Shi'ite Collective Identity and the Construction of the Nation-State of Lebanon

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Abstract*: From the mid 1800s, modern Lebanon began to emerge as a state. Lebanon, as "the eternal homeland", had been accepted by the Maronites, the Sunnis and the Druze as a general principle and the foundation of nation-state construction. The Shi'ite sectarian identity based on the leading role of the traditional feudal zu'ama was challenged by Arab nationalism in the mid 1900s, and was replaced by a new sectarian identity, based on the Shi'ite political organizations and sectarian militias. This new Lebanese Shi'ite collective identity is featured by a pro-Iranian and pro-Syrian position, and has become a big challenge to the nation-state construction of Lebanon.*
Key Words: *Lebanon; Shi'ism; Collective Identity; Nation-state Construction; Hezbollah*

From the mid 1800s, modern Lebanon began to emerge as a state, and its nation-state construction process witnessed several phases: a bi-polar system of the Maronites and the Druze, a political unit dominated by the Maronites (1860-1943), a state based on the partnership of the Maronites and the Sunnis (1943-1975), and the emergence of a principle considering Lebanon as "the eternal homeland" after the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) which has been accepted by the Maronites, the Sunnis and the Druze. From the late 1800s, the Shi'ite sectarian identity based on the leading role of the traditional feudal *zu'ama* (leaders, singular form *za'im*) was vacillating between Lebanese nationalism mainly supported by the Maronites and Arab nationalism mainly among the Sunnis. This collective identity was challenged by Arab nationalism in the mid 1900s, and was replaced by a new sectarian identity, based on the Shi'ite political organizations and sectarian militias, i.e., Amal Movement and Hezbollah. This new Lebanese Shi'ite collective identity is featured by a transnational Shi'ite affiliation and leads to a pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian position. As a result, tensions to some extent could be found between it and Lebanon nation-state construction.

I. The Emergence of Modern Lebanon

The root of modern Lebanon could be traced to the mid-1800s, when Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, began to launch an attack against Othman

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Empire through Palestine in 1831 and put Lebanon under the rule of his son Ibrahim Pasha during the period of 1832-1840. Amir Bashir II of the Shihabi Family (reigned 1788-1840) in the region of Lebanon cooperated with the Egyptians, and was forced to abdicate in October 10, 1840 after the Egyptians were defeated. Then the Othman Empire began to control the region of Lebanon.

Since 1840, the peaceful coexistence between the Druze and the Maronites had been destroyed, and the increasing hostility between the two sects resulted in three sectarian wars in 1841, 1845 and 1860 successively, and "a feeling of mutual suspicion and ill will"[2] increased between them. The Othman Empire deposed Bashir III (reigned 1840-1842) in January 1842 and finished the emirate system of Shihabi Family in the region of Lebanon, so the actual independence enjoyed by Lebanon since the 16th century was terminated consequently. Mount Lebanon was divided by Othman Empire into two sectors (*qa'immaqamiyyah*): the northern one was inhabited mainly by Maronites and other Christians and was ruled by a Maronite, and the southern one was ruled by a Druze although there were a lot of Maronites in it.[3] A second war broke out between the Christians and the Druze in April 1845. The Othman Foreign Minister Shakib Afandi came to stop the war and made the division of Lebanon into two sectors a formal arrangement.

The Maronites and the Druze were the two dominant sects at that time. The former was supported by the French, while the latter was supported by the British. The division of Lebanon into two sectors satisfied neither the Maronites nor the Druze, for the former intended to unite them into a Maronite country while the latter was determined to undermine the Maronites with the Othman and British support. A third war broke out in April 1860, and a massacre of the Maronites was incited. "In this massacre eleven thousand Christians, mostly Maronites, are estimated to have perished and a hundred and fifty villages burned."[4] The sectarian clash in Lebanon also incited a massacre of Christians in Damascus. The European powers decided to intervene. Seven thousand troops were sent by France to Lebanon, and landed at Beirut in August 1860. The Othman Foreign Minister Fu'ad Pasha also came to stabilize the situation. The direct intervention of France and its protection of the Maronites resulted in the collapse of the two *qa'immaqamiyyah* arrangement in the region of Lebanon. The French required a return to the former situation before 1840, which meant the cancellation of two *qa'immaqamiyyah* arrangement and a reunification of the two sectors into one *wilayah* under the rule of a Maronite *wali*. In June 1861, Sublime Porte, France, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia signed the Reglement Organique, according to which a *mutasarrifiyyah* was set up in Mount Lebanon. The Reglement was revised in September 1864 and was signed by Italy in 1867. The new arrangement survived

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[2] Philip K, Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd., 1957), p.435.

[3] Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon* (London: Hurst & Company, First Edition, 2006), p.57.

[4] Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Tenth Edition, 1970), p.735

until the start of the First World War. The Sublime Porte unilaterally cancelled the autonomous position of Mount Lebanon on July 11, 1915, and ruled it directly till the Entente Powers' troops came in 1918.

Under the *mutasarrifiyyah* arrangement, the position of the Druze was in a continuous decline, and the dominant position of the Maronites was strengthened. The Maronites developed a Maronite sectarian nationalism in order to keep their semi-independent status, and argued that they had the right of this status because most of the inhabitants in Mount Lebanon were Maronites. "It was clear that the Maronite myth had the potentiality of a modern nation-building while the Druze hung on to the politics of feudal rights and of maintaining their communal autonomy."[5] The assumption of the governorship of the *mutasarrifiyyah* by a Catholic, and the French support of the Maronites, made the dominant role of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon firmer, and the bi-polar system of the Maronites and the Druze collapsed. It could be concluded that the national identity of Lebanese nationalism had a tendency of exclusive Maronite sectarianism since its very beginning.

According to 1861 Reglement Organique, an Administrative Council was set up to assist the governor. The Administrative Council, according to the revised Reglement in 1864, consisted of 4 Maronites, 3 Druze, 2 Orthodox, 1 Catholic, 1 Sunni Muslim, and 1 Shi'ite Muslim. It seems that "[t]he Maronites were not proportionally represented in the Council. While they constituted 57.5 percent of the total population and paid 51.2 percent of the land tax, they had only four votes in the Council."[6] However, this was not the truth. There were seven administrative districts in Mount Lebanon, and the councilors were elected by the village *shaykhs*. The Maronites constituted the majority of the districts of al-Batrun, Kisrawan, al-Matn, and Jazzin, as well as 30% of Shuf's population. All the *shaykhs* from the villages with a Maronite majority were Maronites, so the Druze, Shi'i, and Orthodox councilors from al-Matn and the Druze and Sunni councilors from Jazzin could hardly win the elections without strong Maronite support. Then the Maronites gained a far greater influence in the Administrative Council than their formal representation in it.[7] And in 1912 a new Maronite councilor was added to the Council after a revision of the Reglement Organique.

During the *mutasarrifiyyah* era, the sectarian politics began to take shape, and a model of power distribution among different sects based on Lebanese demographic composition was set up. However, sectarian politics had obvious negative effects. Firstly, the distribution of power was not balanced between different sects, for the Maronites were the real winners of this model and gained greater power and influence than their actual proportion in the population, which

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[5] Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, p.67.

[6] Engin Deniz Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon 1861-1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p.83.

[7] Ibid., p.83.

led to resent and discontent of the other sects. Secondly, the power distribution mechanism was linked with the demographic composition, which was open for continuous changes because of birth rate change, domestic and international migrations. As a result, the power distribution mechanism fixed by law was unable to meet the changes of demographic composition. Thirdly, sectarian identity was strengthened by the sectarian politics, and the identity of a united Lebanon irrespective of the sectarian differences was weakened.

Identity of Lebanon dominated by the Maronites and the sectarian politics became the foundations of Lebanon's nation-state construction, while they were also factors which weakened the same process.

II. The Shi'a of Lebanon before the French Mandate

Arab nationalism arose in Lebanon along with Lebanese nationalism, and Greater Syria, including Lebanon, was the birthplace of Arab nationalism. In this region, one group of the pioneers was "a new Christian intelligentsia based in Syria and Lebanon. Embracing teachers, journalists, editors, doctors and translators, this group disseminated its ideas by forming literary associations, publishing newspapers, and running schools on modern European lines."[8] The Arab nationalism included two elements: "separation and unification, aiming at detaching the Asian part of the Arab world from the Ottoman Empire and seeking at the same time to unify the constituent administrative units of this territory into a single state."[9] This idea reached its first peak during the Arab Revolt of 1916-1918, and "[i]n Lebanon the Sunnis became totally identified with Arabism"[10].

In the 1800s, the Shi'a in the region of Lebanon were still dominated by the sectarian identity controlled by the feudal *zu'ama*, while both Lebanese identity and nationalism developed mainly by the Maronites and Arab identity and nationalism supported mainly by the Sunnis began to emerge. "Traditionally, dominant families derived power from their ownership of land or from their social and political influence."[11] One of the most prominent feudal families was the al-As'ad family in Jabal 'Amil of southern Lebanon.

The Shi'a began to face economic and social changes from the 19th century. From 1860, the Othman Empire began to set up a new tax administration system, which influenced the power of Shi'ite feudal *zu'ama*. At the same time, some Shi'ite families expanded their power through their trade relations with the Sunni families as well as European merchants in the coastal cities of Beirut and Saida,

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[8] Youssef M. Choueiri, *Nationalism in the Middle East: The Case of Pan-Arabism*, in Youssef M. Choueiri (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., First Edition, 2005), p.301.

[9] Ibid., p.297.

[10] Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, p.105.

[11] Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Families and Clerics* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, First Edition, 2005), p.17.

and became to be known as *wujaha*. They bought lands after being wealthy and became new feudal family leaders. They developed their relations with Sunni al-Sulh family in Saida specifically.[12] In the field of education, Ahmad al-Jazzar (reigned 1770-1802) destroyed many religious schools in Jabal 'Amil during his rule. The Shi'a in Jabal 'Amil region began to be influenced by modern education in 1882, when a Sunni, Rida al-Sulh, established the first modern school in al-Nabatiyyah. The first school of modern style for the Shi'a was established in 1892. "Thus the destruction of the traditional Shi'i schools at the end of the eighteenth century, and the failure to restore such schools in the nineteenth century, forced Shi'i students to acquire their education in the new schools that had adopted the Arab Sunni curriculum."[13]

The economic, social, and educational changes, along with the traditional hostility between the feudal families, created a split among the Shi'a: *zu'ma*, led by Kamil al-As'd tried to maintain the power of traditional families, and a group of intellectuals represented by Ahamd 'Arif al-Zayn (1883-1960) came from the Shi'ite new *wujaha* families and supported Arab nationalism. As for the attitude towards the Arab Revolt, the Shi'a were divided "into two camps, one led by Kamil al-As'ad who supported the Ottomans and the other led by the Sunni leader Rida al-Sulh and the Shi'i intellectuals who supported the Arab revolt"[14].

The Othman troops retreated from Syria and Lebanon in 1918. "[T]he bulk of the Arab government's ideological support in Jabal 'Amil came from urban notables from the coastal cities of Saida and Tyre as well as an aspiring group of lettered semi-urban bourgeoisie in Nabatieh, who had undermined Kamil Bey's position as the legitimate leader of the Jabal."[15] Riyad al-Sulh (1894-1951), son of Rida al-Sulh, became the main regional supporter of the Arab nationalist government in Damascus, and was appointed the governor of Saida. Damascus adopted a pro-Sunni position in Lebanon, while France adopted a pro-Maronite position in order to impose French Mandate. Although the French were trying to win over the Shi'a in Lebanon, they considered the Maronites as their core clients in the region by reason of their policy of sectarian divide and rule first and their religious and historical relation with the Maronites second.[16]

A state of perplexity could be found among the Shi'a in Lebanon when they were facing pro-Maronite France and pro-Sunni Arab nationalist government in Damascus. Some Shi'ite intellectuals made great efforts to reach a compromise between Riyad al-Sulh and Kamil al-As'd in October 1918, but failed in achieving

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[12] Kais M. Firro, "The Shi'is in Lebanon: Between Communal 'Asabiyya and Arab Nationalism, 1908-21," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No.4, July 2006, pp.540-542.

[13] Ibid., p.540.

[14] Ibid., p.543.

[15] Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon: Community and Nation State, 1918-1943* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, First Edition, 2006), p.59.

[16] Ibid., p.72.

such a goal. Kamil al-As'ad was vacillating between the French and Damascus, he pledged his loyalty to Faysal of Damascus in October 1918, then agreed to annex Jabal 'Amil with the Greater Lebanon under French Mandate in February 1920, and changed his mind in April 1920 in Wadi al-Hujayr Conference by supporting an annexation with the Arab Kingdom on condition of an autonomy.[17]

The San Remo Conference in April 1920 imposed the French Mandate over the whole region including Syria and Lebanon. In May of the same year, the French began to suppress the Shi'a in Jabal 'Amil, and defeated Faysal's troops in Maysalun on July 24 and entered Damascus on the next day. On September 1, the French declared the establishment of the Greater Lebanon (La Grand Liban) on the basis of Mount Lebanon and annexed Beirut, Tripoli, Jabal 'Amil and Biqa' to it. Jabal 'Amil was in a marginalized status in the newly established country because the vacillating position of Shi'ite *zua'ma* between the French Mandate and Faysal's Arab Kingdom and their final decision to support the latter. "The already existing socioeconomic disparity between Jabal 'Amil and the other communities of Lebanon was significantly widened by the events of May-June 1920. Jabal 'Amil would only become part of the Grand Liban as an attachment to the main mountain, Mount Lebanon."[18]

In this phase the Shi'a had to face three challenges. Firstly, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, the Maronites and Sunnis had developed their own modern ideology respectively, through which they began to express their own political requests. The Shi'a were forced to made a difficult choice between Lebanese nationalism of the Maronites and Arab nationalism of the Sunnis, for they had not developed their own modern ideology yet, and eventually were annexed to the Greater Lebanon by the French. So the first challenge was how to develop a Shi'ite ideology reflecting their own sectarian interests. Secondly, Jabal 'Amil with a Shi'ite majority was backward in its socio-economic developments compared with the other regions in Lebanon. This marginalized status was worsened after its annexation with the Greater Lebanon. How to change this marginalized status and realize socioeconomic developments was the second challenge. Thirdly, the dominant force among the Shi'a was still the feudal *zu'ama*. This social structure could neither adapt to the social changes nor meet the political requests of the new social forces of the Shi'a. The third challenge was how to change the social structure and power distribution system to meet the ever-changing international and domestic situation and the emergence of new Shi'ite social forces. In the early 1900s, the Shi'ite sectarian identity on the basis of traditional feudal *zu'ama* was still dominant. However, the challenges weakened the position of the *zu'ama* on the one hand, and strengthened the sectarian identity

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[17] Kais M. Firro, "The Shi'is in Lebanon: Between Communal 'Asabiyya and Arab Nationalism, 1908-21," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No.4, July 2006, pp.544-545.

[18] Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon: Community and Nation State, 1918-1943*, p.84.

on the other hand, so the Shi'ite identity was in an unstable state.

III. From French Mandate to the Start of the Civil War (1920-1975)

The French sought to win the support of the Shi'a in Lebanon since 1922 in order to alienate them from the Sunni Arab nationalists. Accordingly, the Shi'ite feudal *zu'ama* changed their attitude and became supportive to the Mandate.

The Othman Empire refused to recognize the Shi'a as an independent sectarian community other than the Sunnis, so the Shi'a had to settle their legal affairs in the Sunni religious courts. In 1923 the Shi'ite deputies of Lebanese Parliament submitted a bill to grant the Shi'a a sectarian status independent of the Sunnis, which was approved. On March 22, 1924, the French High Commissioner issued a decree to grant amnesty to those Shi'ite notables who had been against French Mandate in the period of 1920-1922. On January 27, 1926, the French High Commissioner issued another decree to announce publicly that the Shi'a were an independent religious sect and granted them the right to have their own religious judges and establish their own religious courts. Then the Ja'fari Court of Cassation was established in 1928.[19] All these actions were welcomed by most of the Shi'a.

At least in 1926, "it would have been increasingly apparent to the Shi'a at this time that they could benefit more from becoming a large minority in a small state of Lebanon than by remaining a small minority in a larger, Sunni-dominated Syria. Consequently, widespread support from notables for the idea of Syrian union began to dissipate by the end of the 1920s."[20] On September 9, 1936, France signed the treaty with Syria, promising to finish French Mandate three years later while grant Lebanon independence. On November 13, the Franco-Lebanese treaty was signed and a kind of autonomy was promised for Lebanon. "At the end of 1936, the Franco-Lebanese Treaty had convinced the Shi'i zu'ama' and 'ulama' that the territorial integrity of Lebanon was irreversible, and that they should therefore intensify their struggle for a 'fair' distribution of the political and administrative posts."[21] Until the end of the 1930s, most of the Shi'ite notables had abandoned Arab nationalism appealing for a reunification with Syria, and began to support the French Mandate as well as the existence of an independent Lebanon in order to gain more sectarian interests.

Meanwhile, the Maronites and Sunnis were experiencing a fundamental change. Emile Edde, President of Lebanon (1936-1941), continued to advocate a Lebanon as the homeland for the Christians, especially as a Maronite country, while his co-religious rival Bishara Khoury, who became President of Lebanon

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[19] Kais M. Firro, "Ethnicizing the Shi'is in Mandatory Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September 2006, pp.741-742.

[20] Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Families and Clerics*, p.52.

[21] Kais M. Firro, "Ethnicizing the Shi'is in Mandatory Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September 2006, p.753.

later in 1943, hold a pragmatic position, and was allied with the Sunni leader Riyad al-Sulh, who shifted from an Arab nationalist to a pragmatist and accepted the status quo of an independent Lebanon. In 1943, they represented their own sects respectively to agree to a National Pact, promising to insure the independence of Lebanon, maintain the Arab face of Lebanon as well as its relation with the West, cooperate with all the other Arab countries, and distribute the political posts fairly along the sectarian lines: a Maronite president, a Sunni Prime Minister, and a Shi'ite Speaker, and all the parliament seats should be distributed among the Christians and Muslims according to a 6 to 5 proportion. This meant the very basis of the country has altered, from a Maronite-dominance to a Maronite-Sunni partnership. However, this partnership was not between two equal partners, as long as the Maronite president controlled most of the powers.

The Shi'ite *zu'ama* began to be integrated into the power system, but the socio-economic marginalization of the Shi'a as a whole turned from bad to worse. The social structure of the Shi'a changed as a result of the international and domestic migration, which challenged the existing power structure and sectarian identity of the Shi'a. "[F]rom the beginning of the twentieth century the weakly organized local silk industry was challenged and finally extinguished by competition from the silk of Japan and other counties, and then by the introduction of artificial fabrics."[22] From 1880, Lebanese began their emigration to North America and in the beginning of 20th century to West Africa increasingly. Many Lebanese Shi'a also moved to these two regions and became members of a newly emerging middle class. When they came back to Lebanon, they had stronger inclination to take part in the political affairs and were eager to change the existing political structure. From the 1920s, more and more Shi'ite poor peasants moved to the southern suburb of Beirut, and the migration scale became larger in the 1950s. The main reasons were that "prices for staple commodities were stagnant, state investment in the Shi'a-dominated agricultural sectors was miniscule, and there was a shift towards capital-intensive (rather than labour-intensive) citrus farming."[23] The marginalized status of the Shi'ite regions helped the migration of the Shi'a from the rural areas to the cities. They escaped the political control of the feudal *zu'ama*, and were discontent with their poor lives and low political and social position. This lower Shi'ite class became the potential object of political mobilization. Domestic and international migration made the Shi'ite middle and lower classes shift their political tendency from political quietism to active politicization.

The new regional situation made Arab nationalism the main ideology to mobilize the Shi'ite masses. After the Second World War, Arab countries achieved their independence one after another. The conflict between Arab countries and

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[22] Albert Hourani, *Introduction*, in Albert Hourani & Nadim Shehadi (ed.), *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: The Center for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1992), p.4.
[23] Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Families and Clerics*, p.34.

Israel intensified after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and Arab nationalism gained more and more advocates. Under the framework of the Cold War international geo-political structure, Arab nationalism hold a pro-Soviet position, and carried out socialist policies to some extent. "Arab nationalism acquired widespread popular support and succeeded in implementing its own radical programme in the economic, social and cultural fields. Henceforth, Arab nationalism became associated with socialism, one-party rule and the liberation of Palestine."[24]

Arab nationalism, combined with Arab socialism advocated social and economic justice and radical change of the status quo. Such a call was especially attractive to the Shi'a who were suffering a marginalized position. In Lebanon, leftist parties, such as Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), succeeded in recruiting many Shi'ite members. In the 1960s, the "party began talking about social justice and the necessity of achieving an equitable distribution of income. It also ended its ideological opposition to Arab nationalism and began preaching reconciliation between Arab nationalism and Syrian nationalism. The party also championed the Palestinian revolution and identified with the Lebanese leftist coalition headed by Kamal Jumblat."[25] In the late 1960s, Kamal Jumblatt (?-1977) organized the Grouping of National and Progressive Parties as a coalition of leftist parties, in which his Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) played a leading role. PSP was a firm supporter of Palestinians' rights and a radical caller for political reforms in Lebanon. There were more and more Shi'ite youth who joined various Palestinian movements and groups. "The rush to join Palestinian groups must be seen in the context of the late 1950s and 1960s, when the Palestinian cause offered an outlet, particularly in the wake of the 1967 war, for the frustrations of a highly politicised Shi'a population."[26]

The French policy to gain the support of the Shi'a during the French Mandate and the shift of the basis of Lebanon after its independence helped to integrate the Shi'ite feudal *zu'ama* into Lebanese political system. However, the marginalized position of the Shi'ite regions and the migration movements in the mid-twentieth century encouraged the Shi'ite middle and lower classes to make efforts to change the status quo, and at the same time Arab nationalism and Arab socialism offered them strong ideological mobilization tools. In the 1960s, the Shi'ite sectarian identity, based on the feudal families, was challenged by Arab nationalism.

IV. New Shi'ite Sectarian Identity

Arab countries' failure in the 1967 War and the death of Egyptian President

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[24] Youssef M. Choueiri, "Nationalism in the Middle East: The Case of Pan-Arabism," in Youssef M. Choueiri (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, p.308.

[25] Frank Tachau (ed.), *Political Parties of the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, First Edition, 1994), p.362.

[26] Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Families and Clerics*, p.96.

Nasser in 1970 turned Arab nationalism into a low ebb. In Lebanon, the Shi'ite identity also began to shift from Arab nationalism to a new sectarian identity.

The attractiveness of Lebanese National Movement (LNM), an alliance of PSP and other leftist and nationalist parties, to the Shi'a was diminishing continuously, for they realized that "Shi'a were regarded by many parties as foot soldiers rather than functionaries"[27]. The Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975 and many Shi'a became followers of LNM, but it was well-known that Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of PSP, only utilized them as cannon folder and "was going to fight his enemies to the last Shi'ite"[28]. Meanwhile, the attractiveness of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the Shi'a was also diminishing. After the 1948 War, many Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon, and many new ones joined them after 1967 War. A great number of PLO fighters moved from Jordan to Lebanon after the event of Black October in 1970. The total number of Palestinians in Lebanon amounted to 400 thousand. In the 1970s, PLO fighters launched cross border attacks against Israeli targets, which brought Israeli retaliations and caused the Shi'a in southern Lebanon many losses. Israel launched Operation Litani on March 14, 1978 as a retaliatory measure against PLO, and forced about 20 thousand Lebanese to leave their homes, most of whom were Shi'a. Israeli military operation created an antagonism between Lebanese Shi'ia and PLO, for the former regarded the latter's existence in southern Lebanon as the reason of their sufferings. As a result, "in those areas where the Israelis and their agents moved with ease, activists affiliated with the LNM or the PLO either left or kept a very low profile, and as result their recruitment suffered"[29].

The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) was fought mainly between two confronting fronts: the Maronites and an alliance of the Sunnis, Druze and PLO militia. Sectarian identity was inevitably strengthened because of the severe inter-sect clashes. The civilians could hardly find ways to protect their basic security except their own sectarian political organizations and militias. At this moment, many Shi'a had left the leftist parties such as PSP and also PLO, while as Muslims they could not be accepted by the Maronites, so they were in urgent need of a Shi'ite sectarian political organization and militia. Amal Movement led by Musa al-Sadr (1928-1978) met this need.

Musa al-Sadr came to Lebanon from Iran in October 1959. He founded many charitable institutions in the South to expand his influence. Thanks to his efforts, the Supreme Islamic Shi'ite Council was established in 1969, and its duty since then has been in charge of the affairs of Lebanese Shi'a. The Lebanese Shi'ite religious scholars had been competing for the authority of religious affairs since the 1930s, and the establishment of the Shi'ite communal council was postponed.

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[27] Ibid., p.93.

[28] Frank Tachau (ed.), *Political Parties of the Middle East and North Africa*, p.355.

[29] Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, First Edition, 1987), p.50.

"There is no doubt that the Shi'is in 1960s were able to overcome their factionalism thanks to the leadership of Musa al-Sadr".[30] Musa al-Sadr's success as the leader of Lebanese Shi'a helped the Shi'ite religious scholars to play a more eminent role in Lebanon. In the early and mid 1970s, Musa al-Sadr won the competition against the Shi'ite traditional *zu'ama*, whose authority and influence were weakened severely since then. After that, the most urgent challenge to Musa al-Sadr's leadership came from the leftist parties, so he founded Amal Movement in 1974 and organized a militia.

During the first year of the Civil War, Amal Movement stood with the leftist LNM in order to realize a re-distribution of power. Syria sent its troops to Lebanon in May 1976 to support the Maronites, so Amal Movement changed its position accordingly and supported Syria firmly. In 1970 Hafiz al-Asad, an Alawite officer, began to control Syria, so in the eyes of Lebanese Shi'a, Syria could be regarded as a pro-Shi'ite power. In the Arab world, there is "a total identification of Pan-Arab national-socialism with the Arab Sunni communities: in Syria this identification was first broken when the 'Alawite Hafez Assad took power in 1970, which made the Syrian Sunnis turn heavily to the Islamism of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*"[31]. Musa al-Sadr supported Syria through "his recognition in 1973 of the minority Alawi community as Twelver Shi'a. This act concomitantly bestowed religious legitimacy on the Syrian (and Alawi) regime of Hafiz al-Assad at a time when it faced rising opposition from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood."[32] Since then Musa al-Sadr's Amal Movement has always been adopting a pro-Syrian position. It was obvious that the creation of Amal Movement by Musa al-Sadr was an effort to construct a new Shi'ite identity, considering Musa al-Sadr as its leader, sharing a transnational Shi'ite affiliation with Iran and Syria Alawites, and being based on the Shi'ite political party and militia. Such a new identity not only replaced the traditional sectarian identity on the basis of Shi'ite *zu'ama*, but also responded systemically to Arab nationalist challenge.

Israeli invasion in 1982 resulted in the split of Amal Movement. Husayn al-Musawi and other dissidents unsatisfied with Amal Movement's quietist position towards Israeli invasion left and organized "Islamic Amal Movement". They received Iranian support, accepted the concept of Islamic Republic, and hold a firm anti-Israeli position. After its combination with some other Islamic organizations, the establishment of Hezbollah was declared formally in 1985, which symbolized a second stage of the construction of a new Shi'ite identity, i.e., Shi'ite sectarian identity on the basis of modern Islamism. Such an identity recognized the leading role of religious scholars, took the Shi'ite political parties

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[30] Kais M. Firro, "Ethnicizing the Shi'is in Mandatory Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September 2006, p.743.

[31] Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, p.105.

[32] Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Families and Clerics*, p.161.

and militias as its organizational basis, supported the concept of Islamic Republic and fought against Israel, and kept a close link with Iran and Syria because of the transnational Shi'ite affiliation. Amal Movement and Hezbollah could be considered as two consequential phases of the construction of the new Shi'ite sectarian identity. The identity represented by Hezbollah had a clearer ideological inclination than Amal Movement's. As a result of its success in its anti-Israeli occupation operations, Hezbollah has been more and more influential among Lebanese Shi'a.

The trans-national Shi'i affiliation had become the main factor challenging the Lebanon national-state identity. Since the Civil War ended in 1990, Lebanon national-state identity has been strengthened, for the Sunnis and Druze ceased to support Pan-Arab nationalism and abandoned the idea of an unification with Syria or a Pan-Arab unification, while the Christians gave up the idea of establishing a non-Arab Lebanon dominated by the Maronites. The suffering of the Civil War made "considering Lebanon as the eternal homeland" a widely accepted principle.[33] The supporters of Lebanon nation-state identity regarded both Israeli and Syrian military existence in Lebanon as threats to Lebanon. After Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Syria was facing a louder protesting voice in Lebanon. A confrontation between anti-Syrian Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri (Prime Minister 1992-1998, 2000-2004) and pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud (President 1998-2007) intensified.

The transnational Shi'i affiliation shared by Hezbollah and Amal Movement encouraged them to hold a firm pro-Syrian position. After al-Hariri was murdered on February 14, 2005 and Syria was forced to withdraw its troops from Lebanon afterwise, an anti-Syrian front named "March 14 Forces" was formed mainly by Future Movement under the leadership of Sa'd al-Hariri, PSP led by Walid Jumblatt and Qornah Shahwan Gathering of the Maronites, while a pro-Syrian one entitled "March 8 Forces" was formed by Amal Movement, Hizubullah and some other organizations.[34] The position of Hizullah and Amal Movement shows that they still do not accept the principle of "considering Lebanon as the eternal homeland", and a tension between Shi'ite sectarian identity and the construction of Lebanon nation-state still exists. Furthermore, Hezbollah's ideological goal of establishing an Islamic Republic in Lebanon is a potential threat to Lebanon's multi-sect political system.

After the Civil War, the Maronites, Sunnis and Druze began to recognize and accept the principle of "considering Lebanon as eternal homeland", and combine their own sectarian identities with Lebanese nation-state identity, while the Shi'a have not developed a sectarian identity combined with Lebanon nation-state identity, and the Shi'a transnational affiliation is a reason of tension between the Shi'ite sectarian and the Lebanon nation-state identity.

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[33] Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, p.139.
[34] Oren Barak, *"Don't Mention the War?" Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Winter 2007, p.68.