing the ministry of emigrants and most recently through passing the law that allows the expatriates to vote from embassies and consulates and the law of restoring the Lebanese citizenship. On one side those rights will have a positive effect on many aspects democratic, national, political alliances in Lebanon. On the other side implementing those rights might also have negative outcome on Lebanon. The real results of those laws will be clear after applying them.

Every Lebanese party works for its own advantage, the Christians are demanding to allow the immigrants to vote and the restoration of citizenship because

they consider that those laws will re-establish the sectarian balance. However, the Muslims and Druze due to their interests refused the law of restoring the Lebanese citizenship. Even if those law were implemented the electoral law must be fair for all the Lebanese sects.

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