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The Origin of Women's Segregation in
Lebanon's Political Life
Between Patriarchy and Consociational Democracy

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ABSTRACT

This paper postulates that the overlooked role of political familialism forms the foundation for women's segregation in Lebanese politics. It focuses on internal features that characterize the dominant political parties to reveal that they are grounded on a system of political familialism which is based on patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity. As such, it argues that the deep structures of Lebanon's political system produce elements (namely patriarchal kinship politics and clientelist networks) that are inhospitable for women in politics.

Whilst political familialism is considered the root for the exclusion of women in politics, this system is augmented and enshrined by a majoritarian electoral system and a consociational model which lacks democratic qualities and enhances polarizations between the sects and sectarian hegemonic leadership; which, in turn, regenerates a fixed set of male-oriented political elites and families. As such, while adopting an electoral gender quota is necessary to enhance women's political participation, this step must be accompanied with democratization initiatives to weaken the current familial and clientelist features that dominate Lebanon's political system. Ergo, the author proposes establishing a law on political parties and an adoption of a proportional representation system as part of the institutional, electoral, and educational reforms towards further democratization.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of political participation descends further beyond voting—encompassing the right to be elected to hold office at all levels of public offices and participate in the conduct of public affairs; the freedom to assemble, organize, and speak out; and the capability to register as a nominee and campaign.¹ Political participation can thus be defined as “*the activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies of government.*”² Despite representing half of the world’s population, women are still largely absent from decision-making positions in politics. In fact, women merely comprise 22.8 percent of the globe’s national parliaments.³ Although international standards have equalized women’s and men’s rights to fully participate in all aspects of politics—in practice—women face numerous of socio-cultural, economic, legal and political challenges that restricts them from fulfilling this right.

As the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation elaborates:

Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.⁴

Women’s political participation is considered a vital indicator to the institutionalization of a functioning democracy. The quest for the equality of women’s representation in politics and the importance of women’s role in a democracy stems from a number of key postulations that consider the disparities between how both genders participate in the political process. The advocated subjects on the political agenda, policy making and implementations evidently reflect this in practice; where politics significantly affects women differently than men. Considering that the political activity often modifies gender relations, coupled with the assumption that women commonly participate in political practices as political subjects⁵—this imbalance results in a clear tendency for women to participate drastically less than men in politics as representatives in decision-making positions.

The Global Gap Index displays that The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the slowest paced region in the globe in its distance from gender parity. The Political Empowerment indicator reveals that four out of the globe’s five lowest-ranking countries on this index belong to the MENA

¹ United Nations. *Women & Elections. Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections.* March 2005.

² M.M, Conway, *Political Participation in the United States*, Washington, CQ Press, 2000.

³ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation*, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures> [accessed 23 May 2017].

⁴ UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130, *Women and political participation*, A/RES/66/130, 2011, December 19 2011, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/130&Lang=E [accessed 20 May 2017].

⁵ S. Joseph and A. Nağmābādī, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, Herndon, Brill, 2003.

region.⁶ Lebanon was branded as the 10th worst country in terms of gender equality in 2016 by The World Economic Forum. In the Political Empowerment category, Lebanon ranked 143 out of 144 surveyed countries in the world⁷—as merely three percent of women are represented in the Lebanese parliament; five percent in municipalities; and less than seven percent in the 2009 government, as the 2012 cabinet is comprised of males only.⁸

As such, in contradiction to Lebanon's image as a fairly liberal society, where modernity is a social trend, a woman's access to a political career remains alarmingly restricted. Considering the renowned educational and economic triumphs of Lebanese women, the country exhibits all the descriptions of a qualifying environment for women's political leadership. Thus, the dilemma stemming from the dramatic mismatch between women's socio-economic figures and the low participation rates in politics has been the driving force for this research. In turn, examining the key barriers and foundations that limit Lebanese women from accessing political positions is crucial to address appropriate solutions to end the exclusion of women in Lebanon's political life.

Although the participation of women in Lebanese politics has grabbed the attention of various scholars, an overwhelming majority of the studies emphasize on two main obstacles that hinder women's inclusion in politics: the political sectarian system, and the nature of Lebanon's patriarchal society. While such indicators offer useful insights, they arguably conceal other vital obstacles that may have a deeper impact on women's political participation. As such, this research seeks to contribute to the field of women's political participation by examining the role of political familialism as an obstruct that has been entirely neglected in academia.⁹

The limited number of women who have historically gained seats in Lebanon's parliamentary elections have been characterized as the 'women dressed in black'. This is because a clear pattern testifies that women who access political positions in Lebanon are largely restricted to those with blood ties (as mothers, sisters or daughters) to prominent political martyrs. Thus, in the absence of a male heir, political familialism has been the main channel for women to historically enter politics. As the 2006 UN report on the implementation of CEDAW in Lebanon has stated: "The continuing active influence of traditional factors, family allegiance, services, client networks, family or partisan political legacy determines the chances of women's success."¹⁰ The centrality of

⁶ World Economic Forum, *Performance by Region and Country*, 2016 <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/performance-by-region-and-country/> [accessed 24 May 2017].

⁷ World Economic Forum, *Lebanon*, 2016, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=LBN> [accessed 21 May 2017].

⁸ F.S. Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

⁹ M. Helou, 'Women's Political Participation in Lebanon: Gaps in Research and Approaches', *Al Raida*, Issue 145-146-147, 2014. p.74-82.

¹⁰ United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, '*Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention third periodic report of States parties due in 2006 - Lebanon**', CEDAW/C/LBN/3.

familialism and the dominance of political familialism as a traditional source of power in Lebanon calls for a closer analysis on the way it may influence or shape women's political participation.

Ergo, the thesis is designed to address the following research questions:

- *“Why is it that Lebanon's supposedly emancipated women suffer from the lowest political participation rates of women in the Arab region and in the world?”*
- *“What role does political familialism play in Lebanese politics and how does it influence women's political participation?”*

Accordingly, the research is grounded on the following hypotheses':

The origin of the segregation of women in Lebanese politics stems from the predominance of political familialism, which is based on a structure of patriarchy and masculinity. Although the consociational-power sharing formula is not the root cause of the exclusion of women in politics, it endures and augments this familial system. Consolidated by a majoritarian electoral system, polarizations between the sects and hegemonic sectarian leadership, the majority of competent women (and men) are prevented from accessing senior political positions and a fixed set of male-oriented political elites are preserved.

Hypothesis: Discrimination against Lebanese women in politics is rooted and generated by the patriarchal and familial political system. This structure is augmented and sustained by the majoritarian electoral system and the consociational-power sharing formula which enriches polarizations between the sects and hegemonic sectarian leadership.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This thesis is grounded on an extensive desk review and a qualitative, mixed methods research design, which consisted of in-depth interviews with female candidates and prominent women's rights actors, along with a focus group with politically active students. The qualitative research was conducted in Lebanon between March 2017—May 2017.

1.1.1 Field Research

The thesis has heavily relied on field research to enrich the author's knowledge on insights that were deficient in the secondary literature. This was particularly important since the impact of indicators that are postulated to form key barriers to women's political participation, namely political familialism and clientelism, have not been comprehensively explored in academia. This information was thus attained through a qualitative research design involving semi-structured, in-depth interviews with experts in the field, researchers, ten female candidates who ran for the municipal and parliamentary elections and Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh, one of the first female ministers in Lebanon. Moreover, a focus group was conducted with four politically active students (male and female) who are leading different sections of political parties in The American University of Beirut (AUB) and The University of Saint Joseph (USJ).

1.1.2 Female Candidates

The female candidates were selected for the interviews according to various indicators, including their demographic features (age and education); varying viewpoints (different party affiliations and ideologies); experience; geographical areas; and a mix between nominees who failed, won or withdrew during the campaigning process.

The semi-structured, in-depth interviews included a wide array of open questions to deeply comprehend their perspectives on the pressures they faced as female nominees for the municipality and the parliament. Beyond understanding the candidates' motives, experiences and key barriers that stood in their way once they decided to run for elections, the interviews sought to underscore on indicators that were overshadowed in literature; including the impact of political familialism. The interviewees were additionally asked about their family's political affiliations, their experiences as independent candidates or with a political party, and particular familial pressures that they experienced before, during and after the campaigning process.

1.1.3 Politically Active Students

As the young and leading generation, it was important for the researcher to benefit from the insights of young activists (male and female) who are interested in a career in Lebanese politics. As such, the students were asked about their family's role in politics; what they considered to be the key obstacles they would face to access political positions in Lebanon; their outlook on Lebanon's traditional sources of power and democracy; and their perception on the main reasons why women are underrepresented in politics.

1.1.4 Limitations

The author is fully aware that this research has a number of limitations. Due to time-constraints and shortage of contacts, the chosen sample is not sufficiently representative of the entire population. This is not only because of the relatively small size of the sample, but also since the interviews with the experts from the women's movement and the focus group with the students from AUB and USJ are more representative of an urban, highly educated, middle-class group. Nonetheless, the research design (in the form of qualitative, in-depth interviews and a focus group) has enabled the author to gain rich and detailed knowledge which has provided a comprehensive guide to the analysis as a supplement to the secondary readings. Taking this into consideration, the thesis can be considered an initial contribution to the study of political familialism and women's political participation, which the author seeks to enlarge in a comparative study in the upcoming future.

1.2 RELATED LITERATURE

Following the halt of the Lebanese civil war, the 1990s witnessed a sharp revival of interest in boosting the political participation of women in Lebanon. The expansion of women's rights organizations and NGOs, coupled with the promise of democratization, fuelled women with high hopes on their inclusion and representation in political positions in post-war Lebanon.¹¹ Yet, despite their loud demands, efforts and vast international funds, meaningful advances in this sector have not been met, and the demand for a female quota system was not adopted. In order to identify appropriate solutions to end the exclusion of women in politics, numerous scholars have naturally questioned: 'why is it that female representation in Lebanese politics continues to be exceptionally low?'

¹¹ Helou, 'Women's Political Participation in Lebanon: Gaps in Research and Approaches', p.74-82.

According to what the literature pinpoints to, the most widely emphasized indicator that hinders women's political participation is Lebanon's political confessionalism.¹² The core argument postulates that this is due to the prevailing link between discrimination against women and the sectarian system. This is evident in Lebanon's 15 separate personal status laws that are delegated to religious courts which discriminate against women across all sects in crucial aspects of their lives.¹³ Furthermore, studies suggest that the male-dominated personal status court system reinforces patriarchy in Lebanese society (among men and women)¹⁴, since it consolidates the patriarchal notion that women are subordinates to men—which naturally extends to politics. As such, scholars argue that the abolishment of the sectarian system is the only way Lebanese women can achieve gender equality and thus enhance their political participation rates.

Whilst such revelations provide useful and relevant insights, Marguerite Helou's article, '*Women's Political Participation in Lebanon: Gaps in Research and Approaches*', proposes that previous research concerning this topic suffers from considerable gaps. This is arguably because former studies have highlighted on a number of key barriers to political participation at the expense of others. For Helou, this has not only narrowed the understanding of the topic, but has also led to addressing ineffective solutions to the problem. Thus, Helou calls for a further examination on two overlooked factors she considers to be more harmful than the consociational system in place: the role of political familialism and clientelism—which are strengthened by the conflictual, heterogeneous culture and the rooted patriarchal culture. As such, Helou's paper was the first preliminary inspiration for this research, and in turn, the utmost contributor in forming a hypothesis.

Although the literature signifies a historical pattern which indicates that having blood ties with a male political figure is the main channel for women to access political positions in the absence of a male heir in the family; none of the previous studies have focused on the critical role of political familialism on women's political participation in Lebanon. To comprehend the prevalence of political familialism in Lebanese politics, the research heavily relied on Suad Joseph's extensive work in Lebanon regarding political familialism, citizenship, family law and the institutionalization of the family in relation to gender.

Moreover, the research consulted the writings of Imad Salamey and Michael C. Hudson to enrich the author's knowledge on the nature of the consociational model of democracy in Lebanon and

¹² P. Kingston, 'Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience', in *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics*, 2011; S. Saadeh, '*Women in Lebanese Politics: Underlying Causes of Women's Lack of Representation in Lebanese Politics*', In *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics*, 2011; F. Botros '*Analytical reading in political sectarianism: the electoral system as a model*', 2005, www.uldroit3.com/pdf/fouadbotros.doc [accessed 5 May 2017].

¹³ S. Saadeh, '*Women in Lebanese Politics: Underlying Causes of Women's Lack of Representation in Lebanese Politics*', In *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics*, 2011.

¹⁴ M., Helou, '*Lebanese municipal elections 1998: The struggle of democracy in local structures*', Beirut, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 1999.

its influence on the political context. On the other hand, Dr. Hassan Krayem's work facilitated comprehending the outcomes of the Ta'if Accord following the civil war and its impact on the polarization between the sects and the surge in hegemonic sectarian leadership.

Due to the pivotal role of political parties as a key channel to enhance women's political participation, Fatima Sbaity Kassem's book, *'Party Politics, Religion, and Women's Leadership'*, was an invaluable resource. The book details party-level characteristics in Lebanon and their impact on women's leadership and participation within the parties' inner structures. However, the book's scope does not detail complicated internal features within the political blocks in Lebanon, namely the role of clientelism and patronage networks within the political parties on women's leadership.

Sharabi's theory on the patriarchal nature of Lebanese society, with his book, *'Neopatriarchy'*, has proven to be extremely useful in grasping the overall societal and patriarchal character of the Arab region from a gender-perspective. The book describes the ways social, cultural and economic transformations in the Arab world have led to a modernized type of patriarchy: which is reflected in the internal structures of the family, state and broad society. The framework stipulated by Sharabi has been deployed throughout the analysis of this paper.

The research also utilized information from various reports and studies published by local women's rights organizations and governmental agencies (including the Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues, Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, and National Commission for Lebanese Women) along with reports from CEDAW, UN Women, Human Rights Watch, The National Democratic Institute and Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

CHAPTER 2: THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN LEBANON

2.1 THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Lebanon's Constitution does not hold any discriminatory texts against the full rights of women and equality between genders. As exhibited in Articles 7 and 12 below, the Constitution explicitly enshrines all Lebanese citizens' equality before the law. Furthermore, an amendment to the constitutional law in 1990 asserted Lebanon's consecration to human rights by applying to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter 'in all domains without exception' to the level of a constitutional obligation.

Article 7 of the Lebanese Constitution guarantees all its citizens full political rights, declaring:

All Lebanese shall be equal before the law. They shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction.¹⁵

Article 12 additionally upholds the right for all citizens to occupy public positions, stating:

Every Lebanese shall be the right to hold public office, no preference shall be made except on the basis of merit and competence, according to the conditions established by law. A special statute shall guarantee the rights of civil service in the departments to which they belong.¹⁶

Nonetheless, Article 9 of the Constitution contradicts the equality of Lebanese citizens it concedes in Article 7; since it delegates all personal status issues (including inheritance, divorce, marriage and custody) to different religious courts, depending on a citizen's sect.¹⁷ As Human Rights Watch have affirmed, Lebanon's religion-based personal laws do not guarantee equality between women and men and discriminate against women differently across all religions.¹⁸

2.1.1 International Treaties and State Compliance

The Lebanese state has ratified a number of conventions and declarations that commit to the fulfilment and protection of women's rights. Ergo, on the surface, Lebanon is perceived to have taken progressive steps to eliminate laws that discriminate against women.

¹⁵ The Lebanese Constitution, Article 7.

¹⁶ The Lebanese Constitution, Article 12.

¹⁷ The Lebanese Constitution, Article 9.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Lebanon: Laws Discriminate Against Women*, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/19/lebanon-laws-discriminate-against-women> [accessed 16 May 2017].

In 1955, the Lebanese government has ratified the Convention of Political Rights of Women, which demands states to take steps to preserve the right for women to vote, be eligible for elections and nominations in all fields, and hold public office on equal terms with men. Other important conventions ratified by Lebanon include the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The Lebanese state has additionally ratified the 1996 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), albeit with reservations concerning Articles 9, 16, and 29 (which deal with personal status laws).¹⁹ CEDAW is considered to be an “international bill of rights for women”²⁰, as it demands states to undertake measures to end discrimination against women in all forms. The Convention defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.²¹ The reservations the Lebanese state expressed in CEDAW underline discriminatory features of Lebanese laws that contradict the essential aim of the convention: to eliminate discrimination against women; displaying obstacles to the implementation of such conventions despite their ratification (*see Appendix V*).

Recent instruments have also provided international legitimacy to the pivotal role women must play in politics, particularly in areas of armed conflicts or post conflict situations. Through the U.N Security Resolution 1325 in 2000, an international legal framework was produced to address the disproportionate impact of war on women, and the need for women to be critical actors in conflict resolution, conflict management and peace building.²² As males and females experience war differently, it is thus vital to increase women’s participation politically and provide their perspectives on strategies towards peacebuilding. While the Lebanese state fits in such a category and refers to international legitimacy in various documents, women’s political participation remains dismally low and the demand for a female quota system has not been adopted.

2.1.2 Discriminative National Laws

It may be argued that the practical application of the civil and political rights of women preserved in constitutional and legal frameworks in Lebanon do not reflect the human rights situation faced by women in practice. The reservations in CEDAW, with respect to nationality and citizenship (Article 9) and marriage and family relations (Article 16), are clearly mirrored in Lebanon’s national laws; which do not enshrine the equality between women and men. For instance,

¹⁹ W. Hussein, ‘The ‘Female Quota’ in Lebanon: A Temporary Solution to a Chronic Political Problem’, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2017, <https://lb.boell.org/en/2017/02/17/female-quota-lebanon-temporary-solution-chronic-political-problem> [accessed 22 May 2017].

²⁰ UN Women, *Overview of the Convention*, 2009, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> [accessed 15 May 2017].

²¹ Ibid.

²² A. Barrow, ‘UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820: constructing gender in armed conflict and international humanitarian law’, *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 92, no. 877, 2010.

Lebanon's Nationality Law does not permit Lebanese women to pass their nationality to their foreign spouse and children—a condition which does not apply to Lebanese men.

With a lack of an optional civil code and a presence of personal laws that are controlled by self-ruling religious courts with little or no government oversight, personal laws often issue patriarchal rulings that discriminate against women.²³ As the courts identify the male as the head of the household, Lebanese women suffer from various laws that violate their human rights—from initiating divorce, securing property rights from a previous spouse, to rights related to their children after terminating a marriage.²⁴ In regard to women's political rights, a woman's civil registration, and consequently her electoral area, is registered in the records of her father or husband. Thus, when a woman's registration is transferred to her husband's area, this does not only demotivate women to run for municipality elections (which are considered a vital training for public engagement), but also weakens their ability to win.

2.2 WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Consisting of 18 officially recognized religious sects, the Lebanese population is projected at 4.7 million, 51 percent of which are females. Lebanese women are renowned for holding a noteworthy socio-economic profile in the educational, economic and professional fields (*see Table I*). In all educational domains, females recorded higher enrolment levels than males. In fact, for the past twenty years, there has been a higher percentage of women enrolled at university than men—today, 53 percent of graduates at university are female, while 47 percent are male graduates.

According to an interview with Marguerite Helou, the education rates of Lebanese women have significantly improved since the government has opened regional sections of Lebanese universities outside of Beirut after the 1970s; beforehand, most of the universities, if not all, were located in the Beirut area. Thus, to continue their education, females had to commute to Beirut on a daily basis or live on their own (which was accepted by very few families).²⁵ Additionally, in contrast to the past, Lebanese women are no longer confined to stereotypical or 'feminized' educational fields. For instance, women represent 60 percent of graduates in sciences; over 24 percent of graduates in medicine, pharmacy and engineering; and 20 percent are graduates in law.²⁶

²³ D. Khoury, *Women's political participation in Lebanon*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2013, <https://lb.boell.org/en/2013/09/23/womens-political-participation-lebanon> [accessed 23 May 2017].

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Lebanon: Laws Discriminate Against Women*, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/19/lebanon-laws-discriminate-against-women> [accessed 16 May 2017].

²⁵ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

²⁶ P. Lazzarini, 'Addressing Silent Violence', *The Daily Star*, 25 November 2016, <https://www.pressreader.com/lebanon/the-daily-star-lebanon/20161125/281616714969717> [accessed 20 May 2017].

Though women are largely marginalized in the economic sphere, as their economic participation rates merely equate to 27 percent in comparison to 73 percent with men,²⁷ Lebanese women have clearly advanced within the economic field. Today, 30 percent of women in Lebanon are administrators, 39 percent are specialists and professionals, and 9 percent are executives and managers in the private sector.²⁸ Lebanese women are also elected in professional associations as presidents and partners of executive committees of engineers, pharmacist and lawyers orders.²⁹

Table I: Socio-Economic and Political Profile of Lebanese Women

Education, 2007	Economic Participation, 2008					Political Participation, 2010	
	(Rates; % shares of total)					(% shares in total)	
<i>Higher Education (Female /male ratio)</i>	<i>Female economic activity rate (15 years+)</i>	<i>Administrators</i>	<i>Specialists & professionals</i>	<i>Executives & Managers</i>	<i>Judges</i>	<i>MPs (4/128)</i>	<i>Ministers (2/30)</i>
1.2	30.7	28.8	39	9	37	3.1	6.7

Source: F.S.Kassem, 'Party Variation in Religiosity & Women's Leadership: Lebanon in Comparative Perspective', PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2011.

Dr. Fahmieh Sharafeddine noted that in the past, women's rights organizations used to presume that the problem of the low political participation rates was rooted in Lebanese women and their educational orientation to theoretical majors, such as history and social sciences. Today, although the situation has significantly improved, as women's educational choices now correlate to work opportunities and male-dominated industries, the participation rates of women in politics are still alarmingly low.³⁰ Hence, given such noteworthy improvements in the socio-economic profile of Lebanese women, it is puzzling that such investments are not being translated into a comparable representation in the political sphere. In countries like Syria, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Sudan and Jordan, where women rank lower in educational and economic participation, female parliamentary representation is far higher than in Lebanon.³¹

²⁷ Central Administration of Statistics, *Women in Lebanon in Figures*, 2014
<http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PressRoom/Women%20in%20Lebanon_Dr.%20Maral%20Tutelian_Grand%20Sera il%2023%20Avril%202014.pdf> [accessed 13 May 2017].

²⁸ F.S. Kassem, *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Interview with Dr Fahmieh Sharafeddine

³¹ Kassem, *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*.

Such dismal political participation rates also neglect the active participation of Lebanese women in civil society and their important historical role as political actors in direct or indirect forms of activism for political, national and feminist struggles. Whether these took the form of leading mobilization movements, educational campaigns, hunger strikes or armed resistance against mandate regimes and occupiers (which exposed women to imprisonment and violence even to men),³² women were yet still excluded from decision-making positions in political parties.

³² H. Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN A SECTARIAN CONTEXT

3.1 OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Prior to 1952, Lebanese women's political rights were not secured, with limitations on their participation in electoral campaigns, protest activities and as indirect advisors for their husbands and sons.³³ Nineteen years earlier than Switzerland, however, Lebanese women attained their suffrage rights in 1952 and Lebanon became one of the first countries in the Arab region to guarantee women the right to vote and participate fully in politics.³⁴

Despite the progress Lebanese women are renowned for in the educational, professional and social fields, Lebanon paradoxically suffers from the lowest rates of women's political participation in the region. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in 2017, Lebanon ranked 185th out of 193 countries in the world's classification of female representation in parliament, with 3.1 percent of women in parliament,³⁵ equivalent to The Islamic Republic of Iran (3.1 percent) and side by side with Bahrain (2.7 percent).³⁶ Lebanon also significantly lags behind more conservative countries in the Arab world, including Kuwait (6.2 percent), Iraq (25 percent) and Jordan (12 percent). Moreover, women merely represented 4.7 percent in the 2010 municipalities, and 6.7 percent in the 2009 cabinet (which fell to zero in 2011).³⁷

Indeed, as The National Democratic Institute have rightly observed in the 2009 parliamentary elections:

The level of women's representation in Lebanon's Parliament falls below international norms. Even within the Arab world, Lebanon has one of the lowest levels of women's political participation.³⁸

Since 1952 and 1990, the history of Lebanese women's political participation in the parliament was marked for being relatively non-existent, albeit there were two exemptions: Mrs. Myrna Al Boustani, who filled the position of her political father who died in 1965; and Mrs. Nayla Moawad,

³³ M. Helou, 'Women's Political Participation in Lebanon: Gaps in Research and Approaches'.

³⁴ W. Hussein, *The 'Female Quota' in Lebanon: A Temporary Solution to a Chronic Political Problem*, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2017, <https://lb.boell.org/en/2017/02/17/female-quota-lebanon-temporary-solution-chronic-political-problem> [accessed 22 May 2017].

³⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments*, 2017, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> [accessed 16 May 2017].

³⁶ M. Alami, *Parliamentary presence sticking point for Lebanon's women*, Al Monitor, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/lebanon-women-access-parliament-death-relative.html> [accessed 20 May 2017].

³⁷ Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*.

³⁸ National Democratic Institute, *Final Report on the Lebanese Parliamentary Election*, June 2009, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Lebanese_Elections_Report_2009.pdf [accessed 23 May 2017].

who was appointed in 1991 to compensate a vacant seat after her husband, President Rene Moawad was assassinated. Between 1992 and 2009, three to four women won in each of the five successive parliamentary elections; excluding the 2005 parliament where women held six seats (*see Appendix IV*). In the current Lebanese parliament, women merely occupy four out of 128 seats—a decline from 2005 to 2009 (*see Table II*).³⁹

As the history of the Lebanese government testifies, the first year a woman served in any Lebanese government was in 2004; since then, not further than one or two women held a governmental position.⁴⁰ The representation of women in municipality elections at the local level is also extremely low. Between 1953 and 1975, during the eruption of the civil war, women’s representation was limited to a few municipalities. Although the number of female candidates in the municipality surged from 206 in 2004 to 536 in the 2009 elections, the percentage never exceeded five percent of the total candidates (*see Table II*).

Table II: Female Nominees for Parliament (2005 and 2009) versus the Municipalities (2004 and 2009) (%)

	<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>Candidates</i>		<i>Winners</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Candidates</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Candidates</i>
<i>Parliamentary elections 2005</i>	128	14	3.5	6	4.7
<i>Parliamentary elections 2009</i>	128	12	2.0	4	3.1
<i>Municipal elections 2004</i>	8976	514	2.8	206	2.3
<i>Municipal elections 2009</i>	11424	1346	5.6	536	4.7

Source: F.S. Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women’s Leadership*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

It is important to note that statistics regarding the participation of men and women in national and local elections since 1953 expose a slim difference (2-3 percent) between males and females in Lebanon.⁴¹ However, when one examines the percentage of women running for national and local elections since 1953—the results entirely alter—as they have never surpassed three percent of the total number of candidates. This is in exception to the last parliamentary elections (which were postponed in 2013), where the percentage of female candidates was 10 percent.⁴²

³⁹ M. Helou, ‘Gender Quotas and Parliamentary Representation’, *Al Raida*, Issue 126-127, 2009, p. 2-5.

⁴⁰ Hussein, ‘The ‘Female Quota’ in Lebanon: A Temporary Solution to a Chronic Political Problem’.

⁴¹ Statistics Lebanon, *Lebanese Elections 2009*, Beirut, Statistics Lebanon, 2009.

⁴² Helou, ‘Women’s Political Participation in Lebanon: Gaps in Research and Approaches’.

3.2 LEBANON'S CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

In recognition of Lebanon's heterogeneous society that is deeply divided on sectarian lines, the political system has taken the form of a consociational framework of democratic governance; designed as a necessary system for a democracy in an environment with a complex social diversity like Lebanon's. According to Helou, Lebanon's heterogeneous society is characterized by being divided into various groups that disagree on basic issues. It is therefore important to acknowledge that Lebanon's heterogeneous society is not only branded as having different cultures, but conflictual ones.⁴³

Ergo, grounded on the prevalence of clear social cleavages, public consensus on governmental grand coalition, and multiple equilibrium of power between different groups within the country, the 1943 Lebanese National Covenant formed a system of consociationalism with a power-sharing formula between the different confessions in the state.⁴⁴ As a type of democracy that is adapted by countries that are "deeply divided into distinct religious, ethnic, racial, or regional segments"⁴⁵, a consociational democracy is defined by Lijphart as a "government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy."⁴⁶ Lijphart categorized consociational democracies as encompassing four main pillars: a grand coalition, proportional representation, a mutual veto, and segmental autonomy.⁴⁷

As such, in Lebanon's context, the consociational system allocated political and administrative functions to Lebanon's major religious sects: where the presidency is assigned to a Christian Maronite, the prime minister office for a Muslim Sunni and the Speakership to a Muslim Shi'ite. The confessions were allocated according to the proportional principle of five Muslims to every six appointed Christians.⁴⁸

Indeed, the consociational democracy model in Lebanon has facilitated in preventing conflict between the sects—particularly following The Ta'if accords, which added amendments to the Lebanese constitution to enshrine the confessional system after a bloody civil war between various confessional communities for 15 years. However, the power-sharing formula in Lebanon after the Ta'if agreement has paradoxically spread the seeds for "a self-perpetuating capture of the state by a political sectarian elite that both lacks national accountability and undermines government

⁴³ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

⁴⁴ I. Salamey, 'Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Options', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 14, Number 2, 2009.

⁴⁵ S. Saurugger, 'Consociationalism', *Enclopaedia Britannica*, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/consociationalism> [accessed at 23 May 2017].

⁴⁶ A. Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1969.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Salamey, 'Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Options'.

commitment to the public good.”⁴⁹

This may not be essentially because of the consociational model itself, but rather due to the way it functioned after the circumstances of the civil war; which has deepened the polarizations between the Lebanese sects and enhanced sectarian hegemonic leadership (Hareeri over the Sunni community; Jumblatt over the Druze community; and Hezbollah over the Shia community). In fact, in pre-war Lebanon, from 1943 until 1975, the consociational model was considered to be successful, and as Hudson suggests, political leadership was not formed according to one’s sect:

During the relatively tranquil periods, the President of the Republic, although a Maronite, also enjoyed widespread support from the Muslim communities. But in postwar Lebanon executive power is distributed among a "troika" whose leaders are more narrowly identified with their respective sectarian constituency.⁵⁰

Strengthened by an electoral list-based majority system within districts of a small size (that erodes independent and non-sectarian oppositions), the confessional elites are capable of securing electoral victories across sectarian lines and dividing public offices and resources according to their interests. In this sense, the way the consociational formula in post-war Lebanon has been functioning—which has deepened polarization between the sects and political hegemony—plays a key role in preserving and reinforcing a static set of political elites and families.

3.2.1 Women’s Rights in a Sectarian Context

The puzzling underrepresentation of women in the Lebanese political sphere in Lebanon has prompted scholarly interest and studies since the mid-nineties to identify the key obstacles that hinder women’s access to decision-making positions. These studies have largely concluded that the sectarian political system and the way it distributes power based on confessional quotas is considered a key obstacle that obstructs women’s political participation.⁵¹ A common hypothesis suggests that in a sectarian political system, women do not only face the dilemma of being selected as candidates in a patriarchal political sphere; as belonging to a sect that only has a few seats in the parliament makes a candidate’s chances relatively non-existent.⁵² However, this is arguably an issue that discriminates against women and men, simultaneously, depending on their sect.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ M.C. Hudson, ‘Lebanon After Tai’f: Another Reform Opportunity Lost?’ *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.1, 1999.

⁵¹ Kingston, ‘Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience’; Saadeh, ‘*Women in Lebanese Politics: Underlying Causes of Women’s Lack of Representation in Lebanese Politics*’; Khoury, *Women’s political participation in Lebanon*.

⁵² Khoury, *Women’s political participation in Lebanon*.

A strong argument postulates that institutionally, the roots of sectarianism conflict with women's rights and their interests. This is largely because attaining women's full rights in Lebanon would threaten the basis of the sectarian system and the correlation between sectarian and political interests.⁵³ This is evident in the demand to demolish the personal status laws, which limit the attainment of women's full rights, and compensating it with a civil personal status law; as it is considered a call that would topple the entire sectarian regime. Likewise, the demand to attain Lebanese women's right to pass their nationality to their children and foreign husbands would endanger the demographic distribution that the sectarian system is founded upon. Hence, excluding women who would be competent at delivering change from high decision-making positions is arguably 'safer' for maintaining the current political sectarian system and status quo.

Moreover, as The CEDAW Report of 2014 remarked, the confessional political system reinforces sectarian anxieties and mobilizes citizens within "sectarian frameworks that are always ready to confront one another"⁵⁴; which naturally makes the issue of women's rights a secondary problem in the political agenda. In this sense, women's equality becomes subordinate to the party's sectarian priorities that are treated as existential. Helou supplements this idea by linking it with the notion that Lebanon is a heterogeneous society with a conflictual political culture. Consequently, every single issue, no matter how trivial, becomes high politics; as the political debates mainly focus on identity politics—such as the survival of the sect, the concern of demographics, and the threat of identity and culture. In an interview with Helou, she stated:

When everything is seen from the interest of the sect's perspective, women's rights and human rights issues are pushed to the backstage, and women accept this. In a study I have done on women's political culture versus men's political culture in 2000, I found that women's position is the same as the men of their sect, rather than as women. They are regenerating the culture that has been working against them.⁵⁵

This was parallel with Wafaa' Dikah Hamze's experience in 2004 as one of the first female ministers in Lebanon, as she stated that the major difficulty she faced concerned passing laws that advocate for women's right; since many politicians did not view women's issues to be a priority.⁵⁶ As Nayla Moawad, a previous member of parliament, has formerly affirmed, "The quota system that already prevails in the Lebanese parliament and that has been inherited from the Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, complicates women's role in politics."⁵⁷

⁵³ M. Helou, 'Study on Advocacy for the Adoption of a Quota for Women in Electoral Law', for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Lebanon Project financed by the EU, 2016.

⁵⁴ United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention Fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2014 - Lebanon*', CEDAW/C/LBN/4-5.

⁵⁵ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

⁵⁶ Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh.

⁵⁷ Alami, 'Parliamentary presence sticking point for Lebanon's women'.

Though this hypothesis is largely factual, it is noteworthy to recall that the discrimination stemming from this power-sharing formula does not only thwart women's role and issues in politics, as it also restricts many politically competent and driven men who strive for the same political aspirations. On the other hand, while the impact of the power-sharing formula on women's political participation has been underscored in literature, other indicators that arguably have a stronger role have been entirely overshadowed. For Helou, the root of the problem does not necessarily lie in the political sectarian formula; rather, it stems from political familialism and clientelism, which are embedded within the dominant political parties and the different sects. Their role is additionally consolidated by the patriarchal culture that extends to politics and the failure of the women's movement to create the mass required, as they have not been able to "transcend the sectarian borders."⁵⁸

3.3 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN POLITICAL PARTIES

It is well-established that political parties play a key role in increasing women's political participation, as they are the most common channel for candidates to get elected. This is naturally the case since parties choose the candidates' nominations, provide their base of electoral support, and financially assist candidates during or after the election campaign. Running independently, without the support of a political party, is a far riskier and challenging route to win elections.⁵⁹ All female candidates who ran as independent have never won in parliamentary elections to date in Lebanon; increasing the evidence on political parties' vital role in supporting women's leadership (*see Table III*).

Alas, political parties in Lebanon mirror the minor role played by women in politics. A nationwide study conducted by the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering revealed serious weaknesses in political parties concerning promoting women's participation. By examining six out of 12 active political parties (the Future Movement, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, Hezbollah, the Phalange Party and the Lebanese Communist Party), the study showed that merely one or two women were represented in each party's leadership body.⁶⁰ As Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh has noted, although women participate equally in voting for candidates in political parties, their role is restricted within their electoral power and the parties' political campaigns, as political blocks do not nominate women within their leadership or lists.⁶¹

Between 1990s and 2013, membership of women in Lebanese political parties never surpassed eight percent, according to national surveys.⁶² Such allegations may be rationalized in the ways women have historically participated in political parties, which has been limited to three main

⁵⁸ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

⁵⁹ United Nations. *Women & Elections. Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections*. March 2005.

⁶⁰ Alami, 'Parliamentary presence sticking point for Lebanon's women'.

⁶¹ Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh.

⁶² Results of the five International Republican Institute (IRI) surveys by Statistics Lebanon between 2006-2009.

forms: 1) providing traditional forms of support for the political parties, 2) being involved in women's committees within the political parties, and 3) initiating to integrate into the decision-making apparatus of the party.⁶³

The Lebanese government itself also reflects the male-centered orientation of politics in Lebanon and the dilemmas concerning women's political participation. This is evident in the fact that since 1943, Lebanon had 74 governments – yet, merely six included women in them.⁶⁴ Vicky Zwein, elected to represent Sin el Fil Municipality, stressed that these numbers disclose that the problem stems from the parties' lack of will to enhance women's participation:

One can say that the government is not elected, but appointed, as they name ministers from their political party. Thus, they can name female ministers or male ministers – it is as simple as that. Since only six governments within the last 74 represented one or two women in them, these figures reveal that we are talking about numbers that are not ordinary; which means that there is no political will to have women in government.⁶⁵

Marguerite Helou shares a parallel view on the absence of a political will within the current dominant political parties to enhance the participation of women in politics. For Helou, this exhibits that the root of the problem stems from the sects and political parties themselves. Even the Progressive Socialist party, which considers itself the most modern and leftist political party in Lebanon, has yet to nominate any female candidates. In fact, secular parties of the least religiosity are parallel to the extremist parties of highest religiosity in the ways they do not nominate Lebanese women to parliament.⁶⁶ The parties' uncommitted action to gender equality in the political sphere is additionally revealed in their lack of will to adopt measures to introduce internal and electoral female quotas to boost women's representation in public office.

It is important to however note that the characteristics of political parties in Lebanon lack common traits that are found in most Western democracies. Due to the sectarian political system in place, the parties rely at gaining support through sectarian lines, rather than programs or ideologies. The confessional political system has also nurtured political debates that focus on topics of power sharing and demographics; restricting the chances for political competition. As it is often the case in post-conflict countries, political blocks in Lebanon are centered on hegemonic leadership and “prominent personalities associated with a faction in conflict than on issue-focused platforms and programmes”⁶⁷, which makes it more challenging for women to arise as political leaders. As such, the confessional system has transformed political parties to political machines not only for their

⁶³ Kingston, ‘*Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience*’.

⁶⁴ Interview with Vicky Zwein.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*.

⁶⁷ United Nations. *Women & Elections. Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections*.

confession, but for a number of powerful and charismatic zu'ama of the various sectarian communities.

3.3.1 Predominance of Zu'ama Clientelism

Zu'ama can be defined as a group of traditional political leaders that enforce a system of utmost allegiance and loyalty (including support in election times) by a certain family to a certain za'im, in exchange for services and access to powerbrokers.⁶⁸ Through a network of middle men, these connections assemble meetings, establish contacts, mobilize, and pledge the political loyalty and votes of individuals and families during the elections. In exchange, the middle men transfer goods and social services between the za'im and his clients.⁶⁹

In this sense, zu'ama heavily rely on patronage and clientelist practices to maintain their power, as Kassem elaborates:

Beyond the confessional identity that brings constituents together, the locomotive or driving force behind the formation of parties lies in the self-serving interests of political leaders for electoral power, patronage, and clientelism. Feudal or “rentier” type clientilistic behavior keeps the party in the political arena, as the leader uses his affluence for buying votes or offering financial and in-kind incentives to secure higher turnout.⁷⁰

This political environment, which is embedded on patronage networks, reinforces the key role of major families within each sect. The role of powerful families does not only lie in consulting with the za'im to access public resources, but also to employ and mobilize their family members for their political patron.⁷¹ This is clearly exhibited when examining how most political parties are grounded on familial commitments and loyalty to the leader (the za'im), where political allegiances pass from generation to another.⁷² For instance, Amin Gemayel from the Phalange Party, Walid Jumblatt from the Progressive Socialist Party, and Dani Shamun from the National Liberal Party have all inherited their fathers' political roles.⁷³

In fact, it is rather common for the same members of the family to hold office in the same party for decades—indicating that political familialism is an integral feature of the Lebanese political parties and zu'ama clientelism. As such, the family patriarchs are crucial to the patronage networks which the sectarian elites rely on to maintain their power. Given that the structure of families are

⁶⁸ J. C. Rolland, *Lebanon: Current Issues and Background*, New York, Nova Science Pub Inc, 2003.

⁶⁹ J. Helou, 'Policy Overcomes Confessional Hurdles: A Policy Strategy Tackles Challenges in the Segmented Society and State of Lebanon', *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, Vol.1, No. 4.

⁷⁰ Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*.

⁷¹ L. Khattab, 'Civil Society in a Sectarian Context: The Women's Movement in Post-War Lebanon', Masters Thesis, Lebanese American University, 2010.

⁷² Khoury, *Women's political participation in Lebanon*.

⁷³ Rolland, *Lebanon: Current Issues and Background*.

patriarchal in nature, “men are privileged over women in bargaining with political patrons which cements men’s control over their kin and keeps women in a subordinate position.”⁷⁴ In this respect, zu’ama clientelism in Lebanon is grounded on patriarchal kinship and political familialism, where women are naturally excluded.

Zu’ama clientelism, patronage and *wastah*—the ability to gain access to a power broker—can be viewed as a mark rooted in feudal Lebanon and a common feature in heterogeneous societies. In feudal times, the lord allowed the peasants and their families to use the land in return for loyalty and obedience. Today, the lord has transformed into a political form of a za’im and the peasants have become his voters; where in exchange for services, the voters provide electoral loyalty.⁷⁵ The roots for such a political environment in Lebanon may primarily stem from the small size of the country and its heterogeneous society, which embolden strong familial ties. In turn, this reinforces sectarian associations and political clientelism between the zu’ama and their supporters. On the other hand, since kinship is central to the Lebanese neo-patrimonial state, personal use of patronage and clientelism to gain and control supporters is predictably widespread and institutionalized.⁷⁶

3.3.2 Political Positions Through Economic Power

As Traboulsi suggests, “There is no need to present huge amounts of evidence to prove that capital controls political power in post-war Lebanon; indeed, capital controls not just power but the state itself.”⁷⁷ However, the tangible connection between economic power and accessing political positions with political parties does not remove the need to study this issue closely, particularly from a gender perspective.

The steady increase of businessmen in the post-war Lebanese parliament clearly displays the close relationship between economic power and political power. For instance, in 2000, the parliament incorporated around 36 businessmen MPs; many of which have returned from the Gulf and exile, comprising billionaires such as Issam Fares, Hariri and Mikati.⁷⁸ A parliamentary seat offered ways to the newly rich to preserve their fortunes by developing new economic interests and enhancing their political influence simultaneously. Gaining such senior political positions did not necessitate political experience or competency; rather, it merely involved purchasing parliamentary seats with generous sums of money to the head of the electoral list or funding the parties’ campaigns.⁷⁹ There are numerous prominent examples of politicians who have used their

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Rolland, ‘*Lebanon: Current Issues and Background*’.

⁷⁶ S. Joseph, ‘Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World’, *Al Raida*, Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, Issue 129-30, p.8-18, 2010.

⁷⁷ F. Traboulsi, ‘*Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon*’, Beirut, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2014.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

economic power to gain senior political positions, including Nabil Boustani, Robert Fadel, Gilbertte Zuwayn, Bahia Hareeri and Najib Mikati.

The incentives such a parliamentary position offers to those with economic power may be visualized when one takes into account that a number of individuals “pay up to to 3 million dollars to be included on safe electoral lists.”⁸⁰ In an interview with Aly Sleem, the researcher in the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) confirmed that in Lebanese politics, it is common and normalized for individuals with economic power to finance a party’s campaigns under the condition of being selected in their list. “This is a clear phenomenon in Lebanese politics. Although it is not loudly spoken of, everyone knows of its prevalent existence”⁸¹, Sleem stated.

The pervasiveness of this phenomenon rationalizes the male-centered orientation of political blocks’ in Lebanon; since it is wealthy men who are economically financing the parties and purchasing parliamentary seats in order to be included in the electoral lists. This is because in contrast to men, women are a marginalized group in the economy. Though 50 percent of university graduates are females, only 27 percent of women are in the labor force, compared to 73 percent of men.⁸² Socio-cultural factors largely prevent women from attaining equal economic participation to men, since the traditional gender roles that are assigned to them limits them to their reproductive role: raising the children and fulfilling household chores. As Hammoud remarks, “Men in general, and in particular married men, agree that women should take care of children and refrain from working, because they perceive work to affect motherhood negatively.”⁸³

As a result, the majority of women do not have the necessary resources or economic power to buy their seats, fund the parties or offer financial incentives and resources. A deficiency in economic power forms various other obstacles for women to reach political decision-making positions. This appears in the high costs of the electoral campaigns and candidacy fees which largely exceed the capacity of female candidates who are not supported by a party, a list or their families.⁸⁴ Moreover, the costs of establishing a social network and exposing one’s self to the public requires economic power. This includes presenting in lectures, participating in conferences, radios and most importantly, by using exposure from the mainstream media and TV.⁸⁵ Yet, as Roula Douglas remarks, most media channels in Lebanon, if not all, belong and are funded by politicians or

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Interview with Aly Sleem.

⁸² Central Administration of Statistics, *Women in Lebanon in Figures*, 2014 <http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PressRoom/Women%20in%20Lebanon_Dr.%20Maral%20Tutelian_Grand%20Sera il%2023%20Avril%202014.pdf> [accessed 13 May 2017].

⁸³ M. Hammoud, ‘*Legal and Contextual Research on Women Economic Empowerment in Lebanon*’, Search for Common Ground, 2014 <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Legal_and_Contextual_Research_on_Women_Economic_Empowerment_in_Lebanon.pdf> [accessed 14 May 2017].

⁸⁴ Helou, ‘*Study on Advocacy for the Adoption of a Quota for Women in Electoral Law*’.

⁸⁵ Interview with Roula Douglas.

particular parties—constructing an additional obstacle for women (and independent candidates) who require the support of the media to expose themselves to society as politicians.⁸⁶ Traboulsi provides valuable examples to acknowledge this important connection between the media and politicians with economic power:

Establishing control over the visual media is one of the most important objectives of the partnership between money and political power. Investment in television stations transcends economic considerations, aiming to establish control over public opinion and public space. Suleiman Frangieh, Nabil Bustani, Michel Pharaon, Raymond Audi, Fattal Holding, Maurice Sehnaoui, Pierre Pharaon and Issam Fares are all shareholders in LBC Television... Over at Future TV we find Rafic Hariri, his wife, his sister Bahia Hariri, MP Khaled Saab, Issam Fares' three sons, the brother of MP and minister Farid Makari and Hariri's media advisor Nohad Machnouk.⁸⁷

3.3.3 Upholding the Status Quo Through the Electoral System

In consociational regimes, electoral systems are considered to be one of the most instrumental institutional reforms, given that they form behavioral inducement for candidates. It is postulated that the current electoral system in Lebanon—which has always been based on a majority system—plays a vital role in regenerating the power of Lebanon's political elites: the powerful families and dominant political parties. Though the country has conducted parliamentary elections every four years since 1943 (in exception to the interruptions during the civil war), the ruling political parties, families and political culture have not yet changed.⁸⁸

This is arguably due to the way the electoral system divides electoral constituencies in order to enable the ruling class to reinforce themselves and power. The majoritarian system in place (where the winner takes all), has an evident districting issue, as Ekmekji elaborates:

The electoral districting used today to configure confessionals is based on five large governorates (muhafazat) that are subdivided into smaller constituencies (qadaas). These geographical districts have always been subject to the whims and the agenda of the political leadership. To eliminate an opponent's chances of being elected or to increase the probability of a partisan government, the Ministry of Interior gerrymanders and clusters districts accordingly. For example, the districting of Muslim-majority areas in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Zahle in the Beqaa, Marjeyoun in the South, and

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Traboulsi, 'Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon'.

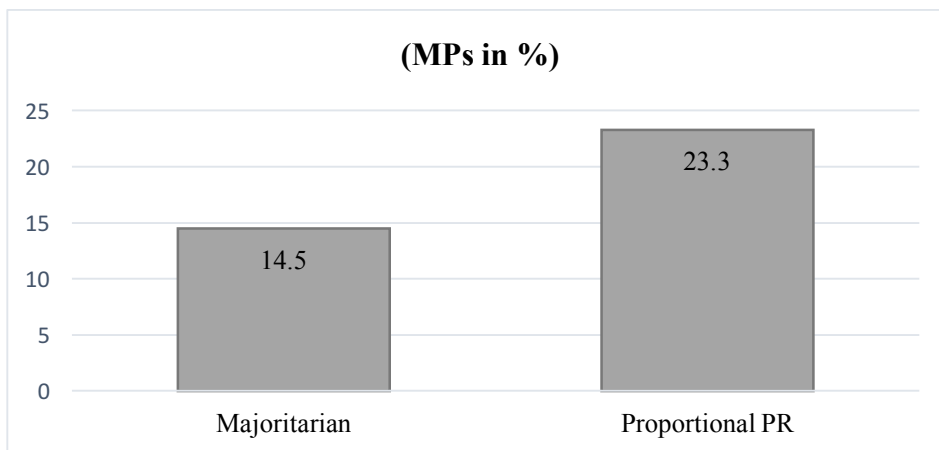
⁸⁸ Khoury, *Women's political participation in Lebanon*.

Bsharre in the North, has a decisive influence on the outcome of the Christian polls.⁸⁹

In a context where the parliament's seats are distributed between multi-member districts with multi-confessional slates, the district size is significant since it identifies the confessional demography in each electorate. Through this manipulation of the district sizes, the current majoritarian electoral system arguably functions to reinforce the power of a fixed set of confessional elites while excluding participation from the youth, women or independent candidates.

To boost national integration, Lijphart—the forefather of the consensus democracy model—identifies that the optimal electoral system for divided societies is the proportional representation (PR) of ethnic groups. This is because large district PR enables every community to choose its representatives proportional to their numbers and enlarge their autonomy and influence.⁹⁰ In this sense, adopting a proportional system has been proposed and demanded in Lebanon to transform the electoral districts into larger ones; given the fact that the small size of the districts are more homogeneous in their sectarian identity. From a gender-perspective, proportional electoral systems are also argued to be 'women friendly' electoral systems. As Kassem establishes in Chart I below, countries that have adopted a PR system endure higher levels of female representation than majoritarian systems.

Chart I: Female MPs by Majoritarian and Proportional Systems in 80 Countries



Source: F.S Kassem, 'Can Women Break Through? Women in Municipalities: Lebanon in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 35, Issue 4, 2012, p.233-255.

⁸⁹ A.A. Ekmekji, 'Confessionalism and Electoral Law in Lebanon', The Aspen Institute, 2012, https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/pubs/Confessionalism%20and%20Electoral%20Reform%20in%20Lebanon_Final.pdf [accessed at 14 June 2017].

⁹⁰ S. E. Machnouk, 'Electoral System Reform in Lebanon: Dilemmas of a Consociational State', Ethnopolitics, 2017.

CHAPTER 4: THE FAMILIAL NATURE OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC

4.1 PATRIARCHY AND NEOPATRIARCHY

Due to its detrimental impact on women, the concept of patriarchy is fundamental to feminist studies and women's political participation. Though the notion of patriarchy is not static, it can be defined as, "the privileging of males and seniors and the legitimating of those privileges in the morality and idiom of kinship."⁹¹ Classic patriarchal theory is thus grounded on a system of society where the father (the patriarch) is the head of the family; in effect, the patriarch does not only rule over the women in the family, but also the younger men. As the exponent of the Patriarchal Theory, Sir Henry Maine, describes in his introduction in *Ancient Law*:

The eldest male parent is absolutely supreme in his household. His dominion extends to life and death, and is as unqualified over his children as over his slave.⁹²

In Lebanon's context, it may be postulated that gender discrimination is rooted in three patriarchal structures that position women as second-class citizens in politics: 1) the family (including the extended family and kinship ties), 2) the sect (through personal status laws), 3) and the state.⁹³

Parallel to the rest of the Arab region, the penetration of family-based patriarchy is extremely prevalent in Lebanon. This form of patriarchal structure be defined as the "cultural constructs and structural relations that privilege the initiative of males and elders in directing the lives of others."⁹⁴ A clear example can be exhibited in the stereotypical gender roles that are allocated to males and females within the family; where men are viewed to be the breadwinners of the family, while women are expected to fulfil their limited role as caretakers of the children and household chores. As a consequence, family-based patriarchy extends to the political culture of Lebanon.

Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh, one of the first female ministers in Lebanon, has remarked that such gender stereotypes form a key obstacle to women in politics; particularly since it is a field that society did not traditionally assign to females.⁹⁵ In turn, women's position in politics is often viewed to be inferior and secondary to men. The Arab Barometer data, for instance, demonstrated that although 82.6 percent of Lebanese citizens support women as prime ministers, more than 50 percent believe

⁹¹ P.W.T. Kingston, *Reproducing Sectarianism: Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil*, New York, Suny Press, 2014.

⁹² H. S. Maine, *Ancient Law*, Dorset, Dorset Press, 1987.

⁹³ Khoury, *Women's political participation in Lebanon*.

⁹⁴ S. Joseph, *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

⁹⁵ Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh.

that men make better political leaders than women.⁹⁶

While interviewing female nominees in the municipal and parliamentary elections, it was clear that the pervasiveness of the patriarchal familial culture had an evident role on the candidates' political careers and thus on the political culture in Lebanon. Vicky Zwein, for instance, explained that along with the other women on her list, this was the first time that women were nominated in Sin El Fil municipality. The disbelief that women have a role to play in politics (rather than their own homes) was exhibited when the president of Zwein's list was visiting peoples' homes. She remarked that the initial reaction of having women in the list would lead them to ask, "*Why are you putting women with you on the list? Aren't there enough men in Sin El Fil?*"⁹⁷ Similar patriarchal questions regarding women's position in politics was faced by most of the female candidates who were interviewed. Such a political culture produces an inhospitable environment to women; which may lead to a deficiency in public support and appeal to women who are regarded as autonomous figures, rather than female representatives of male figures of power.⁹⁸

Institutionally, the Lebanese state also reinforces the strength of family-based patriarchy by delegating its responsibility to protect the rights of all citizens to religious leaders and courts. Lebanon's 15 different personal status laws deal with imperative matters that generally contain patriarchal values—including marriage, inheritance, divorce, child custody and alimony. Yet, none of the religious courts are subject to Lebanese law or the UN's international conventions that safeguard women's rights. As a result, since Lebanese religious court systems base their legal rulings according to the principle that the male is the head of the household, they produce institutionalized patriarchal decisions.⁹⁹ The fact that religious courts dominate family law, rather than a unified civil law, displays the fine line between the public and private spheres; in which, patriarchal values that may arise within family law develop into a "non-negotiable sacred arena" where modern patriarchy is constituted.¹⁰⁰

Hisham Sharabi's book, '*Neopatriarchy*', provides a valuable framework to grasp and analyze the common features of patriarchy in the Arab-speaking states. The author explains that although Arab states have experienced social, cultural, political and economic transformations, this has not led to anticipated outcomes, such as modernity. Rather, it resulted into a modernized form of patriarchy, which he refers to as neopatriarchy, due to the confrontation between tradition and modernity within the framework of dependent capitalism.

⁹⁶ S. Atallah, '*Arab Barometer Country Report: Lebanon*', 5 September 2012, <file:///Users/hindsharif/Downloads/countryreportlebanon2%20(1).pdf> [accessed 12 May 2017].

⁹⁷ Interview Vicky Zwein

⁹⁸ S. Zuhur, 'Empowering Women or Dislodging Sectarianism?: Civil Marriage in Lebanon', *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Article 5, 2002.

⁹⁹ Kingston, '*Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience*'.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph, '*Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*'.

By addressing the different political regimes (whether modern or conservative), along with the institutions and discourse in the Arab region, Sharabi remarks that a common feature is shared between them: the predominance of the father (patriarch) within the family and the state. As such, the internal structures of the modern forms of the family, state or society are constantly engrained in patriarchal principles and dominance of the clan, kinship, religious and ethnic groups.¹⁰¹ In a neopatriarchal state, religion has the dominant power and state authority; whereas the family, as a substitute for the individual, forms the building block of a community. In effect, “the neopatriarchal state and the patriarchal family reflect and reinforce each other.”¹⁰²

As Sharabi (1992) describes, the institutional elements of this form of society are characterized with patriarchal values:

A central psychological feature of this type of society... is the dominance of the Father (patriarch), the center around which the national as well as the natural family are organized. Thus between ruler and ruled, between father and child, there exist only vertical relations: in both settings the paternal will is the absolute will, mediated in both the society and the family by a forced consensus based on ritual and coercion.¹⁰³

In this regard, the internal structures of neopatriarchal states, such as the case for Lebanon, are largely grounded on patriarchal principles and relations of clan, kinship, ethnic and religious groups. As a direct consequence to the nature of a neopatriarchal state, the relation between the state and families is central in comprehending its social and political actions. Ergo, it is a system where the ‘kin contract’ precedes membership in the state; and where families can thus “legitimately claim prior loyalty of their members (male and female) over and above the state’s claims to loyalty.”¹⁰⁴ In Lebanon’s context, the ‘kin contract’ can considerably refer to five main structures: the immediate family, biological and marital kin, and extended relatives.¹⁰⁵

4.1.1 *The Family as the Primary Social Unit*

In contrast to Western constitutions, which identify the basic unit of society as the individual citizen, Arab constitutions regard the family as the primary social unit.¹⁰⁶ As such, it may be argued that the family is regarded as superior to the ‘individual’, and identity is defined in familial terms and kinship relations. However, given that the theory of citizenship contradicts the particularism

¹⁰¹ Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*.

¹⁰² V.M. Moghadam, *Modernising Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 1993.

¹⁰³ Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*.

¹⁰⁴ S. Joseph, ‘Political Familialism in Lebanon’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 636, Patrimonial Power in the Modern World, 2011, pp. 150-163.

¹⁰⁵ R. Stephan, ‘The Family and the Making of Women’s Rights Activism in Lebanon’, PhD Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ S. Joseph, ‘Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World’, *Al Raida*, Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, Issue 129-30, p.8-18, 2010.

of kinship, family or clan ties, the concept of citizenship and the social contract is essentially grounded on substituting the ‘family’ as the main social unit of society with the ‘individual’.¹⁰⁷

In Lebanon and in most Arab countries, the notion of citizenship and the social contract merely subsist on paper, in the constitution and legislations, not in practical political activities.¹⁰⁸ Hence, it is important to study the notion of citizenship closely when examining women’s political participation, as it can be gendered in a way where women are categorized as second-class citizens.¹⁰⁹ As a neopatriarchal state, it may be argued that in Lebanon, family and kin relations are valued beyond an ‘individual’, since a citizen’s rights can be determined by kin relations. This, in turn, has contributed in regenerating family-based patriarchal values that regard women’s citizenship as secondary. Joseph encapsulates this notion in the following analysis:

The Arab citizen subject is seen as a patriarch, the head of a patriarchal family, legally constituted as the basic unit of the political community who accrues rights and responsibilities concomitant with that legal status.¹¹⁰

In essence, a gendered-citizenship that is grounded on patriarchal and familial principles, produces a culture where women are perceived to be dependents of men; and where men, to a great extent, are rather viewed as ‘individuals’. Furthermore, prioritizing the family as a social unit means that connections, familial relationships and clientelist networks are a necessary means in society to attain essential services and a prosperous social existence.¹¹¹ In effect, instead of qualifying for citizenship on the basis of being an individual, in the Arab region, it is an individual’s family, kinship relations, or ‘connective relationships’, that provides one with citizenship and a social contract.

When the notion of connective relationships is linked to the patriarchal nature of society and the state, Joseph argues it produces ‘patriarchal connectivity’, which is defined as, “The production of selves with fluid boundaries organized for gendered and aged domination in a culture valuing kin structures, morality, and idioms.”¹¹² By requiring to connect and socialize with others for creating individual rights as a citizen in a patriarchal society, connectivity consequently reinforces patriarchal power.

In fact, since women are not viewed as individuals by the state, this ‘individuality’ is therefore replaced and controlled by a male relative. As Khoury asserts, this is exhibited by the main form of identification—the registration number of an individual—which is shared by a family through

¹⁰⁷ B. Turner, Contemporary problems in the theory of citizenship. In B. Turner (Ed.). *Citizenship and social theory* (pp. 1-18). London, Sage, 1993.

¹⁰⁸ S. Altorki, The concept and practice of citizenship in Saudi Arabia. In S. Joseph (Ed.). *Gender and citizenship in the Middle East* (pp. 215-236). Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2000.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph, ‘Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World’.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

the male; linking extended kinship contacts and the family under one unit.¹¹³ Thus, when a woman gets married in Lebanon, she is legally forced to change her registration number to her husband's area, rather than her origin place of birth. This forms a great concern for female candidates when running for the municipality elections. When a female's electoral area is transferred to that of her husband's, she becomes barred to compete for municipal seats at her place of birth; the region she is mostly familiar to and where she is known to the electoral community. While interviewing female candidates at the municipality, many voiced their concerns on this issue. Vicky Zwein, for instance, shared the direct influence of this problem on her campaigning experience as a nominee for the municipality, as she stated:

Originally, I am not from Sin el Fil. I got married in 2000 and thus I had to change my registration area. But for the people in Sin el Fil, they considered that I wasn't from there. So when I nominated myself there, many people would come and ask, '*Who are you to talk to us about Sin El Fil? You just arrived here yesterday*'; as you can imagine, this extremely demotivates and discourages many women to run for elections.¹¹⁴

Moreover, Marguerite Helou highlighted that single female candidates face other forms of obstacles due to this registration issue, which does not apply to males. Since one has to be registered in the area where a candidate runs for the municipality elections, if a woman gets married during her term, she would permanently lose her position:

I interviewed a young lady who was running in the municipality in Beqaa and won, but since she was engaged, and she had to postpone her marriage for 6 years to not lose her position.¹¹⁵

Paul Kingston's framework on Lebanon's structural order offers further insights on the ways Lebanon's system produces secondary citizenship for women. Kingston classifies the state's structural order as being patriarchal and path dependent; the latter defined as "the persistence of an institutional structure in spite of the social transformations."¹¹⁶ Kingston describes how the impact of these two features does not only generate a male-dominated system, but also a clan-based system of clientelism; which, in turn, perpetuates gendered citizenship rights defined by patriarchal kinship relations:

Not only does this discriminate against and disadvantage women, but it also creates a sense of citizenship based in one's communal identity where people are granted privileges in return for loyalty as opposed to equality and rights.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Khoury, *Women's political participation in Lebanon*.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Vicky Zwein.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

¹¹⁶ Kingston, '*Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience*'.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

4.1.2 Familial Pressures on Female Candidates

As a result to the deep accumulation of the patriarchal principles that are anchored and institutionalized within the state and citizenship, ten in-depth interviews with female candidates in the municipality and parliament conveyed that male figures in their nuclear and extended family had a substantial impact on their candidacy. In fact, it was observed that the absence of approval and support from the nuclear family, in particular, would naturally lead a female candidate to withdraw her nomination. Meanwhile, the interviews have also emphasized on the role that the extended family plays on women's political participation—as it was often the most significant pressure that female candidates faced during their nominations—driving many to withdraw. Such examples have confirmed the author's readings on the significant influence kinship ties have on women in the public sphere in Lebanon, which, in this case, has extended to their 'individual' political career choices.

Amalia Hassoun, a 36-year old independent municipality candidate from Chouf, shared a fascinating example which exhibits how familial forces can form a key obstacle to female candidates. In a deep sense, familial pressures may rationalize why a limited number of females nominate themselves in politics, and why many withdraw their candidacy:

When I decided to nominate myself, there was a group on WhatsApp with all the women who nominated themselves to the municipality in all of Lebanon. Initially, we were 50 women in the group, but at the end, only four of us were left. Why? Because most of the female candidates experienced pressure from their families to withdraw in an unbelievable way: one of them stated she was crying because her father stopped talking to her, the other said her brother was threatening her; often it was even the uncles and members of the extended family who were pressuring them to withdraw in various ways just because they were women.¹¹⁸

In the following section, the case studies of Zeinab Ismail, Latifa Husneyyah and Marwa Rahhal will be taken into consideration to display the patterns that the author established after conducting the interviews. Although all of the female candidates selected in the case study have nominated themselves to the municipality, they all had varying political affiliations, ages and familial connections in politics. Nonetheless, all of their stories shared an influential pattern: familial pressures that were particularly deriving from their extended family.

Zeinab Ismail is a 35-year old political activist in The Lebanese Communist Party who nominated herself twice for the municipality elections in Nabteyyeh, South of Lebanon; since she withdrew the first time due to familial pressures. When explaining the details of her experience, she declared:

¹¹⁸ Interview with Amalia Hassoun.

I withdrew the first time due to conflicts between my nuclear and extended family—especially between my father and uncle—as I did not want to be the reason why a huge problem occurs between them. The issue was that my family and I belong to different political parties. For example, my uncle was nominated against me in a different list. Thus, through the political party he belonged to, I was pressured from individuals from my family, which created a huge amount of tension.¹¹⁹

Zeinab clarified that her nuclear family (sister and parents) thoroughly supported her until the very end; yet, her extended family (specifically her uncle), was extremely opposed to her nomination. Zeinab stated that familial pressure is one of the key barriers that women face when trying to access political positions. For Zeinab, the significant implication of this pressure stems from the fact that, like many, she was raised on the principle that ‘family must always come first.’ Thus, instead of prioritizing her own political beliefs and aspirations, she withdrew the first time to satisfy her family. This is in line with Sharabi’s theory on neopatriarchal states and Joseph’s analysis on gendered citizenship in Lebanon, where family and kinship ties, which are grounded in patriarchal values, substitute the ‘individuality’ of women.

Zeinab also reflected that familial pressures are extremely linked to pressures stemming from political parties; exposing the correlation between the dominant parties and political familialism. Since her uncle belonged to a different political party, the party utilized his kinship ties with Zeinab to pressure her to withdraw or join their list. Zeinab’s uncle often pressured her through her father, particularly by using a patriarchal discourse:

My uncle would often speak to my father for hours about my nomination. To try to pressure and discourage my father in his support, he would always use patriarchal measures such as, ‘*She is a woman, how would you allow her to get into politics and represent our family? Aren’t you worried about our family’s reputation?*’¹²⁰

Latifa Husneyyah, is a 38-year-old who nominated herself as an independent in Ain w Zain Chouf municipality, and faced similar familial pressures to withdraw by her extended family. This was mainly due to patriarchal gender stereotypes about women in politics and since Latifa’s family belonged to a certain political party while she chose to be an independent nominee. Parallel to Zeinab’s case, this was achieved through pressuring and discouraging her parents through patriarchal arguments:

My family wanted to be represented by a man. They were constantly reminding me that ‘there’s men in the family’ in hope that I would withdraw and evade their humiliation. They were extremely serious about their

¹¹⁹ Interview with Zeinab Ismail.

¹²⁰ Interview with Zeinab Ismail.

concerns, to the extent where they would ask me whether it is worth losing my own family for my political aspirations. It was emotionally exhausting, especially knowing that your own family wouldn't even vote for you.¹²¹

Marwa Rahhal is a 26 year-old who nominated herself as an independent to the municipality elections in the district of Nabteyyeh, South of Lebanon. She was the youngest candidate in the whole of Southern Lebanon at the time and the first woman to nominate herself to the municipality in the history of her village. Although Marwa comes from a highly connected family in Lebanese politics on a national level, unlike most of the candidates interviewed, the familial pressures she faced mirrors the experiences faced by most female candidates. When asked if she encountered any familial pressures, she stated:

People who threatened me were from my own extended family, particularly from my father's side of the family because they're highly politically connected. They tried to push me on their side as they wanted me to get nominated with their list, which is affiliated with a certain political party. They used to speak to me for over 40 minutes over the phone, although I didn't have a close relationship with them before. When I refused their offer, since I wanted to be an independent nominee, they started threatening me to withdraw my nomination.¹²²

In reflection to the notion of citizenship and the 'individual', the three case studies above clearly confirm that in practice, Lebanon's patriarchal society does not perceive a woman as an individual with equal rights and responsibilities to a man; but as a subordinate and submissive subject to her family and kinship ties. Moreover, they display the influential and overlooked role of patriarchal familial pressures on female candidates in the political sphere: regardless of a candidate's sect, political affiliation or age.

As Roula Douglas, a journalist and activist, has rightly remarked:

Culturally speaking, families always have a bias towards the man in the family rather than the woman, even if she is more competent. For example, if the female in the family has the highest marks in school whereas the male doesn't—the family is likely to support him to complete his education, while the girl would be encouraged to stop to get married and become a housewife. This patriarchal familial culture is extended to politics.¹²³

The interviews have also shed light on the key reasons that stem from familial pressures (from the nuclear and extended family) on female candidates: 1) patriarchal gender stereotypes which consider that it is not appropriate for the family to be represented by a woman, since public affairs

¹²¹ Interview with Latifa Husneyyah.

¹²² Interview with Marwa Rahhal.

¹²³ Interview with Roula Douglas.

is viewed as an exclusive job for men, and 2) political affiliation differences, particularly when a family is politically active in a certain political party and the candidate is either associated with a different party or an independent nominee.

The combination of Lebanon as a neopatriarchal state with a heterogeneous and patriarchal legal system (personal status laws), largely contributes to this consolidation of kin-based patriarchal norms that are deeply intertwined within families. Given the centrality of the family's impact on pressuring or supporting female candidates in elections, the role of familialism on women's political participation in Lebanon must be re-evaluated and considered when addressing solutions to the exclusion of women in politics or identifying means to support female candidates.

4.2 THE WEIGHT OF POLITICAL FAMILIALISM

Political Familialism is a term coined by Suad Joseph and defined as:

The deployment of family institutions, ideologies, practices and relationships by citizens to activate their demands in relation to the state, and by the state actors to mobilize moral grounds for governance based on a civic myth of kinship and a public discourse that privileges family.¹²⁴

Mirroring the patriarchal construct of the family and the centrality of kinship in Lebanese society, political familialism is extremely dominant in Lebanese politics. Although its prevalence in Lebanon has not been studied sufficiently, Suad Joseph suggests that political familialism is crucial in comprehending the Lebanese state's political organization and state/citizen relationships. Grounded on the importance of the family in the social and political spheres, political familialism entails a set of practices that replicate the privileged position of 'family' and the patriarchal values that it is founded upon.¹²⁵ What Joseph refers to as the 'kin contract' is a vital tool that reveals the features of political familialism, as the privileged position of familial or kin-like connections in relation to the state is regenerated:

The "kin contract" in Lebanon refers to formal and informal understandings that membership in families precedes membership in the state, and that families legitimately can claim prior loyalty of their members (male and female) over and above the state's claim to loyalty.¹²⁶

Whilst political familialism is not exclusive to Lebanon, the country's historical political instability, fragmentation and the weakness of the state has produced an environment where it is common for citizens to rely on their families for political, social and economic support.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Joseph, 'Political Familialism in Lebanon'.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Likewise, familialism is used by the state and its political leaders as commonly as the citizens (in the form of political familialism), to mobilize and organize the population. Arguably, the resilience of this phenomenon is enshrined by the majoritarian electoral system and the consociational power-sharing model, which, after the civil war, has fuelled polarizations between the sects and sectarian hegemonic leadership.

4.2.1 Enduring the Privilege of the Family

Political familialism is clearly mirrored and exercised through the dominant political parties; as political leadership endures through familial lines—passed down from father to son. In the rare absence of a male heir, daughters, wives or sisters succeed the political positions. In fact, in Lebanon’s context, it is common practice to presume that sons will follow their fathers’ political positions of power, which, in turn, “institutionalizes political familialism within the state apparatus and promotes electoral familial politics.”¹²⁸

One common and clear example was described by Aly Sleem, a Research Coordinator in LADE:

Although the Lebanese Phalange Party was established in 1936, until this current day, it is still ruled by the same family. It was founded by Pierre Gemayel, then it was led by his son, Bashir Gemayel, followed by Amine Gemayel. Today, in 2017, the president of the party is still from the same family: Samy Gemayel.¹²⁹

There are various other examples that illustrate the predominance of political familialism in Lebanese politics. For instance, Rafik Hariri, the prime minister in 1990s and early 2000s and the leader of the Future Movement Party, was succeeded in the Parliament by his son, Saad, who additionally began leading the party. During his career, his sister, Bahiyya, was also elected to the Parliament. When Kamal Jumblat, the Druze leader who led the Socialist Progressive Party was assassinated, his son, Walid, established his political presence and succeeded his father’s position. In the Free Patriotic Movement, which is often referred to as the Aounist party, encompasses positions for all of Aoun’s family. After Micheal Aoun became the President of the Republic, Jubran Basil, Aoun’s son-in-law, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, followed his position as the President of the Party. Suleiman Franjeh was followed by his son Tony; and Chamille Chamoun was succeeded by his son Rory. Other examples of families that have had familial successions to political leadership also include the Shihab family, Karami family, Khazen family and Hamadeh family.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Interview with Aly Sleem.

¹³⁰ Joseph, ‘Political Familialism in Lebanon’.

On an occasional basis, after the death of a prominent political leader and in the absence of a male successor, political familialism has been the main way for Lebanese women to enter the parliament. Ten years after Lebanese women gained their suffrage rights, in 1963, Myrna Bustani became the first Lebanese female to win in parliamentary elections to serve the remainder of her father’s term, who died in a plane crash. Following the 15-year civil war that damaged various democratic practices, the first women to enter Lebanese parliament was in the 1992 election—winning three seats or 2.3 percent of the total seats.¹³¹ In that year, Nayla Mouawad, became a member of the parliament after her husband, President Rene Mouawad, was assassinated; albeit when her son, Michael Mouawad, got older, she withdrew and her son replaced her position. Likewise, when President Bashir Gemayel was assassinated, his widow, Solange Gemayel, entered the parliament in 2005. Similar patterns include Strida Samir Geagea, who became a politician and MP after an 11-year imprisonment of her husband Samir, who was the leader of the Lebanese forces; Nayla Tueni also replaced the position of her assassinated father, Gibran Tueni, a former Parliament member.

As such, political familialism characterizes Lebanese women’s history in politics; since it can be clearly observed that most female MPs in Lebanon are sisters, widows or wives of martyred political leaders. As displayed in Table III below, 100 percent of the women who were nominated by political parties and in the widows/ dynastic category won. Prior to the civil war (1953–1972), 93 percent of female candidates were in the widows/ dynastic joint classification. Between 1992–2009, in the postwar elections, an alteration took place, as 74 percent of female candidates were nominated by political parties, including those garbed-in-black.¹³² It is important to note that there were a few incidents where women accessed governmental positions without political familialism—such as Minister Rayya El Hassan and Minister Wafaa’ Dika Hamzeh—albeit, these women are the exception and not the rule.

Table III: Women Candidates for the Parliament by Baer’s Categories

Category	1953 - 1972	1992 - 2009		
	Candidates	Candidates	Won	Lost
<i>Widows / Dynastic</i>	93.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Political Parties</i>		1.6	2.2	0.0
<i>Political Parties sponsoring women grabbed in black</i>	0.0	72.1	97.8	0.0
<i>Independent</i>	0.0	21.3	0.0	81.0 (100%)
<i>Women’s Movement</i>	7.0	4.9	0.0	19.0 (100%)
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

¹³¹ G. Abu Zayd, ‘In Search of Political Power – Women in Parliament in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon’, *In Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, ed. Azza Karam. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1998, 43-54.

¹³² Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women’s Leadership*.

<i>Total</i>	n=14	n=61	n=45	n=16
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Source: F.S. Kassem. *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

In an interview with Nayla Moawad in 2001 with *Al Raida*, she was asked to elaborate on how she achieved the highest number of votes in the North during the last two elections, where she clearly stated:

Let's face it, I reached where I am today because of Rene, my late husband, and in a way I owe it all to him. When Rene was assassinated, people realized that he died for the sake of the country because he was very honest and attentive to national issues... His program appealed to the citizens and given that I was to pick up from where he had started people voted for me.¹³³

As a reflection of the institutional patriarchy discussed beforehand, this reality portrays that the public "has not considered women candidates as independent voices, but rather as representatives of "their men" - that is, their family and their sect."¹³⁴

4.2.2 *The Institutional Resilience of Clientelism*

It is noteworthy that familial successors are not the only feature that characterizes political familialism; as the phenomenon encompasses an incorporation and utilization of the customs and ideology of kinship to boost clientelism and mobilize the leaders' following and support. This is particularly relevant to Lebanon's political system since the political parties are structured by patronage kin-like allegiances to the party leader (or za'im) who offers personalized services by using the resources of the state that are distributed to kin and kin-like networks in exchange to allegiance. As such, embedded in political familialism, political blocks utilize the centrality of kin-like or familial relations in politics to maintain their patronage networks and power through zu'ama clientelism.

This is in line with Helou's observation, which suggests that the new faces and families that enter the Lebanese parliament are closely affiliated with the powerful political families (kin-like relations):

After the election in 2009, I came across a book published by the parliament, which has the biographies of all members in parliament from 1926 until 2009. When I studied it, I realized that the new faces we're seeing in the parliament are merely business groups who are close and connected to the powerful political families. Berry's group, for instance, were all the individuals and families who were in Africa doing business. Hareeri's group were all the ones

¹³³ M. Sfeir, 'Nayla Moawad: On Politics in Lebanon', *Al Raida*, Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Volume XVIII, No. 92, 2001.

¹³⁴ S. Zuhur, 'Empowering Women or Dislodging Sectarianism?: Civil Marriage in Lebanon', *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Article 5, 2002.

who were with him in the Gulf or the students he taught; Issam Fares, the same scenario. Women, of course, are excluded from this clientelist network, which also may explain why they are not present in the political scene.¹³⁵

In this respect, it is important to study the link between the patron-client networks that characterize political familialism and political blocks in Lebanon with women's political participation. Various scholars postulate that high political representation of women is connected with less levels of corruption, including clientelism and vote buying, which are viewed to obstruct women's leadership.¹³⁶ According to this analysis, the connection between the dominance of political familialism and clientelism in Lebanese politics is arguably a key reason why political parties do not have the will to enhance women's political participation. Zwein shared a story that clearly exhibits this connection, since women are excluded from clientelist networks in Lebanon's political life:

A man from a political party representing a za'im was on TV, and he was simply asked why his political party doesn't nominate women. He firmly answered that men are needed to be in the parliament so they can provide 'services', ones that women won't deliver. The services he's talking about are clientelist services. Thus, in principle, he was asserting that politics in Lebanon must be clientelist—and since women are excluded from such clientelist networks, they should be rejected from politics.¹³⁷

Alas, such undemocratic political practices are extremely normalized in society, to the extent where, as Joseph suggests, "it is the expectation that state-based positions will be used to help family members that animates the use of idiomatic kinship (acting as if you are kin) to gain *wasta* (brokerage) for state-based services and resources."¹³⁸ In turn, in an environment where political familialism and clientelism is prevalent, any person who belongs to political parties but is out of the family or kin-like network, will not be able to proceed in the political party even if he/she was the most competent for the role. In this sense, political familialism discriminates against women and men who are outside the political elite's network; however, its patriarchal nature impacts women more significantly on the internal and external level.

4.2.3 *The Marginalization of Women*

Since the Lebanese parliament's establishment, nearly all women elected to parliament had a close male relative who was a deceased political leader. This clearly indicates that in the absence of a male successor, the main way women can access senior political positions is through political

¹³⁵ Interview with Marguerite Helou.

¹³⁶ Kassem, *Party Politics, Religion & Women's Leadership*.

¹³⁷ Interview with Vicky Zwein.

¹³⁸ Joseph, 'Political Familialism in Lebanon'.

familialism. As a female candidate with a powerful political family has reaffirmed, political familialism is vital to be ‘part of the political game’:

Although I don’t believe in hierarchies and political parties, paradoxically, both elements were the most helpful in my campaign experience. Without their expertise in the field, advices, support, resources, and the meetings with influential people that I gained access to, I don’t believe a woman can make it into Lebanese politics. This was only the case since I come from a very politically known family on the national level.¹³⁹

Ergo, in a deep sense, without access to political familialism, the vast majority of Lebanese women who are outside the close-knit political elites and networks are deliberately excluded from high political positions. In fact, the prevalence of political familialism does not only block candidates from accessing important informal relationships that play a crucial role in entering politics in Lebanon, but also denies them from necessary resources, economic power and support that is incorporated with it. This may be a vital reason why since 1953, the percentage of women running for national and local elections have never exceeded three percent of the total number of candidates.

Nonetheless, the influential role that political familialism plays in the way women enter or participate in Lebanese politics lacks scholarly interest. Though it may be considered as “one of the most important channels for women to get into politics”¹⁴⁰, the patriarchal and male-dominated nature of political familialism must not be overlooked. Considering that families are patriarchal institutions, in that they privilege males over females, this naturally extends to politics. As such, within the ‘familial political inheritance’ process that dominates Lebanese politics, women are arguably marginalized within the external and internal political arena.

This is because political familialism does not merely have an external impact, given that it excludes the majority of Lebanese women from the political sphere; as it also entails internal forms of control and subordination to the women who access senior political positions. While discussing the notion of political familialism from a gender-perspective, Wafaa’ Dikah Hamzeh stressed that the patriarchal nature of this phenomenon is evident, given that female candidates who reached these positions were only chosen since there was an absence of a male heir to take their position.¹⁴¹ In this sense, their role was fundamentally inferior to males, and they were presumed to hand over their political positions in the presence a male heir. According to Dikah Hamzeh, this largely shaped the way they participated in their positions:

¹³⁹ Interview with Marwa Rahhal.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Amalia Hassoun.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Wafaa’ Dikah Hamzeh.

Their role seemed temporary, as if they were bridging the position of their deceased male leader until a male relative can take over. This explains why the position was often passed to their sons once they aged.¹⁴²

Nayla Moawad and Solange Gemayel, for instance, have both accessed political positions as widows of former presidents that got assassinated. Yet, once their children got older, they both stepped out of their positions and were replaced by their sons (Nadim Gemayel and Michel Moawad). Moreover, a political system that is grounded on political familialism expects female candidates to defer to the political aspirations and agendas of their families (and political party) prior to seeking political positions.¹⁴³ As such, women candidates who win in elections due to their familial ties are expected to submit to the status quo as passive political subjects and follow the same ideologies as their familial allegiances; despite their personal motivations or agendas, including a wish to evolve women's rights. In this sense, political familialism reinforces and institutionalizes the patriarchal composition of the family and the denial of women's citizenship as an individual in the political sphere.

This notion of political familial subordination is infamous in Lebanese society. When the students were questioned whether they have families in high political positions in the focus group, Theresa Sahyoun, a student from the Red Oak Club at AUB, stated that ironically, as a woman, she feels fortunate about not having any familial connections in politics:

I don't have to carry the burden of my family's name in politics and this is something that helped me a lot in my political work. If it weren't the case, I would be expected to hold the same ideologies and agenda as my family. In Lebanon, as a woman, it is extremely challenging to work against your family and their interests because it is an issue that is always connected with the idea of the patriarch.¹⁴⁴

Zeina Kallab, a nominee in the parliamentary elections, elaborated that she communicates with various women in the parliament who share that they cannot voice their opinions freely. Kallab remarked that she knew a woman in the parliament, for instance, who was asked by the leader of her party to remain silent about 30 ideas she proposed for law changes.¹⁴⁵ In this regard, Zeinab Ismail, a female candidate, has noted:

It is not easy even for the women with familial connections in politics. Because once they enter the political scene, they are forced to merely become numbers, rather than voice their own concerns and proposals. If a candidate's ideology and agenda is not parallel to the interests of the political party she is

¹⁴² Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh.

¹⁴³ Joseph, 'Political Familialism in Lebanon'.

¹⁴⁴ Focus group with Theresa Sahyoun.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Zeina Kallab.

with, she won't be allowed to occupy a high decision-making political position in Lebanon.¹⁴⁶

As a result, the dominance of political familialism has reinforced a political culture that is hostile to the participation of women. It produced an environment where women are discouraged to nominate themselves for elections not only because they will not win, but also due to an acknowledgement that they will be forced to work against their beliefs by submitting to the current state of affairs. For example, although Theresa Sahyoun is politically active, competent and aspires for political change, she noted that she has no interest in working for the parliament. This is because, like many, she does not believe that the current political system is a domain that permits one to confront the status quo and progress women's issues.¹⁴⁷

In this respect, through the dominant political parties, political familialism plays a key role in reproducing a fixed set of male-dominated ruling elites while preserving an institutional structure that is resistant to any attempt to reform; which is augmented and supported by the consociational formula and the majoritarian electoral system in place. In turn, as a woman's presence becomes merely a number, women's political participation under such a familial system opposes its two main purposes: 1) to progress political agendas that commit to the equality of genders or represent women's interests, and 2) provide new outlooks on mainstream political issues by reconsidering political priorities.¹⁴⁸

Gilberte Zuwayn, for instance, was a member in the committee debating the draft law to safeguard women from family violence. In contradiction to expectations, Zuwayn rejected the calls that the women's organizations demanded.¹⁴⁹ In this respect, the political context which is based on political familialism has produced an ineffective or a façade form of women's participation; one that is not representative of women's interests and does not ensure that women-friendly agendas will be endorsed through the legislative bodies. Women's legislative behavior is also a result of the political restrictions that only enable a minor number of women to access decision-making positions. As the theory of 'critical mass' suggests, females often do not promote policies that advocate for women's rights in public office since their number is significantly less to men in all elected assemblies.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Zeinab Ismail.

¹⁴⁷ Focus group with Theresa Sahyoun.

¹⁴⁸ Un Women, *Women in Power and Decision-Making*, 2000,

<<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/fs7.htm>> [accessed 5 May 2017].

¹⁴⁹ R. Salameh, 'Gender Politics in Lebanon and the limits of legal reformism', Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 2014, <http://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/gender-politics-lebanon-and-limits-legal-reformism-en-ar> [accessed 13 May 2017].

¹⁵⁰ S. Childs and M.L Krook, 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation', *Political Studies*, vol. 56, no.1, 2008, p. 725–736.

This notion was in line with the experience of one of the first female ministers of Lebanon, Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh, who described that advancing women's issues through her position was challenging due to the small number of women in public office:

Only two women cannot make a change with a government that is comprised of 30 male minister (who mostly have a very patriarchal mentality). It was difficult to pass issues concerning women's rights... For example, when we suggested the female quota, we created a proposal for the law, but it wasn't even discussed. There was a clear opposition to include specific laws or bends for women's issues.¹⁵¹

The trends above display that a true representation of women in politics in Lebanon's context requires weakening political familialism and increasing the number of women in public office. In essence, this demands a democratization effort to attain an inclusive and fair political representation of all groups in society. As Aly Sleem proclaimed, the majoritarian electoral system in Lebanon plays a crucial role in blocking such a vision, as it merely reinforces the power of political familialism and a male-dominated system that regenerates a fixed set of political elites:

Political parties are creating the electoral laws; thus, the electoral districts are tailored for their own interests not to lose seats. This is why we are asking for a proportional electoral system, as the distribution of districts is the only place for a real democratic change in Lebanese politics. This change can restrict political familialism and enhance the participation of all groups in politics, including women, the youth and independent candidates.¹⁵²

When independent candidates were asked about the influence of the current electoral law on their experience, all of them confirmed that the majoritarian system clearly hindered them from winning. One of the candidates, for instance, marked that although she achieved a high percentage of votes (over 40 percent), she couldn't gain any seats due to the proportional system in place. "This is why we are demanding a proportional system to represent everyone in society, not just political parties and their interests", she stated.¹⁵³

As informal networks, clientelism and *wasta* (brokerage) continue to play a significant function in Lebanese politics, unlike a true and functional democracy, political familialism will remain to place politicians (male or female) in positions due to their connections and loyalty, rather than political competencies. This characterization of Lebanese politics as familial, patriarchal and clientelist in nature has thus resulted in an unfavorable environment for a functioning democracy and women's political participation. In turn, most women who aspire for a career in politics feel

¹⁵¹ Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh.

¹⁵² Interview with Aly Sleem.

¹⁵³ Interview with Zeinab Ismail.

excluded, demotivated and do not have hope that their competencies and experiences will help them win.

4.2.4 Regenerating Patriarchal Stereotypes

While the women's movement encouraged the participation of women in politics in optimism that it would destruct stereotypes on women's role in politics, political familialism has paradoxically validated patriarchal gender stereotypes on women's contested role in politics. Since most female candidates have accessed political positions through political familialism, their role was formerly restricted and shaped for them. As such, most female parliamentarians arguably submitted to the male-dominated system and did not facilitate a positive image about women in politics to preserve their positions.

This is not only exhibited by surrendering to machist ideologies of their political parties and refraining from voicing concerns on gender equality, but also by withdrawing their positions when their sons age to replace them, not actively participating in the parliament or tangibly accomplishing a change, and by asserting traditional stereotypes on women's role in politics. Aly Sleem has shared a clear example on the ways some female candidates have merely perpetuated patriarchal stereotypes:

When Nayla Tueini became an MP after her father was assassinated, she attended a few sessions in the parliament and then she stopped coming because she got married and had children. This has largely reinforced the patriarchal image that a women's place is in the house, not in politics or in parliament.¹⁵⁴

In effect, Zeina Kallab, a nominee in the subsequent parliamentary elections, stressed that political familialism in the parliament has created a vicious cycle that harmed women's long-term role in politics:

The women who accessed the parliament through political familialism constructed a long-term negative image for women in politics. Instead of taking advantage of their positions to change patriarchal stereotypes, we have never heard them speak or learnt about a project they have done or a law they amended.¹⁵⁵

Vicky Zwein has remarked on the large consequences such patterns produce for women in politics. For the municipality, an increasing number of competent women have been able to win without political familialism and break patriarchal gender stereotypes on women's in political positions. Since Zwein nominated herself for the municipality elections twice, in 2004 and 2016, she noticed

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Aly Sleem.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Zeina Kallab.

visible changes in the ways people have responded to her nomination as a woman while campaigning in the two distant years. Validating the data by UNDP, which display a 15 percent increase in the number of women elected in the municipality between 2010-2016,¹⁵⁶ Zwein affirmed that in contrast to her experience in 2004, people were positive about having more women in the municipality in 2016. Zwein argues that this largely due to the surge of competent women in the municipality, which exhibited that women did have an effective role in politics. In the parliament, however, political familialism has prevented showcasing the same positive results on the importance of involving proficient and qualified women in decision-making positions; which, in turn, reinforced patriarchal stereotypes that discourage increasing women's political participation.

The focus group with politically active students has displayed that this image demotivates those interested in change to enter the political sphere. This is because the students did not view the parliament as a platform for reform or advancement of society; rather, as a fixed institutional system that is resistant to any form of change. As Theresa Sahyoun stated:

I have no interest in being part of the parliament. The experiences of the women there have confirmed that when you are part of the status quo, you're bound to start working against your beliefs... I don't care about women's representation in parliament if it does not make it easier for less privileged women.¹⁵⁷

4.3 THE LIMITATIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN LEBANON

As the only Arab state to hold periodic free elections (in spite of disruptions during the 15-year civil war), Lebanon is renowned for being the closest example of a 'democracy' in the Arab region. The country's parliament, relatively free press and progressive civil society also facilitate its image as a country of political freedom. Indeed, the state does hold democratic institutions. Nonetheless, the institutions and overall political sphere in Lebanon does not represent a system that guarantees the participation and representation of all groups in society; rather, it holds institutions that are resistant to reform with a fixed set of elites that have historically regenerated their power through political familialism and a majoritarian electoral system. As such, it is a political environment that can be characterized as being restricted to the demands of the few, rather than open to the many. This is clearly demonstrated in the fact that females, who compose over half of society, are entirely excluded from political decision-making positions.

¹⁵⁶ UNDP, '*Women in Municipal Elections 2016*' <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/democratic_governance/Women-in-Municipal-Elections-2016.html> [accessed 13 May 2017].

¹⁵⁷ Focus group with Theresa Sahyoun.

Joseph argues that the entanglement between family-based patriarchy with the state, the lack of separation between ‘public’ and ‘private’, and the deep entrenchment of religion and politics also contribute to the shortage of democracy in Lebanon:

Political leaders recruit their relatives into public offices. Lay people expect their relatives in public offices to act as kin to them, rather than as public officials. Face-to-face relationships grounded in kinship are used to distribute public resources. Political leaders privilege the rights of males and elders over familial females and juniors in the distribution of resources or in the adjudication of legal matters.¹⁵⁸

As such, Lebanon’s democracy can be regarded as dysfunctional, given an environment where access to political decisions highly depends on one’s family connections in politics and informal relationships, rather than their competencies as public officials; and where clientelist networks, rather than democratic institutions and the rule of law, form the foundation to one’s political legitimacy and followers. Roula Douglas has shared an alarming example which demonstrates the way Lebanese politicians prioritize loyalty to reinforce their power rather than utilizing their democratic institutions to engage those with the most suitable capabilities. Douglas referred to an interview on TV with a well-known Lebanese politician, who clearly stated: “When I prepare my lists, I will place those who are most loyal to the party and who I have most confidence in, not those with the most competence.”¹⁵⁹

This political environment constituted a great concern for all the experts, students and female candidates who were interviewed, as such features indicate that the country is not heading to the trajectory of a true democracy. As Chaden Maalouf Najjar, a nominee in the municipality elections and a political activist has stated:

The greatest problem in Lebanon’s democracy is that it doesn’t offer a chance to those who deserve to be in politics. Even if you are exceptionally qualified for a political position, you will not be able to access it. Without wasta, a known political family or informal relationships, men and women alike can not get into Lebanese politics. This is why the conditions of the country are moving backwards, and people don’t have hope that the situation will improve; as the political system is designed to be robust to change.¹⁶⁰

Such a hypothesis was parallel to the perspectives of all the politically active students in the focus group, regardless of their political and party affiliations. For Patrick Azrak, the President of USJ’s Secular Club, Lebanon’s democracy was viewed as an enterprise, or a large corporation, that is run by a number of powerful families.¹⁶¹ To access political positions, students acknowledged this

¹⁵⁸ Joseph, ‘Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World’.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Roula Douglas.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Chaden Maalouf Najjar.

¹⁶¹ Focus group with Patrick Azrak.

would not be feasible unless one establishes informal connections or wealth that may lead them there by submitting to the corrupt practices, ideologies and the system in place—which merely benefit and regenerate the fixed set of elites.

Dr Fahmieh Sharafeddine additionally noted that the way the consociational power-sharing formula has been manipulated by the sectarian elites has key consequences to the shortages of democratic practices in Lebanon: as it has transformed citizens to sectarian individuals. For Sharafeddine, this transformation has not only prioritized sectarian interests rather than civil interests, but also reinforced political familialism and clientelism within the sects, political parties and citizens; producing an unfavorable environment for democracy.¹⁶²

In view of the above, the current features of the political system in Lebanon exhibit that further democratization efforts by reforming the internal institutional governance is of great urgency. This commands a process to decentralize and institutionalize the political system to retain the trust of citizens by encouraging them to rely on machineries and institutions; rather than individuals and families on a sectarian basis. As prospering the internal institutional governance is the most direct method to enhance democracy, political parties must be the first target in this reform due to their fundamental role in democratic institutions. By governing the parties internally through a democratic approach, this essence of governance will naturally extend to state institutions. An increasing number of countries are achieving this strategy through special laws and legislations that regulate political parties, which are referred to as ‘law on political parties.’

Presently, Lebanon does not have a law on political parties (*kanoon el ahzab el seyaseyyeh*). Establishing a law on political parties would be an important step to democratize the current political system and provide an equal opportunity to citizens who aspire to contribute to politics and public office. Such a law would serve as a legal regulation to the functioning of the political parties, or what can be categorized as legal or illegal conduct, including what comprises a political party; the minimum criteria to be applied in the parties’ internal elections; the types of activities they may participate in; and the shapes of party organization and conduct that are considered suitable and appropriate.¹⁶³ Such measures would weaken autocracy within the political parties and diminish perpetual party leadership and political familialism, opening the rivalry for new candidates and enhancing the democratization of the internal characteristics of the parties. Since the phenomenon of political familialism is reinforced by the majoritarian electoral law (which is conveniently tailored according to the parties’ interests), adopting a proportional electoral system will also be necessary to pave the way for institutional bargaining.

¹⁶² Interview with Fahmieh Sharafeddine.

¹⁶³ Kosova Democratic Institute, *Review of Practices of Law on Political Parties*, 2017, <https://www.kdi-kosova.org/publikime/113-miratimi-i-ligjit-per-partite-politike_eng_final.pdf> [accessed 1 May 2017].

4.4 ADVANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The most common and advocated reform policy for boosting women's participation in politics requires the adoption of a women electoral quota: a mandatory percentage of female candidates in public elections. Diffused by the United Nations through its commitment to women's political participation in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, a strong push for quotas arose in the 1990s. Mirroring a global norm concerning the need to enhance women's political representation, today, over one hundred countries have adopted a women's quota policy.¹⁶⁴ The European Commission's report in 2013, advises that introducing female quotas will take governments 20 years to accomplish gender parity, as opposed to 70 years without quotas.¹⁶⁵ After experiencing many failed advocacy and lobbying campaigns to promote women's representation in Lebanese politics, it has become evident that traditional methods to advance this issue are not sufficient: which calls for a necessity to adopt a temporary female quota.

In Lebanon's context, a temporary female quota will be particularly beneficial not only since it will advance women's representation at decision-making positions, but also because it can facilitate in breaking socio-cultural gender stereotypes and patriarchal patterns about women's contested role in politics. The process of familiarizing electors to vote for women is thus expected to change the machist mindset of men and women; which, in turn, will empower and motivate women to run for elections, restrict the role of familial pressures, political familialism and clientelism in the electoral process. As such, this process will naturally assist in curbing political efforts that are opposed to change. The establishment of the National Coalition to support women's political participation in Lebanon, which encompasses numerous women's rights organizations, is an important step to materialize this mechanism. The "Coalition for Women" is united in an effort to pressure the government and demand the inclusion of a 30 percent female quota system in the upcoming parliamentary election. However, adopting a female quota, without a gender mainstreaming strategy that includes electoral, institutional, and educational reforms, is not sufficient to enhance women's political participation in Lebanon's context.

As the research sought to convey, the problem of the underrepresentation of women stems from the deep structures that shape the Lebanese political system and political parties; which are characterized by kinship politics and clientelist networks. This could only be addressed by democratization efforts that could strengthen the citizens' trust with institutions and machineries. As such, establishing a law on political parties to serve as a regulator to their functions and amending the majoritarian electoral law to a PR system are vital steps that need to be taken as part of an institutional reform.

¹⁶⁴ M.L, Krook, 'Gender Quota in Parliament: A Global View', *Al Raida*, Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Issue 126-127, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ European Commission, 'Report on Progress on equality between women and men in 2013', Brussels, 14 April 2014, <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/swd_2014_142_en.pdf> [accessed 1 May 2017].

In effect, this move requires a political decision and will to acknowledge the errors in Lebanon's model of democracy and its exclusion of competent women (and men) from politics. Such a political decision must include further measures to encourage women to run for elections, including an equal citizenship to men; which calls for a lift on all the reservations in CEDAW and an abolishment to the laws that discriminate against women and position them as second-class citizens. To offer women the chance to compete fairly and support their public exposure, exceptional measures must be taken by defining the spending cap on campaigns and the media, since women suffer from evident financial weaknesses. Lastly, it is important to conduct awareness campaigns targeting children and students, the new generation, to advocate for a cultural change that upholds women's rights for the long-term. Institutionally, this could take the form of reforming the educational curricula to eliminate patriarchal attitudes that assign restricted gender roles for men and women.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Women's political participation is increasingly becoming an international norm, where women are globally challenging patriarchal gender roles and progressively evolving their representation in politics. In Lebanon, however, women's political representation has in fact declined since the last parliamentary election in 2009. With its commitment in ratifying conventions that commit to the equality of genders, the Lebanese state has been able to gloss a liberal image about its treatment to women. In practice, however, Lebanese women are restricted from their full-rights and are rejected from a political sphere that has historically been exclusively reserved for men. In paradox with Lebanon's progressive image, women merely represent four out of 128 deputies in the parliament (3.1 percent) and one out of 30 ministers (3 percent). In turn, over half of the Lebanese society are puzzlingly underrepresented and entirely excluded from decision-making positions.

To address appropriate solutions to the exclusion of women in politics, this research sought to shed light on overlooked structural indicators that arguably produce the foundations for the various barriers that women face to access senior political positions. As such, it argues that the root cause of the underrepresentation of women in politics lies within the internal characteristics of political parties that are embedded on a patriarchal and familial structure of political familialism.

Since families are a patriarchal institution, institutionalizing a public discourse that privileges the family and entrenching kinship politics in Lebanon has produced a hostile political culture for women. Given its neopatriarchal structure, the Lebanese state reinforces family-based patriarchy as the citizens' rights are protected through religious leaders and courts; which base their legal rulings according to the principle that the male is the head of the household. In a deep sense, this has extended to the most important social unit in Lebanese society, the family, where males are provided with a privilege position of power (father, brother, or husband) while females are treated as subordinates to males; neglected from equal citizenship as individuals. In politics, this comes into effect by directing familial pressures (from male figures in the nuclear or extended family) to female nominees through various patriarchal measures. For instance, the most common remark all interviewed female candidates have heard by their extensive families when they nominated themselves was, "*There are enough men in the family*"; since they wanted their family to be represented by a male.

This vertical relation is similarly reflected in most political parties in Lebanon, which institutionalize political familialism through practices that replicate the privileged position of 'family' and kin-like connections. This can be observed in the way political leadership is endured through familial lines, from father to son, and by the utilization of kin-like connections in clientelist practices to mobilize political support. As such political familialism entails three main features: 1) it is exercised through the dominant political parties, 2) it is patriarchal and masculine in nature,

given its incorporation of the ideologies of kinship into politics, 3) and it involves practices that incorporate informal relationships and clientelist behaviors into politics.

As a consequence to a political environment that is entrenched in political familialism, aspiring politicians in Lebanon (male or female) who are excluded from such families and their close networks, find that they cannot proceed in senior positions within political parties even if they acquired political competency. In turn, this has produced elite-based parties that mobilize their followings through the predominance of *zu'ama* clientelism (where women are naturally excluded), and a necessity for economic power to be included on their list (a field that women are particularly marginalized from).

Political familialism also internally contributes to the marginalization of women who enter the political sphere based on familial lines. This is evident in the patriarchal feature of political familialism, which entails forms of control and subordination and treats female politicians as passive political objects who are secondary to men. As the women who accessed political positions were merely selected due to a lack of a male heir, their political function was already restricted and shaped for them; which, in turn, has reinforced patriarchal stereotypes on women's role in politics. Moreover, the way most female politicians were expected to defer to the political aspirations and agendas of their familial connections and political parties has produced an ineffective form of women's political participation. Since a woman's presence in the parliament was merely a number, their involvement did not accomplish the legislative behavior which advocates for women's political participation anticipate; including encouraging the progression of political agendas that commit to the equality of genders or represent women's interests. In this respect, the role of political familialism on women's political participation can be addressed as destructive: producing a façade form of women's political participation or a meaningless representation of women.

Whilst political familialism is the origin that generates the discrimination against women in politics, this system is reinforced and upheld by the majoritarian electoral system and the consociational power-sharing formula in place. This arrangement has enshrined polarizations between the sects and enabled powerful families to endure their hereditary positions and status quo while regenerating a male-dominated and clan-based political system. As such, Lebanon's political structure gives birth to toxic elements that obstruct women's political participation and halt the state from becoming a true and functional democracy. Ergo, while efforts to enforce a temporary female quota are essential, a meaningful representation of women in politics requires further institutional reforms to democratize the political system. Forming a law on political parties and adopting a PR system are necessary steps that must be addressed as part of the democratization process and institutional bargaining to terminate the exclusion of women in Lebanese politics.

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APPENDICES

A. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- Interview with Dr. Fahmieh Sharafeddine, President of the Committee for the Follow Up on Women's Issues (CFUWI), 5 May 2017.
- Interview with Marguerite Helou, Political Science Lecturer and expert on women's political participation, 16 May 2017.
- Interview with Roula Douglas, journalist at L'Orient-Le Jour and the Women's Club mentor at University of Saint Joseph, 10 April 2017.
- Interview with Aly Sleem, Research Coordinator at Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), 31 March 2017.
- Interview with Joelle Abou Farhat Rizkallah, Co-founder of Women in Front, 5 April 2017.
- Interview with Wafaa' Dikah Hamzeh, one of the first female ministers of Lebanon, 1 June 2017.
- Interview with Vicky Zwein, female candidate, 8 May 2017.
- Interview with Chaden Maalouf Najjar, female candidate, 17 April 2017.
- Interview with Latifa Hassanieh, female candidate, 12 April 2017.
- Interview with Marwa Rahhal, female candidate, 13 April.
- Interview with Ghada Al Kafi, female candidate, 10 April 2017.
- Interview with Amalia Hassoun, female candidate, 10 April 2017.
- Interview with Zeinab Ismail, female candidate, 11 April 2017.
- Interview with Sarah Bou Kamel, female candidate, 8 May 2017.
- Interview with Zeina Kallab, female candidate, 5 May 2017.

B. INTERVIEW SHEET FOR FEMALE CANDIDATES

1. Experience

- Can you briefly tell us about yourself?
- What has motivated you to nominate yourself as a candidate?
- Can you tell us about your experience running as a female candidate?
- What barriers stood in your way once you have made this decision?
- Were you nominated with a political party or as an independent? How did this influence your experience?

2. Political Familialism

- How did your family react to your decision?
- Do you have any members in your family in politics? Do they belong to particular political parties? How did this influence your experience?
- Did your family encourage or discourage you to access a career in politics? Did you go through any familial pressures?
- Do you believe political familialism is present in Lebanese politics? If so, how important is its role for those aspiring to become politicians?
- Does having a politically known family name facilitate access for political positions? Can this marginalize female candidates?
- How can the challenges for a female candidate who doesn't have a politically known family differ than for a female candidate who has such connections?

3. General/other obstacles

- What are the biggest obstacles you had to face as a woman while trying to access a career as a politician in Lebanon?

- In your opinion, are the obstacles that hinder citizens from accessing political positions the same for a men and women? If not, what are the differences?
- Are political parties playing a role to encourage women's political participation?
- Is the media playing a role to encourage women's political participation?
- Does the Lebanese tradition of a patriarchal and clientilist society prevent women from full participation in political life? If so, in what ways?

4. Legal framework

- From your experience, does the legal framework in Lebanon limit women's political participation in any way?
- Does the current electoral law limit or marginalize women's political participation? If so, how?
- What are the limitations of the nature of "democracy" in Lebanon and the role of informal structures and relationships in it?
- From your opinion, what are the steps that need to be taken to increase women's political participation in Lebanon?

C. INTERVIEW SHEET FOR EXPERTS

- Can you briefly tell us about yourself and the organization you work for?
- How come in a liberal society like Lebanon, where woman achieved renowned triumphs in education and work, the level of political participation of women is still very low?
- What are the biggest obstacles women have to face to get into political positions in Lebanon?
- Does the sectarian political system influence women's political participation? How?
- It is well-established that political parties play a key role in increasing women's political participation; in your opinion, are the dominant parties contributing in encouraging women's leadership?
- To what extent is political familialism present in Lebanese politics in general and how important is its role for those aspiring to become politicians (male and female)?
- Political familialism has been historically the main channel for women to enter the Lebanese parliament. Do you consider this is a key obstacle that discourages women's political participation? How?
- Is Lebanon considered a patriarchal society? If so, in what forms or shapes?
- Does the current electoral law limit women's political participation? If so, how?
- Does the Lebanese tradition of a clientelist society prevent women from full participation in political life? If so, in what ways and is it changing?
- What are the limitations of the nature of "democracy" in Lebanon and the role of informal structures and relationships in it?
- In your opinion what decisions/steps need to be taken to increase female participation in Lebanese politics?

D. LANDMARKS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (UNDP, 2016)

1952	Establishment of the Lebanese Council for Women Issuance of a decree granting suffrage to literate women.	1996	Three women elected to parliament (Nayla Moawad, Bahia Hariri and Nouhad Souaid).
1953	Issuance of a law granting literate women the right to vote and run as candidates in parliamentary election.	1997	Lebanon signs and ratifies CEDAW.
1957	Issuance of a law establishing the right of all men and women to be registered as eligible voters.	2000	Three women elected to parliament (Nayla Moawad, Bahia Hariri and Ghinwa Jalloul).
1963	First woman elected to parliament (Mirna Boustani). Issuance of a law granting women an equal right to vote and run as candidates in municipal elections.	2004	First time appointment of female ministers (Wafaa Dikah Hamzeh and Leila Al Solh Hamadeh).
1991	One woman elected to parliament (Nayla Moawad).	2005	Six women elected to parliament (Nayla Moawad, Bahia Hariri, Ghinawa Jalloul, Gilberte Zouein, Strida Geagea and Solange Gemayel).
1992	Three women elected to parliament (Nayla Moawad, Bahia Hariri and Maha Khoury Asaad).	2006	Four women elected to parliament (Bahia Hariri, Gilberte Zouein, Strida Geagea and Nayla Tueini).
1995	Lebanon participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women and signs the Beijing Declaration.		

E. UNITED NATIONS OBLIGATIONS AND STANDARDS (ratified by the Lebanese state) (United Nations, 2005)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.

Article 25. Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity 1. To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

2. To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.

Article 26. All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Article 2. States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

Article 7. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.