

Janine A. Clark and Bassel F. Salloukh

ELITE STRATEGIES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SECTARIAN IDENTITIES IN POSTWAR LEBANON

Abstract

This article explains the endurance of sectarian identities and modes of political mobilization in Lebanon after the civil war. This is done by examining three case studies that demonstrate a recursive relation between sectarian elites and civil society actors: on one side of this relation, sectarian elites pursue their political and socioeconomic interests at the expense of civil society organizations (CSOs); on the other side, civil society actors instrumentalize the sectarian political system and its resources to advance their own organizational or personal advantage. These mutually reinforcing dynamics enable sectarian elites to penetrate, besiege, or co-opt CSOs as well as to extend their clientelist networks to CSOs that should otherwise lead the effort to establish cross-sectarian ties and modes of political mobilization or that expressly seek to challenge the sectarian system. The article fills a gap in the literature on sectarianism in postwar Lebanon and helps explain a puzzle identified by Ashutosh Varshney in the theoretical debate on ethnic conflict, namely the reasons behind the “stickiness” of historically constructed ethnic identities.

Albeit rooted in diverse theoretical approaches, the debate on identity formation is increasingly dominated by constructivist explanations. Widely associated with Benedict Anderson, among other scholars, constructivism assumes that ethnic identities are a product of material and political struggles in specific historical contexts.¹ However, as Ashutosh Varshney points out, while constructivism does a good job accounting for “identity formation . . . it does not do a good job of explaining ethnic conflict.”² In other words, constructivism assumes the “stickiness” of ethnic identities, but cannot account for how this transpires beyond referring to the role of political entrepreneurs.³ This puzzle is replicated in constructivist accounts of sectarianism and sectarian identities in Lebanon, which contend that such identities are not primordial “givens”⁴ but rather the product of the interplay between local and external political, discursive, and material transformations that conspired to form a modern “culture of sectarianism” in Mount Lebanon in the second half of the 19th century.⁵ This is also true of studies of sectarianism as practices of social reproduction, material domination, and national imagination,⁶ or those that examine the impact of sectarian networks and considerations on state institutions and policies, electoral laws, the provision of social welfare, and the distribution

Janine A. Clark is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Guelph, Guelph, Canada; e-mail: jclark@uoguelph.ca. Bassel F. Salloukh is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Sciences, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon; e-mail: bassel.salloukh@lau.edu.lb

of public expenditures in Lebanon.⁷ Although these historicist accounts do a good job of explaining the origins of sectarian identities in Lebanon, and of demonstrating their effects on a range of social and economic practices, they offer very little insight into the reasons behind the persistence of a seemingly resilient “culture of sectarianism” since the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). Moreover, they fail to capture *how* sectarian elite strategies have actively both precluded the emergence of cross-sectarian, interest-based identities and sabotaged direct attempts to challenge the sectarian system.⁸

Thus, despite the substantial literature on sectarianism in postwar Lebanon, the dynamics of sectarian elite strategies remain grossly understudied. We aim to correct this methodological bias by undertaking an in-depth examination of three empirical cases. The first involves the sectarian elites’ efforts to undermine the General Confederation of Labor (GCL) as a mouthpiece for labor rights. We show how shifting alliances among sectarian elites, driven by socioeconomic and political interests at the national level, used state institutions to interfere in the electoral processes of the GCL and absorb it into their clientelist network. The other two cases similarly examine how sectarian interests infiltrate nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and impact their goals, activities, and effectiveness, looking first at the Lebanese Council of Women (LCW) and then at NGOs that openly seek to challenge and alter the sectarian political system. These latter cases demonstrate two important dynamics that help reproduce sectarian identities and modes of political mobilization in Lebanon. First, sectarian elites use both formal and informal means to infiltrate what can be considered relatively minor civil society organizations (CSOs), thus preventing them from effecting political or socioeconomic change at the national level through, for example, legal campaigns to change personal status laws. Second, NGO actors, for their part, seek out sectarian elites to advance their own organizations or their personal interests within these organizations. In sum, the three case studies demonstrate a recursive dynamic by which sectarian elites pursue their political and socioeconomic interests at the expense of CSOs, and civil society actors seek to instrumentalize the sectarian political system and its resources for their own organizational or personal advantage. The result is the preclusion of any effective mode of cross-sectarian affiliation or political mobilization and the sabotaging of antisectarian initiatives in Lebanon.

The three case studies were selected for different methodological reasons. The GCL and the LCW were chosen as typical cases representing the two most important types of CSOs that one might expect to establish cross-sectarian ties: those based on labor concerns and on women’s issues. In the third case study, of NGOs that expressly seek to challenge the sectarian system, we turn our attention to the least likely case in which sectarian interests might be expected to infiltrate and fracture a civil society organization or absorb it into their clientelist networks.

This article is based on substantial fieldwork conducted between 2004 and 2010 with a diverse group of union, NGO, and political party representatives, and on a survey of both primary and secondary materials. It begins with an examination of the process by which the GCL’s ability to defend workers’ rights and champion labor activism was undermined. This is followed by in-depth studies of the sectarian penetration and permeation of the LCW and of the besieging of those NGOs that seek to challenge the sectarian system. The article closes by spelling out the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

UNDERMINING THE LABOR MOVEMENT: THE 1997 GCL
ELECTIONS

The origins of Lebanon's labor movement dates back to the French Mandate, when it was composed of competing chapters representing different ideological trends and vocational sectors. On 3 May 1970, all existing federations united under the umbrella of the GCL.⁹ Prior to the start of the civil war in 1975, the main split within the labor movement was between the so-called "rightist" and "leftist" unions. Nevertheless, peasants, workers, and students led by the GCL jointly organized across the country in defense of lower-class socioeconomic interests. "Militant working-class unity" and collective bargaining for job security, salary increases, an end to arbitrary layoffs, and social security were blocked by an alliance of industrialists, merchants, and the sectarian political elite, which was determined to prevent nascent working-class and labor-union solidarity.¹⁰ With the outbreak of the civil war, one-time comrades struggling for job security and better wages found themselves manning opposing sides of religious divides. Despite the civil war's adverse impact on intersectarian coexistence, the GCL retained a semblance of unity throughout the years of the war. Consistently championing the cause of wage increases, it was one of only a few Lebanese institutions to rise above sectarian divisions.¹¹ The end of the war, however, witnessed a fresh attempt by the government to reestablish control over the GCL.

Sectarian elites' strategies to control the GCL in the postwar era undermined its organizational autonomy and the strength of the labor movement in general. The politicization of the GCL is a primary cause of its weakness in defending labor rights and engaging in collective bargaining with employers. It also has hindered the emergence of a truly secular national labor movement capable of representing worker's interests beyond sectarian considerations. Part of the problem rests in internal institutional dynamics. The GCL's nondemocratic internal structures, the gap between its leadership and labor base, and the idiosyncratic shortcomings of its leaders have inhibited it from promoting national, cross-sectarian, interest-based platforms on behalf of Lebanese workers.¹² At the same time, sectarian elites' strategies have played an instrumental role in the politicization of the GCL. The case of the 1997 GCL elections demonstrates how shifting alliances between sectarian elites, which are predominantly a result of changing political dynamics in the country, and their use of state institutions to interfere in the GCL's management and elections have resulted in the organization's fragmentation and politicization.

Sectarian elites penetrated the GCL in the postwar era through the creation of labor unions and federations affiliated with their respective parties. Indeed, following the war, the Ministry of Labor, headed by consecutive ministers allied with Syria,¹³ was tasked with licensing new labor federations loyal to particular sectarian elites, a ruse intended to stack the GCL's executive council with loyal members.¹⁴ Different political parties also penetrated the GCL by creating and/or dominating selective unions and federations. The effect of this was to ensure sectarian competition over control of the executive council, the securing of which required and continues to require shifting cross-sectarian alliances.

Following the war, therefore, the executive council was overwhelmingly pro-Syrian in orientation. A substantial number of its members were politically affiliated with Nabih

Berri's Shi'i Amal movement. The LCP, the pro-Syrian Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), the Ba'th Party, Hizbullah, the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the Maronite Phalange Party, and Michel 'Awn's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) were also represented in the GCL through affiliated unions and federations, many of which were thin in membership density.¹⁵

During the 24 April 1997 elections for the executive council, an intersectarian alliance composed of the supporters of the then-governing troika—Maronite President Elyas Hrawi, Shi'i Parliament Speaker Berri, and Sunni Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri—and of the SSNP and Walid Jumblatt's PSP converged to depose, with Syrian acquiescence, the incumbent GCL president Ilyas Abu Rizq.¹⁶ Abu Rizq had successfully transformed the GCL into the country's champion of political freedoms and liberties and was a critic of Hariri's postwar reconstruction project and of neoliberal socioeconomic policies.¹⁷ Hariri was especially wary of a GCL determined to defend workers' rights and to oppose the state's neoliberal policies at a time of growing economic crisis. In contrast, Berri was intent on demonstrating his popular and political weight in public and private institutions, in a bid to balance the growing weight of both Hariri—his opponent in the government and in state institutions—and Hizbullah, his contender for leadership within the Shi'i community. Abu Rizq was the political opponent of the pro-Syrian As'ad Herdan, then minister of labor (1995–98 and 2003–04) and SSNP leader, and his competitor in parliamentary elections in the south of the country. Hrawi and Jumblatt opposed Abu Rizq because of the latter's growing political weight and monopoly over the GCL.¹⁸ All of these factors converged to transform Abu Rizq into the leading enemy of an alliance of sectarian elites that gathered against him and the GCL. Abu Rizq's supporters included Hizbullah, the Maronite National Liberal Party, and independent MPs Najah Wakim, Zaher al-Khatib, and Mustafa Sa'd.¹⁹

The opening move in the push to depose Abu Rizq came in mid-April 1997, days before the GCL elections were held. It began with Minister of Labor Herdan admitting into the GCL five new federations that were all loyal to Speaker Berri, thus giving him control over the votes of ten additional representatives in the executive council.²⁰ The government furthermore intervened in the elections of at least three federations that were already in the GCL to ensure that their six representatives on the council voted against Abu Rizq.²¹

Most telling, however, were government attempts to sabotage the elections on 24 April. Two hours before the 11 a.m. scheduled election time, the government replaced the Lebanese Army units that were deployed around GCL headquarters with the Internal Security Forces (ISF), a move that signaled the state's determination to use heavy-handed tactics to ensure the success of its chosen candidate.²² The ISF immediately cordoned off GCL headquarters and began intimidating Abu Rizq's supporters. Tipped off that the security forces were planning to prevent them from entering GCL headquarters, however, Abu Rizq and his supporters had slipped into their offices on the eve of the election. The next morning, they swiftly organized their own elections after securing a quorum, and Abu Rizq was unanimously reelected president.²³ However, as the minutes of the meeting were handed to one of the attending MPs, an ISF officer stormed Abu Rizq's office and dispersed the gathering.

Immediately following Abu Rizq's reelection, the government, represented by a Ministry of Labor delegate, began organizing its own elections in another room of the

GCL headquarters.²⁴ These alternate elections were attended by the representatives of the progovernment federations plus a number of Amal MPs.²⁵ They were marked by serious irregularities, however, as Abu Rizq's supporters were prohibited from voting in them. The government-supported candidate, Ghnaym al-Zoghby, was duly elected GCL president by unanimous vote. The government, through the Ministry of Labor, exercised its executive prerogatives to recognize and certify the validity of al-Zoghby's election and to deny the legality of the elections held by the Abu Rizq group. The GCL was split into two opposing camps, each upholding the legitimacy of its own leadership.²⁶ Both Abu Rizq and al-Zoghby claimed the right to represent the labor movement. The government subsequently charged Abu Rizq with false representation of the GCL and detained him briefly. This divisive state of affairs continued until al-Zoghby resigned his post in April 1998, having failed to reunite the GCL's competing factions.

With Lebanon's presidential elections looming, the alliance of sectarian enemies that had secured al-Zoghby's electoral success and divided the GCL in the 1997 elections fractured. Disagreement between Berri and Hariri over army commander General Emile Lahoud's candidacy in the upcoming presidential elections resulted in Amal and its affiliated union federations suddenly supporting Abu Rizq as GCL president. On 30 July 1998, Abu Rizq reclaimed the leadership of the GCL, this time supported by the Amal- and PSP-affiliated members of the executive council, the same members who had played an instrumental role in dividing the GCL in 1997.²⁷

Abu Rizq's victory was ultimately a pyrrhic one. After his failure in the parliamentary elections of 2000, he announced what he called his tactical resignation as president of the GCL. A majority of executive council members, including those who had supported his earlier victory, then passed a no-confidence motion against him. In March 2001, in an effort to defeat the core leftist factions in the GCL's executive council, an Amal-SSNP-Hizbullah-Ba'ath Party alliance (plus a former member of the FPM) on the executive council supported the election of Ghassan Ghosn as GCL president. Opposing this alliance were a number of federations controlled by the LCP, the PSP, the Phalange Party, and several small leftist groups.²⁸

Abu Rizq's deposition and subsequent reelection by the same political factions demonstrates how changing sectarian alliances used the institutions of the state to protect their socioeconomic and political interests and, consequently, to incorporate the GCL into the sectarian elites' clientelist ensemble. It underscores how, and the extent to which, the executive council of the GCL became penetrated by federations loyal to sectarian elites rather than to the labor movement, robbing it, as shall be demonstrated below, of the necessary collective bargaining power to defend labor interests.

DIVIDING GCL MEMBERS

The impact of the sectarianization of the GCL has been profound both in terms of its role as an effective lobbyist for labor collective rights and in dividing labor activism at the grassroots level. The attempt in 2004 by taxi and van drivers—particularly *service* or shared taxi and van drivers who pick up multiple clients heading for roughly the same destination—to eliminate the ban on diesel engines provides an example of both. As in the case of the GCL executive council, this case study demonstrates how the institutional structure of the GCL allows for multiple and competing unions within the

same labor sector and, as a result, creates political divisions that can be exploited by sectarian elites for their own political and clientelist interests. Sectarian elites' strategies to control the GCL—through both the creation of unions and the making and breaking of alliances—have not only divided drivers and pitted them against each other, thus undermining their concrete attempts to press collective demands, but have also inhibited severely any future possibility for drivers to work together.

In Lebanon, a profession is not limited to a single union. For example, the country's approximately 33,000 taxi and 4,000 van drivers (numbers that include only legal drivers) are divided into seventeen unions.²⁹ Three or more unions of one type make up a federation, which sends representatives to the GCL.³⁰ Most drivers' unions belong to either the Union of Taxi Drivers and Owners, headed by Abdel Amir Najdi, or the Federation of Land Transportation, headed by Bassam Tleis. The former comprises three unions and the latter seven. These two federations differ according to sect and political party affiliation. Tleis is a member of Amal's Central Committee, while Najdi is affiliated with the LCP. In addition, there is one van-only union, the Union of Drivers and Owners of Mini-Buses, headed by Abdullah Hemadé. It is a member of Wafa' (Ittihad al-Wafa' li-Niqabat al-'Ummal wa-l-Mustakhdamin fi Lubnan), Hizbullah's labor unit.

Drivers in Lebanon are thus divided along multiple lines. Within the GCL, the federations fall into progovernment and opposition coalitions. Competition between parties exists even within the same camp or alliance, with Amal and Hizbullah competing over Shi'i loyalties. Compounding these divisions are those between federations and, on a more local level, between unions. Finally, drivers are divided on a geographic level, since many unions represent a single area. The 24 May 2004 rally called by the GCL to protest rising fuel prices exposed these divisions among drivers and demonstrated how sectarian elites have exploited the GCL for their own political calculations, thus sabotaging workers' demands, paralyzing both the drivers' federations/unions and the GCL, and rendering the latter an ineffective organization for defending labor concerns.

Rallies were held in a variety of locations throughout Lebanon; those in Beirut intended to march to and converge upon the National Museum. Hizbullah and Amal jointly agreed to a march that would begin on the Airport Road, which runs through the Shi'i-majority southern suburbs.³¹ The march was led by Tleis and dominated by Amal. However, there was a strong Hizbullah presence, and other union leaders, most importantly Hemadé and members of his van drivers' union, as well as leftist leaders participated. The Amal leadership redirected the march to the southern suburb of Hay al-Sillom, where it turned into a riot between Amal and Hizbullah members.³² When a rock hit an officer, the army fired upon the crowd and five bystanders were killed.

After the riots, Hizbullah immediately called for an investigation into why the army fired upon the crowd rather than first respond with less violent measures. Hizbullah also objected to the decision by the Amal leadership of the protest to redirect the march and allow the riot to break out. It further complained that no Amal leaders were arrested while leftist and Hizbullah-associated union leaders were all arrested, including Hemadé, who was tried in absentia and given a three-year sentence for inciting a riot. When the Amal leadership of the GCL refused to conduct an investigation and failed to cooperate with the Ministry of Justice's investigation, Hizbullah's representative in the GCL's executive council, Osama al-Khansa, resigned his post.³³ Other parties, including the LCP and the PSP, also withdrew from or boycotted the GCL.³⁴

The GCL was paralyzed by the withdrawals and held no meetings from 27 May 2004 until after the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon on 26 April 2005. As a consequence, no labor demands were addressed for almost a year. The country's fracture in the aftermath of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's assassination on 14 February 2005 into competing 14 and 8 March lines, and the concomitant overlapping domestic and external battle over Lebanon after the Syrian withdrawal, deprived the labor movement any semblance of unity.³⁵ Hizbullah re-entered the GCL (and its former alliance with Amal) despite the fact that there had been no resolution of the 24 May investigation, and the GCL became a mouthpiece of the 8 March opposition. A pro-14 March labor opposition, composed of eighteen federations, gathered under the label of Hay'at al-Inqadh fi al-Ittihad al-'Ummali al-'Amm (Salvation Body of the GCL). The split within the labor movement along sectarian and political lines was now official; socioeconomic demands raised by the GCL were rendered ineffective, as each wing of the movement accused the other of politicizing labor demands at the service of its sectarian patrons. When Najdi's drivers' union and Tleiss' federation called for a strike in January 2008 to protest gasoline prices, the labor opposition refused to participate and accused the organizers of politicizing socioeconomic demands.³⁶

At the same time, and to secure control of the GCL, sectarian leaders entered a race to create more unions and federations loyal to their respective sects. By the time the labor movement in Lebanon celebrated Labor Day in 2010, the GCL had inflated into 580 unions and 51 federations divided along overlapping and competing sectarian and political lines.³⁷ The main federations included 15 for the Shi'i Amal movement, 8 for the Maronite Lebanese Forces, 7 for the Shi'i Hizbullah, 6 for the LCP, 2 for the SSNP, 3.5 for the Ba'ath Party, 1 for the Druze PSP, 1 for the Maronite Phalange Party, 1 for the Maronite Marada Party, 1 shared between Amal and the Sunni Future Movement, and a number of independent federations.³⁸

The shifting political alliances within the GCL, notably those between Hizbullah and Amal as a result first of the 24 May 2004 riots and then of the Hariri assassination, demonstrate the manipulation of labor's socioeconomic concerns for the sake of the sectarian elites' narrow political calculations aimed at consolidating sectarian control. As sectarian elites maneuvered to gain control of the GCL in response to political events, labor's needs were sacrificed. Both the GCL and its associated federations and unions were successfully divided along sectarian lines and the capacity for collective bargaining on behalf of labor demands was effectively crippled.

LEBANON'S INTEREST-BASED NGOS: THE LEBANESE COUNCIL OF WOMEN

Interest-based NGOs have also emerged as contestation sites for control by identity-based political forces in Lebanon.³⁹ Since the end of the civil war, there have been a growing number of what Karam Karam labels claims-based or interest-based NGOs, which are distinct in their functions, management, and membership from more traditional types of family, charity, and community-based associations.⁴⁰ Interest-based NGOs deal with previously neglected fields of activism in Lebanon—human rights, ecology, public freedoms, and democracy—and are “part of the quest for a new political consensus.”⁴¹

They stand in contrast to communally based NGOs that reflect and reinforce, rather than transcend, the deep divisions in Lebanese society.

Historically, Lebanon's civil society has been dominated by communally based organizations. While interest-based NGOs did exist prior to the civil war, many were rendered inoperative during the war years.⁴² This resulted in a strong *mujtama' ahli* (communal society) and a weak *mujtama' madani* (civil society).⁴³ The continued vibrancy of *al-mujtama' al-ahli* was also fed by the growing sectarian group autonomy institutionalized in articles 9 and 10 of the Lebanese Constitution and subsequently in the Personal Status Law (PSL), which relegated personal status matters to the jurisdiction of sectarian rather than civil courts, and in Decree 60 of 13 March 1936, which recognizes sectarian groups as corporate entities.⁴⁴

The PSL—which covers all issues relating to family, marriage, divorce, child custody, adoption, kinship, lineage, and inheritance—grants religious leaders and institutions authority over their respective communities. It also generates income for sectarian institutions, such as through fees for marriage licenses. Moreover, by dealing directly with marriage, the PSL is central to the sectarian demographic equilibrium and consequently has direct implications for the political balance of power between the different religious and sectarian groups. For these and other reasons, interest-based NGOs, particularly women's and feminist organizations such as the Lebanese Council of Women (LCW), are not immune from sectarian interests and interference.

Indeed, despite their postwar (re-)growth, interest-based NGOs have not been able to coalesce across sectarian lines. The case of the LCW demonstrates how sectarian interests penetrate interest-based NGOs formally and informally and control their agendas from within either by joining these NGOs as members, or, alternatively, by exerting pressure on their individual members who often have very personal reasons to succumb to sectarian pressures.⁴⁵ At the same time, interest-based NGOs often appeal to or try to appease sectarian elites, who control many state institutions and other structures. After all, members of interest-based organizations know that their most effective access to the political system is via sectarian leaders.

Established in 1952, the LCW is the oldest and largest women's NGO in Lebanon. It is an umbrella NGO (its membership base comprises NGOs) and the only women's NGO in which all religious affiliations are represented. Albeit effectively frozen throughout the civil war, it was the only multiconfessional CSO not to dissolve during those years. After the war, the LCW was revived; its structure was amended and new elections and a membership drive were conducted. Today, its nine stated objectives include working to consolidate national coexistence and unity, increasing women's political participation, and amending legislation that discriminates against women.

Member NGOs of the LCW must pay an annual fee of U.S. \$100. The executive board uses this money to undertake various projects in the name of the LCW. The LCW also uses its fees and donations, part of which consists of guaranteed official funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), to assist member NGOs with their own programs. Member NGOs have no obligation to participate in the executive board's projects and the vast majority do not. Despite this, they can and do receive funds and assistance for their individual activities.

Thus, as a consequence of the LCW's efforts to create a broad-based women's organization, all interests, including sectarian ones, have an easy, obligation-free means

of entry into the LCW. The result is a highly divided organization, one that eschews political stances on controversial issues concerning women. An examination of the LCW's membership list reveals that the vast majority of its 170 member NGOs are sectarian based.⁴⁶ Virtually all sectarian and political parties have a presence in the LCW, primarily through NGOs affiliated with the parties' women's committees.⁴⁷ While the LCW's postwar membership drive has been successful in terms of sheer numbers, it has occurred at the price of the ascendancy of sectarian-affiliated NGOs. Fewer than 5 of the LCW's 170 NGOs are interest-based.⁴⁸

Because the LCW is an umbrella organization intended to unify the women's movement in Lebanon, its sectarian penetration has had deep consequences on that movement. Most important, the LCW is often silent on sensitive issues or drops out of political events, thus weakening the efforts of other NGOs. At a more institutional level, all decisions within the LCW are taken by democratic vote. A general assembly is held every two months and the executive and its various committees present their plans and strategies for action. Only those plans that receive a majority vote are pursued. This means that controversial issues are simply voted down or avoided, and topics that may divide the membership are eschewed.⁴⁹

The LCW has remained silent on a variety of issues that concern human rights organizations and feminist NGOs outside its umbrella. For example, in 2000, a coalition of NGOs formed to coordinate and implement Lebanon's World March of Women for International Women's Day. Comprising approximately twenty NGOs, including those focused on human rights, disability issues, and women's concerns, the coalition decided that women would participate under the general slogan of "marching against discrimination and in support of equality." It also agreed that its larger agenda included reforming the PSL and demanding an optional civil marriage law. Two days before the march was held, the LCW and the Hariri Foundation withdrew from it. The two organizations then held a joint press conference on the day of the march, condemning it and arguing that its demands were dangerous and ran counter to Lebanese traditions. In an interview with Elinor Bray-Collins, the president of the LCW explained that the organization withdrew as a result of the religious diversity of its members, since participation in the march would have divided the LCW irreparably. She also acknowledged that the LCW was subjected to external pressure.⁵⁰

Other activists have pointed to both Christian and Muslim clerics as the source of pressure on the LCW to withdraw. The pressure (or incentive) to avoid controversial issues, such as civil marriage, often occurs through relatively informal means. Religious clerics and sectarian elites are often able to penetrate the LCW by exerting pressure on its individual women leaders.⁵¹ As Bray-Collins notes, women succumb to such pressures for a variety of reasons: to maintain their class position, to uphold their male relations' or their own political interests, or to avoid the negative consequences they may face in their religious communities or with their political patrons.⁵²

Moreover, LCW members actively strengthen these ties as they use the same sectarian networks to lobby those in power. Indeed, their primary strategy is to work with ministers and political leaders in order to effect legal change.⁵³ LCW women exploit their political and sectarian connections to achieve specific gains, such as accessing funding, gaining publicity, expediting reforms in nonthreatening legal areas, and advancing their own political careers.⁵⁴ Lara Khattab argues that the LCW has become a place where elite

women gather to organize fundraising dinners and praise their social and professional achievements for personal and political interests. Thus the LCW is no more than a showcase for women who try to promote their organization or win electoral support. Not surprisingly, as Khattab points out, almost all LCW presidents have run for parliamentary elections.⁵⁵

The effect of this recursive and mutually reinforcing relationship between the LCW and sectarian interests is quite significant. Historically, the LCW membership has been primarily made up of traditional and confessionally based associations described as being “more feminine than feminist.”⁵⁶ An early postwar study of the LCW revealed that only 33 percent of its members were directly engaged in work on behalf of women; most were involved in more traditional forms of social service provision, a trend that was reinvigorated by the legacies of the civil war period.⁵⁷ Khattab notes that little has changed. The overwhelmingly “feminine” agenda of the LCW is born out in its literature and in interviews where, when asked about the areas in which its member NGOs work, members of the LCW executive begin with the environment, crafts, and health, before discussing women’s rights and issues related to violence against women.⁵⁸ Sectarian penetration and permeation of the LCW furthermore contributes to personalistic politics within the LCW, where, unsurprisingly, there has been very little turnover in leadership. The same relatively small group of women dominates the positions of president and the four vice-presidents.

BESIEGING ALTERNATIVE NGOS

This penetration and permeation of sectarian ties and interests is best demonstrated by examining another type of interest-based NGO. “Alternative NGOs”—the self-designated label that many of these interest-based NGOs employ—seek to change Lebanon’s political system and, more specifically, its sectarian nature. Thus, alternative NGOs should be the type of CSO not only the most resilient to elite attempts at penetration but also the most likely to eschew the “pull” of sectarian ties. Possessing substantial support among youth, alternative NGOs emerged particularly in the aftermath of Hariri’s assassination in 2005, demanding Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon, the resignation of the pro-Syrian government, and free and fair elections.⁵⁹ For example, the founders of Aman05 received international attention in the days following Hariri’s assassination after spontaneously deciding to start a petition demanding the government’s resignation. They dismantled their tent from the tent city of protestors that had formed in Martyrs Square only after the government stepped down and Syria withdrew from the country in April 2005.⁶⁰ Other alternative NGOs were formed in response to the mass exodus of Shi’a from South Lebanon following Israel’s 2006 war with Hizbullah. These alternative NGOs established in 2005 and 2006 joined others that were founded shortly after the end of the war and the largely leftist secular NGOs established in the 1970s upon the war’s outbreak.

Despite the determination of these NGOs to directly challenge the sectarian system, we find a similar recursive and mutually reinforcing dynamic at play. Alternative NGOs are both subject to sectarian elite strategies of penetration and emasculation and agents in the maintenance of sectarian clientelist ties. Formally, sectarian interests have used the power of the state and the media to penetrate or obstruct alternative NGOs. Informally, they

have used the clientelist nature of Lebanese politics to their advantage. Simultaneously, alternative NGOs have turned to sectarian leaders—both as a means to accomplish their goals and as a result of the fact that many remain deeply tied to sectarian identities and the powers that uphold them.

At a most basic level, sectarian leaders are able to disrupt or penetrate alternative NGOs through their control of state institutions, funding, and application of the law. Alternative NGOs cannot avoid relations with sectarian elites, because they require at least the tacit consent of state officials to conduct their activities. Lebanon's CSOs are governed by the Law of Associations of 1909, which imposes few stipulations upon CSOs. All CSOs based in Beirut must inform the Ministry of the Interior (MOI)—or, alternatively, the appropriate regional administrator if the NGO is based outside Beirut—of their founding by submitting an Information Letter.⁶¹ Upon notice of the Letter, the MOI delivers a receipt called *'Ilm wa-Khabar*. Most important, as Ghassan Moukheiber points out, "The Law considers the association incorporated as from the notification date of the Information Letter (and not the date of receipt by the founders of the *'Ilm wa Khabar*)." ⁶² Just as significantly, "[t]here are no formal restrictions or official sanctions on CSOs engagement in advocacy activities and criticism of the government. In principle, CSOs can openly debate public policy, criticize the government, and conduct lobbying and advocacy activities."⁶³ However, as Moukheiber further contends, the association law is in practice continuously and systematically violated by the MOI, which has de facto transformed the freedom of association into an illegal process of prior licensing and control.⁶⁴ During the Syrian era, the MOI refused Information Letters submitted by associations deemed "political."⁶⁵ The MOI further interfered in the management of associations by, for example, issuing circulars ordering that associations invite delegates from the ministry to their general assemblies when they vote on amendments or elect boards. Associations that failed to abide by these circulars were threatened with dissolution.⁶⁶ In the most egregious violation cases, the Council of Ministers has dissolved associations without any legal or factual basis.⁶⁷ Other strategies to neutralize political associations include politicizing their internal elections, imposing progovernment members, and encouraging the establishment of parallel CSOs.⁶⁸ While these constraints have been reduced substantially since the Syrian withdrawal, and most particularly under the reform-minded Ziad Baroud, minister of the interior from 2008 to 2011, they can easily be reintroduced by less NGO-friendly ministers.

Of far greater significance, however, is the obstructive and destructive role sectarian elites can play via their control of the media. As several NGO leaders noted, with the media almost totally controlled by sectarian groups, parties have an easy vehicle through which they can attack or pressure NGOs, prevent the announcement of an event, or refuse to cover it.⁶⁹ Without mainstream media coverage, NGO-related events receive little to no public attention and have limited public impact, since new social media such as the internet and blogs target the already converted. In April 2007, for example, a network of NGOs conducted a campaign called the Popular Court, a mock court proceeding in which politicians were brought to trial for massacres committed during the civil war. According to several NGOs, not one media outlet covered the launch of the Popular Court. Due to political pressure and to lack of funding and media attention, some NGOs withdrew from the event.⁷⁰

On a more informal level, sectarian elites make their displeasure felt by pressuring an NGO's coalition partners to withdraw from an event and/or preventing donor funding by making various accusations about an NGO.⁷¹ Alternative NGOs also face sectarian party attempts to pressure volunteers to leave the organization or to co-opt their leaders or members. For example, the leadership of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) complained that, in 2009, their pre-election monitors—unpaid volunteers—were offered positions in the campaign machines of more than one sectarian party, with the promise of hefty salaries.⁷²

Ultimately, NGO leaders need state officials—sectarian elites who control local state institutions—to hold even an event in a school, for example. Sectarian elites formally control or informally dominate locally based institutions, such as municipal councils. They can thwart alternative NGOs' initiatives through a variety of means. Beirut-based alternative NGOs that conducted their activities in the south following the 2006 war with Israel experienced such "turf" issues.⁷³ In some cases, the dominant local party would use its control of the municipal council to close the NGO under some pretext; in other cases, members of the dominant local party would join the NGO in large numbers and then attempt to take it over through internal NGO elections.⁷⁴ In another example, Samidoon (Steadfast), a well-known relief network of individuals and NGOs that provided aid to Shi'i refugees during the 2006 war and thus brought Christians into relatively direct contact with Shi'a, noted that while it had very good working relations with some parties, others refused to work with it or even to allow it to distribute aid in the areas or schools under their control.⁷⁵

The experience of Nahnoo (We), originally a university club established on a campus of the Lebanese University and now an NGO dedicated to pulling society "out of . . . sectarian ignorance," offers a case in point of how sectarian interests extend their reach into grassroots and seemingly innocuous undertakings.⁷⁶ In 2003, Nahnoo founders decided to establish a club that would, at least in the beginning, focus on films and literature in order to create a broader dialogue about issues of interest to the student body, such as women's rights. The founders called the club "We" in order to take a clear stance against the divisions on campus, where even cafeteria tables were divided among different sectarian trends. The club was extremely popular; by 2004, it had established branches in all four of the university's campuses and was organizing film festivals and live music events. From its very foundation, however, Nahnoo was harassed persistently by the party controlling the student council on campus. As one of Nahnoo's founders stated, resistance to the organization would have emerged from any party that controlled the council; the party that did so at the time, Hizbullah, was not the worst party, but rather the one in control.⁷⁷ This resistance usually came in the form of Hizbullah members' ability to disturb an event—"the power of annoyance"—through individuals belonging to or loyal to the party, the party itself, or the council, or through pressure on the administration, using one of the following strategies: compelling students to boycott Nahnoo's events; defacing or covering Nahnoo's event posters or forbidding the hanging of its posters; reserving all available rooms on campus during a Nahnoo event to deny it a venue; or organizing a counter-event on the same day, time, and location of the Nahnoo event.⁷⁸ For example, the screening of the first movie of the Nahnoo cinema club was interrupted by Hizbullah members—presumably sent to monitor the movie—who claimed that they were offended by the limited but explicit sexual scene. As a result,

Nahnoo was forced to show all potentially offensive movies off campus.⁷⁹ In another example, Hizbullah protested a Nahnoo-organized jazz concert, claiming that jazz is not allowed in the Muslim tradition and falls outside the values and standards defended by Hizbullah.⁸⁰ According to Nahnoo, Hizbullah planned a counterevent on the same day and at the same location as the concert. Moreover, it refused to grant permission for posters advertising the concert and pressured students not to attend.

As stated above, Nahnoo experienced resistance from all the political parties, not just Hizbullah. All the parties, for example, objected to and attempted to disrupt an open-house day Nahnoo organized entitled "Toward the Civil Society," which put students' artistic efforts on display to the university student body and the general public. The parties' objection was to the term "civil society."⁸¹ Nahnoo successfully staged the event by holding it on campus but in a location outside the student body's jurisdiction. These conflicts, however, did not prevent student political parties from trying to enhance their votes on election day by attempting to "incorporate" Nahnoo.⁸² While Nahnoo had no electoral aspirations, several student political parties, including Hizbullah, approached the organization with the hope of building electoral alliances with it in exchange for seats on the council; Nahnoo refused these overtures.

As in the case of other interest-based NGOs, such as the LCW, the control that sectarian elites have over many institutions ultimately means that many alternative NGOs tactically seek out sectarian elites' support to ensure that they have access to government decision-makers and/or receive the public attention they would like.⁸³ Ironically, as one NGO founder pointed out, this means that politicians are invited to and applauded at events protesting the very issues, such as the civil war, that they actively participated in and prolonged.⁸⁴ Conversely, alternative NGOs withdraw or modify their events when they have the potential to disturb sectarian leaders.⁸⁵ Others modify or moderate their tactics or language.⁸⁶ A founder of Tayyar al-Mujtama' al-Madani, an NGO dedicated to secularism, stated that when conducting events in areas politically dominated by a sect, the group purposefully avoids using the term secularism and certain topics altogether.⁸⁷ Alternative NGOs may take these actions as preemptive precautions, in response to sectarian elites' acts of displeasure, or simply as a "personal favor." Lebanon is a small country with relatively small social circles, and the lines between personal and professional relations easily become blurred, with NGOs refraining from activities when a personal friend requests they do so.⁸⁸

Beyond these tactical efforts to remain in sectarian elites' "good books," a closer look at alternative NGOs reveals that, like other interest-based NGOs, they are often highly sectarian in nature themselves, whether or not this is recognized or acknowledged. While all alternative NGOs encourage and accept all sects in their membership, they are nevertheless divided between pro-14 March and pro-8 March allegiances.⁸⁹ In practice, 14 March NGOs are those that do not work with Hizbullah or their supporters; those alternative NGOs that work with Hizbullah or its supporters are considered 8 March NGOs. Thus those supporting 14 March would not join a "pro-8 March NGO" and vice versa. The effect is that, while alternative NGOs host a variety of joint events, there are clear networks within the alternative NGO community that divide it and reduce its transformative potential. They are further divided as to their goals, such as whether they seek a secular political system (most alternative NGOs are leftist in political orientation), whether they fight sectarian extremism and the violence it can lead to, or whether they

seek a more democratic system. Thus not all alternative NGOs—indeed relatively few alternative NGOs—seek profound change to the political system, for example, of the kind that would eliminate sectarian autonomy and the provisions in the constitution that support it.

That alternative NGOs are more sectarian than they appear is the result of several factors. The first is, quite simply, as in the LCW's case, that many sectarian elites, such as party or ex-party members, belong to alternative NGOs.⁹⁰ While some alternative NGOs do not allow their elected leadership to hold any political office and/or belong to a political party, none have similar restrictions on their membership. Furthermore, the power of sectarian identities among some members is such that the members of an extremely small number of alternative NGOs display sectarian loyalties while simultaneously calling for deconfessionalization. While these sectarian loyalties are expressed indirectly, usually symbolically and most likely unconsciously, they underscore the stickiness of sectarian identities and how difficult it is to transcend them in the context of recursive clientelist networks and relations.

SECTARIANISM AND PROSPECTS FOR REFORM

The case studies examined in this article demonstrate that the “stickiness” of sectarian identities in postwar Lebanon is the product of a dynamic, recursive, and mutually reinforcing relationship involving sectarian elites and civil society actors. The sectarian elites' use of formal and informal means to infiltrate, besiege, and co-opt CSOs and NGOs, denying them their natural role as agents of political and socioeconomic change, often intersects with the desires of members and leaders of these groups to instrumentalize the sectarian system and relations with sectarian elites to advance personal and organizational interests. This is not to imply that there are no alternatives to the sectarian system, or that sectarian elites are immune to challenges emanating from cross- or anti-sectarian groups. Alternatives and challenges to the sectarian system both exist, and the latter play an important role in the long and slow process of altering political consciousness. Rather, it is to suggest that the sectarian elites' control over state institutions and resources, their alliance with the country's economic elites, and their substantial clientelist networks allow them to contain, co-opt, or sabotage these challenges and normalize the permeation of sectarian ties and interests. This, in turn, serves to reproduce sectarian identities and a general postwar “culture of sectarianism” that enables sectarian elites to safeguard their political power and socioeconomic interests.

These findings suggest that future research on ethnic identity must investigate not only the impact of institutional arrangements on these identities, the current vogue in ethnic conflict studies, but also how the dynamic, recursive, and mutually reinforcing relations examined in our case studies sabotage institutional attempts at ameliorating ethnic identities, thus precluding the emergence of cross-ethnic alternatives.⁹¹ Our findings bode ill for prospects of democratic institutional engineering in Lebanon and in other deeply divided postwar societies. They support the argument that the ability of institutional design to promote democratic stability in deeply divided societies hinges on the successful resolution of the underlying political, economic, and geostrategic “structure of conflicts” motivating political actors.⁹² Otherwise, and on its own, institutional engineering fails to engender interethnic political dynamics and alliances, and hence democratic stability.

Proponents of institutional engineering can ill afford to underestimate the considerable private and public resources possessed by ethnic elites. The challenge to alter the salience of ethnic identities is made more difficult when these resources intersect with the organizational and personal ambitions of some civil society actors.

Our findings also suggest that the resilience of sectarian identities and modes of political mobilization in postwar Lebanon is tied closely to the sectarian elites' considerable clientelist systems and the personal interests of the country's economic and financial elites. Any attempt to invent alternatives to sectarian identities and modes of political mobilization, and hence to sectarianism, requires breaking this reciprocal relation through fundamental socioeconomic, monetary, and political reforms. Little wonder, then, that sectarian elites have hitherto refused to embrace far-reaching economic and political reforms, and that contemporary reform programs sound eerily similar to those that have been propounded since the 1960s but remain unfulfilled. In the meantime, most Lebanese are dispossessed of some basic civil, political, and socioeconomic rights. Many young Lebanese refuse to give up the fight against sectarianism or to leave the country, however, opting instead to find imaginative ways to battle Lebanon's ever-expanding clientelist system, which enriches its overlapping sectarian and economic elites. They continue to resist the increasingly violence-prone and seemingly resilient sectarian system, one that appears more durable than some authoritarian Arab regimes once did, but that—like them—may one day give way to a more just, accountable, and democratic polity.

NOTES

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¹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991). Other examples include Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1980); David D. Laitin, "Hegemony and Religious Conflict: British Imperial Control and Political Cleavages in Yorubaland," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 285–316; Leroy Vail, "Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. Vail (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 1–19; Terence Ranger, "Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The Invention of Ethnicity in Zimbabwe," in Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 118–50; Elaine Unterhalter, "Constructing Race, Class, Gender and Ethnicity: State and Opposition Strategies in South Africa," in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*, ed. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 207–40; Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (2008): 1043–68.

²See Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 287; and Kanchan Chandra, "What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 397–423.

³See Varshney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," 288.

⁴Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Geertz (New York: Free Press, 1963), 109; Laitin, "Hegemony and Religious Conflict," 287.

⁵See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); and Caesar E. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon: 1830–1861* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000). For one interpretation of how the Shi'i community became sectarian, see Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁶See Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001); Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); and Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁷See Reinoud Leenders, "Nobody Having Too Much to Answer For: Laissez-Faire, Networks, and Postwar Construction in Lebanon," in *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 169–200; A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 (2001): 167–78; Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Limits of Electoral Engineering in Divided Societies: Elections in Postwar Lebanon," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 39 (2006): 635–55; Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon," *World Politics* 62 (2010): 381–421; and Nisreen Salti and Jad Chaaban, "The Role of Sectarianism in the Allocation of Public Expenditures in Postwar Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 637–55.

⁸Paul Kingston's work on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Lebanon is an exception in this respect. However, Kingston's work does not examine NGOs specifically seeking to challenge the sectarian system—the subject of one of the case studies in this article—which the authors feel provide a crucial case study for the examination of sectarian dynamics. See Paul Kingston, "Patrons, Clients and Civil Society: A Case of Environmental Politics in Postwar Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23 (2001): 55–72; and Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism: Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013). The authoritative work on the history and evolution of associational life in Lebanon is Karam Karam, *Le mouvement civile au Liban* (Paris/Aix-en-Provence: Karthala/IREMAM, 2006).

⁹For a brief historical overview of the GCL, see Sami E. Baroudi, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon: State-Labour Relations between 1992 and 1997," *Middle East Journal* 52 (1998): 531–50.

¹⁰Traboulsi, *History*, 166.

¹¹See Baroudi, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon," 534; Secretary General of the GCL (1994–99), interview with Clark, Beirut, 26 June 2006.

¹²Each federation, irrespective of its size, receives two votes in the GCL's executive council. For example, in 2000, the smallest federation, with 182 members, and the largest federation, with 8099 members, were equally represented on the executive committee of the GCL. See Muhammad Zbib and Isma'il Badran, "Tawarrum al-Ra's al-Qiyadi wa-Hazalat al-Jism al-Niqabi," *al-Safir*, 28 February 2002.

¹³Ba'thist Abdallah Al-Amin (1992–95) and SSP leader As'ad Herdan (1995–98 and 2003–04).

¹⁴See Baroudi, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon," 543. Al-Amin established a total of eight new federations, and Herdan established two federations when he assumed the labor portfolio. The two ministers together established a total of 84 new unions, although the number of unions was already 269. See 'Isam al-Jurdi, *24 Nisan 1997: Mahatat al-Inqisam fi al-Ittihad al-'Ummali al-'Amm* (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 1998), 9, 15, 16; 'Abbas Sabbagh, "al-Sulta Tuwasil Taftit al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya 'abr Tafrikh al-Ittihadat wa-l-Niqabat al-'Ummaliyya," *al-Nahar*, 11 April 2005. This tactic has continued in the post-Syria era. In 2005, after the appointment of the Hizbullah-nominated Trad Hemadé as minister of labor, seven new licenses were issued, of which four went to Amal-affiliated federations and two to Hizbullah-affiliated federations.

¹⁵See Adnan al-Haj, "Intihar al-Haraka al-Niqabiyya bayna Nisan 1997 wa-Adhar 2001," *al-Safir*, 16 March 2001.

¹⁶For the composition of this alliance, see Bilal Khbayz and Samir Abu Hawwash, "al-Ittihad al-'Ummali wa-Sinariu al-Inshiqaq," *Mulhaq al-Nahar*, 3 May 1997.

¹⁷The years 1992 to 1997 witnessed a growth in labor militancy. This was due to a deterioration in workers' living conditions during the civil war and in the first few years following the end of hostilities (1990–92). It was

also due to the election in 1993 of Abu Rizq and Yasir Ni'mi as president and secretary general, respectively, of the GCL. Baroudi, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon," 536–37; al-Jurdi, *24 Nisan 1997*, 10, 13.

¹⁸See Khbayz and Abu Hawwash, "al-Ittihad."

¹⁹See Adnan al-Haj and Isma'il al-Saghir, "Intikhabat al-Ittihad al-'Ummali al-'Amm Ta'ti bi-Hay'atayn li-l-Maktab Biri'asat Abu Rizq wa-l-Zughbi," *al-Safir*, 25 April 1997.

²⁰See Adnan al-Haj, "Hal Ta'ish Intikhabat al-Ittihad al-'Ummali al-'Amm Zuruf Intikhab Ittihad al-Janub?," *al-Safir*, 17 April 1997; and al-Jurdi, *24 Nisan 1997*, 86.

²¹See Baroudi, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon," 543.

²²The more politicized ISF units fall under the command of the Ministry of Interior, while army units come under the command of the Ministry of Defence.

²³See Husayn Ayub, "al-Habir Yastadkhir Tarikh al-Haraka al-Niqabiyya," *al-Safir*, 25 April 1997.

²⁴Secretary General of the GCL 1994–97, interview with Clark, Beirut, 26 June 2006; al-Haj and al-Saghir, "Intikhabat"; al-Jurdi, *24 Nisan 1997*, 87, 98.

²⁵Namely, Ali Hassan Khalil and Husayn Tamim.

²⁶See *al-Nahar*, 25 April 1997; and the report by Judge Hatim Madi published in *al-Nahar*, 27 February 2001. The division of the GCL into two camps was felt almost immediately after the election, when the two sides held competing May Day events approximately one week later.

²⁷See Ghassan Salibi, "al-Haraka al-'Ummaliyya: Azmat Istiqlaliyya am Azmat Dimuqratiyya?," *Mulhaq al-Nahar*, 1 May 1999.

²⁸See al-Haj, "Intihar al-Haraka al-Niqabiyya."

²⁹Hizbullah Representative to the GCL, interview with Clark, Beirut, 17 January 2005; General Syndicate for Public Drivers in Lebanon, interview with Clark, Beirut, 31 March 2005.

³⁰Each of Lebanon's thirty-seven labor federations sends two representatives to the GCL, comprising a seventy-four-person central committee, which elects a board of twelve members representing the five provinces; the board follows a quota between Muslims and Christians similar to that of the parliament. Hizbullah representative to the GCL, interview with Clark, Beirut, 17 January 2005.

³¹Hizbullah supporters were hurt the most by the ban on diesel, as most van drivers are from the Hizbullah-dominated southern suburbs.

³²Representative of the GCL, interview with Clark, 26 January 2005. While Hay al-Sillom is a relatively mixed area of Amal and Hizbullah supporters, the majority of its residents support Hizbullah.

³³See *al-Safir*, 17 June 2004.

³⁴Co-vice-president of the GCL, interview with Clark, Beirut, 21 June 2006; Hizbullah representative to the GCL, interview with Clark, Beirut, 17 January 2005.

³⁵14 March refers to the political coalition headed by Sa'ad Hariri and his Sunni Future Movement and supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia, while 8 March refers to the political coalition of Hizbullah, Amal, and the FPM and is supported by Syria and Iran.

³⁶See Sabbagh, "al-Sulta Tuwasil."

³⁷This was compared to eighteen federations in 1999. See Rasha Abu Ziki, "al-Haraka al-Niqabiyya Tusab bi-'Adwa al-Tawafuq," *al-Akhbar*, 15 May 2009.

³⁸See Adnan al-Haj, "al-Awwal min Ayar 2010: 'Ummal bi-la Niqabat am Niqabat bi-la 'Ummal?," *al-Safir*, 1 May 2010.

³⁹See Kingston, "Patrons"; idem, *Reproducing Sectarianism*.

⁴⁰See Karam Karam, "Civil Associations, Social Movements, and Political Participation in Lebanon in the 1990s," in *NGOs and Governance in the Arab World*, ed. Sarah Ben Nefissa, Nabil Abd al-Fattah, Sari Hanafi, and Carlos Milani (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 316.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²See Sami Baroudi, "Conflict and Co-operation within Lebanon's Business Community," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 (2001): 86.

⁴³See Bernhard Hillenkamp, "Civil Society in Lebanon," *Qantara* (2005), http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-593/_nr-8/i.html (accessed 25 August 2011).

⁴⁴See Suad Joseph, "Civic Myths, Citizenship, and Gender in Lebanon," in *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, ed. Suad Joseph (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 107–36; Marie Rose Zalzal, *al-Nizam al-Qanuni li-l-Tawa'if wa-l-Hayat al-Munbathiqah 'anha* (Beirut: CRTDA and IDRC, 2009); and Andre Baladi, Reine Sarkis, and the Springhints team, *Le Printemps de Interrogations: Au coeur des reformes. Enquete dans les universites et sur internet* (Beirut: Springhints and Mind the Gap, 2007).

⁴⁵As Kingston notes, many interest-based NGOs are vulnerable to sectarian elite attempts to control them through clientalist practices as they lack professionalism, secure financing, and a strong membership base. See Kingston, "Patrons."

⁴⁶Representatives from the LCW, interview with Clark, Beirut, 26 May 2010; Lara Khattab, "Civil Society in a Sectarian Context: The Women's Movement in Post-War Lebanon" (master's thesis, Lebanese American University, 2010), 103–104. Khattab's research confirms an earlier study on the LCW conducted by Iman Kabara Charani, past and present president of the LCW. See Iman Charani, *Dirasa hawl 'Amal al-Jami'iyat wa-l-Mu'assasat li-l-Majlis al-Nisa'i* (Beirut: LCW, 1996).

⁴⁷See Khattab, "Civil Society," 105. The LCW has, for example, several Hizbullah-affiliated NGOs. Representative of Shahid and director of finances on the LCW, interview with Clark, Beirut, 24 November 2004. These divisions are exacerbated by the demographic distribution of the faith-based organizations. Given that the headquarters of the LCW are located in Beirut, it is easier for Sunni and Christian NGOs to become active members of the LCW. Ultimately, this has meant a clear dominance of NGOs from the north rather than the south, where Shi'a predominate.

⁴⁸See Khattab, "Civil Society," 104–105.

⁴⁹Vice-president of the LCW, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2010; representatives of the LCW, interview by Clark, Beirut, 30 March 2005; representative of Shahid and director of finance on the LCW, interview with Clark, 24 November 2004.

⁵⁰See Elinor Bray-Collins, "Muted Voices: Women's Rights, NGOs, and the Gendered Politics of the Elite in Post-War Lebanon" (master's thesis, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 2003).

⁵¹For examples, see *ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³Representatives of the LCW, group interview with Clark, Beirut, 26 May 2010.

⁵⁴See Bray-Collins, "Muted Voices," chap. 5.

⁵⁵Khattab, "Civil Society," 108.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷See *ibid.*

⁵⁸Members of the LCW, interview with Clark, Beirut, 26 May 2010.

⁵⁹See Pamela Chrabieh, "Breaking the Vicious Cycle! Contributions of the 25–35 Lebanese Age Group," in *Breaking the Cycle*, ed. Youssef Choueiri (London: Stacey International, 2007), 69–88. One survey of 2,322 university students found that 57.4 percent support political deconfessionalization, 55.4 percent support civil marriage, 58.6 percent support a unified personal civil law, and 60.4 percent support the complete separation of civil and religious affairs. See Baladi, Sarkis, and the Springhints team, *Printemps*, 108–15.

⁶⁰Aman05, interview with Clark, Beirut, 9 April 2008.

⁶¹See Ghassan E. Moukheiber, "A Brief Report on the Freedom of Association in Lebanon," unpublished report, 2009, <http://ghassanmoukheiber.net/ByCategory.aspx?sid=9&mLang=E&Lang=E> (accessed 25 August 2011).

⁶²Ghassan E. Moukheiber, "Freedom of Association as Condition for an Effective Civic Society," unpublished report, 2009, <http://www.ghassanmoukheiber.com/showarticles.aspx?aid=28&mlang=A&lang=E> (accessed 25 August 2011).

⁶³Khaldoun Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for the Republic of Lebanon* (Beirut: CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, 2006), 74.

⁶⁴See Moukheiber, "Brief Report."

⁶⁵*Ibid.* See also Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society*, 73.

⁶⁶Moukheiber, "Brief Report"; Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society*, 77.

⁶⁷See Moukheiber, "Brief Report."

⁶⁸See Abou Assi, *Lebanese Civil Society*.

⁶⁹Representative, Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009; LADE policy analyst, interview with Clark, Beirut, 23 May 2009.

⁷⁰Samidoon representative, interview with Clark, Beirut, 25 May 2009.

⁷¹Representative, Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009; LADE policy analyst, interview with Clark, Beirut, 23 May 2009.

⁷²LADE policy analyst, interview with Clark, Beirut, 23 May 2009.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵Samidoon, group interview with Clark, Beirut, 25 May 2009; Samidoon representative, interview with Clark, Beirut, 9 April 2008.

⁷⁶See <http://www.nahnoo.org/aboutusen.html> (accessed 25 August 2011).

⁷⁷Nahnoo, interview with Clark, Beirut, 5 April 2008.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Nahnoo, interview with Salwa Maalouf on behalf of Clark, Beirut, 14 March 2009.

⁸¹Nahnoo, interview with Clark, Beirut, 5 April 2008.

⁸²Nahnoo, interview with Maalouf on behalf of Clark, Beirut, 14 March 2009.

⁸³Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009 and 4 April 2008.

⁸⁴Mustaqillun, interview with Clark, Jounieh, 11 April 2008.

⁸⁵Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009; Samidoon, group interview with Clark, Beirut, 25 May 2009; Intizarat al-Shabab, interview with Clark, Beirut, 9 April 2008.

⁸⁶Tayyar al-Mujtama' al-Madani, interview with Clark, Beirut, 8 April 2008; Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009.

⁸⁷Tayyar al-Mujtama' al-Madani, interview with Clark, Beirut, 8 April 2008

⁸⁸Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 20 May 2009.

⁸⁹Aman05, interview with Clark, Beirut, 9 April 2008; Union of Lebanese Democratic Youth, interview with Clark, Beirut, 9 April 2008; Bila Hudud, interview with Clark, Beirut, 10 April 2008; Nahwa al-Muwatiniya, interview with Clark, Beirut, 3 April 2008.

⁹⁰LADE policy analyst, interview with Clark, Beirut, 23 May 2009.

⁹¹See Varshney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," 289–91. See also Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁹²See David Waldner, *The Limits of Institutional Engineering: Lessons from Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), 16.