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The Confessional Model and Sectarian Politics:

Lesson's from Lebanon and the Future of Iraq

Honors 4990

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This paper is the product of my time as a student in the Middle East, and especially in Lebanon, for which I can generously thank the unrelenting support of my mother and father. During my time in Beirut I was fortunate to have the opportunity to learn under the instruction of Dr. Basel Sollukh through the SINARC program hosted at the Lebanese American University. My experience in the Levant was further enriched by my time working at the Lebanese Transparency Association that opened my eyes to the endemic levels of corruption and other issues facing the region. Finally, while it may not be possible to list all the names that deserve mentioning, this paper could not have been possible without the countless stimulating conversations from friends and peers along the way who deserve my sincere gratitude.

Like microbes in a petri dish, the streets of the capital were clogged with an unusually copious volume of traffic. It was rush hour and a convoy of olive drab Humvees had made parking lots of the roadways on my route through Beirut. I would have to be swift in navigating the maze of automobiles and concrete low-rises if I was to stay on time through the entanglement. Striding up one final bullet-pocked block toward the Lebanese American University, it was hard not to notice the exodus of college students retreating in the opposite direction. Exclamations of dismay and exasperation were all but painted on their faces as they pushed past. At the top of the hill I rounded the corner only to find the university encircled by military personnel brandishing riot shields and belt-fed machine guns. Class was called off for the day.

A fight had broken out between students of rival political coalitions, who ran as candidates of actual national parties in the 2011 undergraduate elections. Each side had taken to hurling stones, chairs and trashcans before the army was eventually deployed. “Supporters of former Prime Minister Saad Harari’s Future Movement clashed with students loyal to Speaker Nabih Berri,” reported an English language news agency (Kheir, 2011). As the dust settled however, it became clear that the roots of the melee ran deeper than partisan enmity alone. In Lebanon, the electorate is scrupulously separated along ethno-religious divides. What had superficially masqueraded as a clash of ideology was principally a theological feud between the Middle East’s Sunni and Shia Islamic factions.

The engagement serves as a window into the animosities that have come to pervade nearly every aspect of daily life. Today, polarizing sectarian identities contribute to the ongoing politicization of everything from holy matrimony to soccer matches. It is evident that Lebanon

faces a festering national crisis, which threatens to reinvigorate communal tensions and further destabilize society.

But what if it was possible to engineer society so as to accommodate these forces, thereby averting future conflicts? Answering this question had weighed heavily on the imperial French when the seaside territory was initially carved out of Greater Syria. The new nation would feature a constitution that set it apart from any other country of the time. Under the innovative power sharing structure, specific governmental offices were to be reserved for specific ethno-religious communities. Each election cycle, the President would be a Maronite Catholic, the Prime Minister would be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament would be a Shia Muslim. In this way the three most prominent “confessional” groups were guaranteed theoretically proportional representation under the law (Friedman, 1989). The state was to be more than another postcolonial artifact; it was an ambitious experiment in peace building.

Lebanon’s one-of-a-kind system and sectarian diversity have combined to produce a society unique in its strengths and weaknesses. However, the course of the last decade has produced another Middle Eastern state, which in its composition bears a striking resemblance to confessionalism.

Since the U.S. led coalition toppled Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime in 2003, Iraq has shared increasingly convergent experiences with that of Lebanon’s idiosyncratic past. Similarities are perhaps most notable between their governmental frameworks, each deliberately designed to placate primordial grievances.

The confessional system embodies the *de jure* incarnation of the “consociational” model advocated chiefly by political scientist Arend Lijphart as a means for guaranteeing different demographic groups government representation in ethnically conflicted societies. According to

his prescription consociationalism features four primary characteristics that define the model. Firstly, offices are to be allocated to each sect based on the proportion of the overall population that sect comprises (Dixon, 2011). In the Lebanese case, Maronites, whom at the time of independence constituted the most numerous ethnic segment, were awarded the post of Presidency. In accordance with an existing Catholic/Sunni Muslim pact, Sunnis were allocated the Premiership and Shia Muslims were soon after reserved the office of the Speaker of the House. Proportional allocation was further distributed throughout lower levels of government. It was agreed that parliament would be divided by a six to five formula of Christians to Muslims.

Secondly, the consociational framework calls for a “Grand Coalition” to bring together community leaders for inclusive engagement on shared policies. Thirdly, communal autonomy grants each sect a degree of independence to address its own affairs as it sees fit (Dixon, 2011). In Lebanon the 18 officially recognized religious groups have the authority to determine Personal Status Laws regarding the identity of their members. Eventually, the Lebanese Shia and Druze were even granted their own judiciary (Kriener, 2012). Lastly, a mutual veto is granted to each sect so that “any decisions deemed detrimental by any community can be voted down” (Imad Harab, 2006).

It should be recognized that the power-sharing framework inherited by postcolonial Lebanon, while preventing the tyranny of many of its Arab neighbors, shaped a reality of mutual fear among religious groups. Confessional government has steadily done its share in polarizing loyalties in favor of the recognized religious communities and away from a coherent sense of Lebanese nationalism. The political structure therefore strengthens its ethno-sectarian groups at its own expense. Consequently, the confessional system in fact fuels the very effect it was tailored to mitigate. After the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990 ethno-religious tensions became

even more entrenched. Iraq, having recently experienced its own civil war under U.S. occupation, and currently split in the same communal manner, is at risk of falling into the confessional trap that has marred Lebanese society for decades.

Nearly ten years since the overhaul of Iraq's governing institutions, Baghdad finds itself at a critical period of transition. Potential still exists for a population of coexistence and sustainable development but, as evinced by the Lebanese record, this outcome does not follow from the tenets of confessionalism. If Iraq is to progress past its civil hostilities and endeavor for modernization and stability, it must shed its political sectarian chains before they become further embedded within society.

In order to foster a sound sense of national identity, confessional civilizations must integrate state schools, deemphasize religious differences, and promote a shared history through standardized curriculums. Due to the pivotal role education can play in the upbringing of a responsible and cohesive citizenry; education policy will be the focus of this trans-national analysis on public service provision.

This comparison is further facilitated by a striking abundance of qualitative as well as quantitative similarities ranging from demographics to historical benchmarks.

Comparative Education Development and Sect Polarization

Schooling functions beyond the instruction of its established discipline areas and extends to the socialization of the student into society. This effect presents itself in both Iraq as well as Lebanon through the coevolution of educational reform initiatives and sectarian undercurrents. No comparison of confessional education policy should be considered comprehensive without an

overview of institutional developments and of the historical interplay of each country's sectarian groups.

Both Iraq and Lebanon feature three dominant ethno-religious communities whose jockeying characterizes each country's predominant political and social milieus. Therefore a sum of six independent ethnic segments will be emphasized throughout the course of the study. Of these demographics, Arab-Sunni and Shia Islamic denominations are notable players in both of the featured states. Subsequently, consociational grievances can often seem to duplicate themselves between Lebanon and Iraq as these sects coevolve in reaction to one another across the wider Middle East. Yet, Sunni and Shia camps are not entirely monolithic communities when analyzed in the regional context. Aspects of the national and local environments contribute to characteristic differences that colorize and differentiate all six respective ethno-religious segments. Understanding the progression of these groups is crucial to interpreting current sectarian realities, which prevail throughout the societies of both countries.

This chronicle will focus mainly on the periods of confessionalism most relevant to this study. For Lebanon, confessional history spans the decades after its liberation from the French Mandate in 1943 till the present (Harb, 2006). Iraq in contrast has experienced a much shorter, albeit eventful, confessional era since the establishment of the new constitution in 2005. Several pre-confessional developments also warrant mention along within the following chronology.

Lebanon owes its existence in large part to foreign influence, which has characterized the Levantine region since the Ottoman era. The French particularly became increasingly involved until the ratification of the Lebanese constitution in 1926. Under the guidance of Paris, Lebanon would become a Maronite state for Maronite Christians who resided in the northern mountains.

Doubts concerning the viability of the state persuaded the French to expand Lebanese territory to include the agricultural south and the commercial Beirut port (B. Sollukh, personal communication, November 2011). ¹By the time the dots were connected and the lines were drawn, a significant and lucrative enclave had been carved out of Greater Syria. Seemingly overnight the balance of factional power had been turned on its head. Muslims, who once lived in a fairly homogenous Islamic State then became a minority whose power decreased under the now majority of Catholics. In this way the establishment of Lebanon was also the creation of an enduring identity crisis. It's due in part to this crisis that the aforementioned Confessional government was created.

Today's consociational blueprint however is a response to age-old sectarian divisions, many which emerged in antiquity and became more and more hostile in modern times. The initial delineation of Lebanon's borders tended to frame communal struggles in Christian VS. Muslim terms. Although it could be said that competition among all Lebanese factions has steadily intensified, the dominant contemporary tug-of-war is divided between inter-Muslim groups.

The rift bisecting Islamic orthodoxy goes back to the sixth century A.D. following the death of the prophet Mohammed. Soon after his passing a dispute arose concerning how to determine Mohammed's successor who would lead the Islamic community, or Umma, as head caliph. Many religious elders expected to proceed in accordance with customary tribal practice, nomination by consensus. These forerunners were the first members of the Sunni sect, whom

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ultimately followed through with their tradition, agreeing to appoint Mohammed's father-in-law, Abu Bakr, as the Umma's first caliph (Nasr, 2006).

At the same time, a minority of Muslim followers advocated that the prophet's successor be descended from his familial bloodline. Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Mohammed's cousin, was designated as their prophet of choice who, it was felt, had been usurped by the Sunni community's anointment. This disagreement was further invigorated when Ali's revered second son, Imam Hussein, went to battle against the forces of the Sunni hierarchy in modern day Iraq. Impossibly outnumbered, Hussein and a meager contingent of followers was no match for the Caliphate. His death and the historic sidelining of the community by dominant Sunni oligarchies have since built notions of marginalization into the Shia identity. The contemporary mainstream ideologue tends to venerate the concept of martyrdom and an unending struggle between good and evil (Nasr, 2006).

By the 11th century an alternative doctrine had developed out of Shia theology and a portion of the community subdivided. This minority, the Druze, follow a highly secretive religion that prefers to isolate itself between the mountains of Lebanon and Syria (Blanford, 2011). Although they are not among Lebanon's three primary sects focused on within this study, they have at times managed to shake the country's social and political arena.

In 1840 deteriorating relations with an intermixed Maronite population drove the Druze to open and armed conflict with their Christian compatriots. Warfare between the two factions grew in frequency and eventually erupted into ethnic cleansings perpetrated by both sides in 1860 (Salibi, 1988). In the decades since then the Druze have gone on to wage a brutal campaign during the second Lebanese Civil War, and to exercise a particular political leverage which has empowered the community while garnering intrusion by international actors.

The calamitous events of 1860 drew the attention of the French who felt it was proper to protect their Catholic fellows from Druze aggressions. Soon thereafter the French landed troops in the then Ottoman Empire and sent them to be stationed in the Mount Lebanon territory where the Christian population was concentrated (Salibi, 1988).

Iraq shares history as a member of the former Ottoman Empire that secured territory there through centuries of contestation. The modern capital, Baghdad, had once been the capital of the powerful Abassid Caliphate and had developed into a wealthy metropolis. By the time the Ottomans came to control the area the Abassid Empire had long since fallen and Baghdad's prosperity had dwindled. However, the country could serve as a buffer from potential outside attackers attempting to assault the Ottoman heartland. Additionally Iraq possesses the four most important Shia shrines located in Najaf, Samarra, Kadhimayn, and Karbala where Imam Hussein was martyred. Despite economic decline these shrines gave Iraq an invaluable religious significance.

In order to control the territory Sultan-Caliphs of the Ottoman Empire were tasked with defeating Persian forces that controlled the area (Tikriti, 2007). The imperial clash again pitted Muslim Sunnis and Muslim Shia against each other, a theme that has resurged in contemporary times.

In 1546 the Ottomans captured Baghdad and Basra and defended the locations from numerous Persian attempts to reclaim the holy land. Around this time another Sunni group was also consolidating its regional authority. The Kurds, an ethnic minority with their own language and cultural practices, had recently been granted their own semi-autonomous enclave in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah as a result of the Two Iraq's Campaign (Yildiz, 2012). This acquisition was one of the last great advancements of the Kurdish 'Golden Age' that lasted from the twelfth to

the sixteenth centuries (Bengio, 2012). Since this period of development regional governments have subverted the Kurds, fearful of the consequences independence could have for the strength of their body politic. Today the Kurds are recognized as the largest nation without a state, only making significant gains toward true sovereignty in modern times.

By the 18th Century border disputes with the Shia east had calmed down and the contemporary Iraqi boundaries had begun to take shape. As Druze and Maronites clashed in Lebanon and Syria the Ottomans faced a new threat emerging from the deserts to the south, this time from within their very own religious camp. According to the Arabian Sunni Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahab the suffering of the Islamic world resulted due to straying from the initial traditions of the time of the prophet. Offshoots such as Sufism and Shiism were viewed as deviant and subversive diversions. His ultra orthodox teachings advocated a strict adherence to a puritanical interpretation of the Quran for spiritual vitality. Abd al-Wahab preached that the collective spiritual cleansing of the Sunni community and the emulation of Prophet Muhammad's Medina city-state could redeliver the *Umma* to prosperity. However conservative the simplistic epistemology proved to be an appealing prescription for societal recovery (Meijer, 2009).

The doctrine of Wahhabism as it came to be known inspired followers throughout central Arabia that rejected the authority of the Ottoman Empire and the outside religious minorities they tolerated. After allying with the powerful al-Sa'ud family the movement advanced to southern Iraq and began attacking Shiite shrines, including storming Karbala. Shia Clerics then attempted to bolster their political stature and counter the Wahhabi tide by proselytizing Iraqi tribes. The campaign led to a gradual but major expansion of the Shia community whose

increased numbers, along with numerous additional factors, have helped secure them legislative dominance following the latest American invasion (Tikriti, 2007).

More than any other indigenous sects the interplay of the Shia, Sunnis and Kurds have characterized the Iraqi state just as the Shia, Sunnis and Maronites have been the predominant constructive forces within Lebanon.

The end of WWI resulted in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. The League of Nations mandate for the Lebanese territory went to France, which later created the Greater State of Lebanon in 1926 (Salibi, 1988). The state's Confessional constitution was based on the success of similar tactics used in managing multi-ethnic conflicts in the Netherlands (Dixon, 2011). Along with the four concociational principles the constitution also laid the groundwork for the Lebanon's education system. Article 10 of the original document granted each ethno-religious group the right to administer their own private schools. However, in an effort to distinguish the country from the cultural imprints of the French Mandate, Lebanon's first office holders revised the law so that all private schooling would be subject to management by the Ministry of Education. Domestic debates about national identity, combined with foreign policy complications resulted in a brief civil war in 1959. Shortly thereafter, it was decided that private schools should instead be supervised by Lebanon's six governorates (Abouchedid, Nasser & Jeremy, 2002).

Many private educational institutions had been established during the French Mandate through foreign avenues. As a result of Protestant and French missionary activity Christian schools had sprung up in the Mt. Lebanon area. This prompted the Sunnis and Druze to open their own academic institutions. At the time of independence these learning facilities provided an alluring alternative to those of the weak and inexperienced state. The head start of private sector

schooling, the autonomy afforded to them by law and the relative sovereignty of Lebanese sectarian communities fostered the dominance of these nongovernment academic entities.

Theoretically, public and private schools are required to work in coordination with one another, however each sphere now functions independently of the other (Nahas, 2011).

Lebanon's geographic advantage as a regional trading intersection, in combination with its strong banking sector, contributed to an economic golden age in the sixties and mid seventies. Tourists came to equate the capital, Beirut, to the Paris or Switzerland of the Middle East. However, the prosperity proved to be a deceptive façade as sectarian tensions deepened and perpetuated governmental deadlock. Beyond the establishment of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), in 1971, very few educational accomplishments managed to bear fruit (Nahas,2011). An ensuing second civil war stagnated educational development for its 15-year duration and accelerated an emerging brain drain problem. (Abouchedid, Nasser & Jeremy, 2002).

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Similarly, the contemporary Iraqi political sphere is influenced by an additional dimension of sectarian atmospherics with which its intertwined. Sectarian divisions have been politicized within Iraq for as long as the state can be considered "Iraqi." Independence was granted in 1932 after the British Mandate installed a Hashemite Sunni monarchy to rule over a Shia religious majority. Sectarian polarization increased following the 1968 military coup that brought the Ba'th Party to power. Also seen in Syria, this party outwardly promoted an ideology of secularism, socialism and Pan-Arab Nationalism. The transition to Ba'athism corresponded with score settling, reprisals and further centralization. Subsequently, this resulted in the first exodus of Iraqi citizens (Geopolitics, 2009).

Soon after the establishment of the University of Baghdad, came the discovery of massive oil resources, which created a need for engineering skills. Iraq found itself awash with a sudden influx of foreign petrol dollars. The inflated budget allowed President al-Bakr's regime to embark on an ambitious campaign against illiteracy with which he could attract back Iraqi national expatriates. Over the next 20 years, Iraq fortified its educational policy until it was recognized as one of the most advanced academic systems in the Middle East. All schooling, from the primary through university levels became free and open to all Arabs, including foreigners (Issa, J., & Jamil, H, 2010).

The 1979 revolution in neighboring Iran would have major repercussions for both Lebanon and Iraq. For the first time Shia fundamentalism, historically sidelined by Sunnism, succeeded in installing itself within the regional international arena. Buoyed by the crystallization of Shia Political Islam the new government moved to export its religious ideology throughout the Middle East (Hazran, 2010).

That same year al-Bakr abruptly resigned from the presidency and was replaced by Saddam Hussein. The changeover was marked by the execution of 22 senior party officials (Gause, 2010). As a majority Shia country neighboring Iran, Iraq's openly defensive Sunni administration began attempts to forestall the rise of a religiously galvanized opposition movement (Hazran, 2010). However, policies targeting the Shia caste and clerical hierarchy proved only to accelerate the religious polarization they were intended to undermine.

At the same time, Saddam also intensified his undertakings against Kurdish separatists in the north. During the beginning phase of the Sunni-Baathist/Kurdish conflict, Baghdad went about a massive resettlement project. Thousands of villages of Kurds were forcefully relocated to government-monitored areas. Any of those who did not cooperate were listed as traitors and

marked for execution (Power, 2002). Saddam's two-fronted sectarian assault set the state on a trajectory of ethno-religious tensions that would have catastrophic consequences later on.

In late September of 1980, Saddam Hussein launched attacks against the Iranian revolutionary state, initiating the grueling Iran/Iraq war that proceeded for the better part of the decade. Despite an exhaustive stalemate persisting on the battlefield the war seemed to have little effect on Iraqi state education. Even as Iran supported revolutionary Shia and Kurdish proxies within Iraq, the Ba'athists managed to continue their educational advancements (Guase, 2010).

In 1984 the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), was listed above 100% with high gender parity. In 1985, Iraq qualified for classification as an illiteracy free society according to UNESCO standards, accomplishing its goal of total reading proficiency. It should be noted that this pan-Iraqi achievement was accomplished in spite of Saddam's increasing political and social marginalization of Shia communities. During the last half of the 1980's the toll of the Iran/Iraq War, in conjunction with spiraling Kurdish tensions, spurred a period of brain drain and internal crisis (Issa, & Jamil, 2010).

1988 saw the apex of both of the Baath's major conflicts. By this time the two most prominent Kurdish parties had thrown their weight behind an Iranian victory and even actively fought against the Baghdad centered regime alongside Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The United States had withdrawn its support for Kurdish fighters in the interest of fortifying Saddam Hussein against the prospects of Iranian regional hegemony. In the absence of American supervision the Baath regime was free to combat Kurdish separatists as it saw necessary. That year, chemical gas attacks and mass executions befell the Kurdish north leaving upwards of 200,000 dead (Power, 2002).

With the Kurdish insurgency suppressed Baghdad felt the time was right to negotiate the end of a futile war that had resulted in utter deadlock. Although internal and external engagements now appeared to be on hold, the eighties produced an Iraq demarcated with sectarian grievances that had long been at work eroding the social fabric in Lebanon.

Nearly 15 years of fighting had fatigued Lebanese militias and resulted in all but state collapse. The course of the war had brought about the invasion of the Palestinians, Syrians, Israelis, Americans, Iranians, French and others. Lebanon's municipalities crippled and contributed to an environment of lawlessness, which invited foreign guerilla forces. According to former CIA Case Officer Bob Baer, at one point even the Japanese Red Army had taken advantage of the pandemonium and set up shop (2002). Another notable militant group was born in a struggle to oust Israeli forces.

The emergence of the militia would not have been likely if it had not been for the influence of the Shia Imam Sayyed Musa al-Sadr, who mobilized his coreligionists in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. Due to the demographic composition of the valley, infrastructure and other public services had been neglected for city centered development projects. In 1968 Musa al-Sadr founded the Movement of the Deprived to empower the Shia poor and embolden them to confront the government. When Lebanon fought itself in civil war less than a decade later the movement formed an army named Amal with Musa al-Sadr as its leader (Blanford, 2012).

When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran the conventionally subordinate Shiia found themselves with a state to call their own. Eager to export their revolutionary ideology in search of allies, Iran decided to back Shia Amal in Lebanon. However, Amal could not decide whether it was or was not in favor of collaboration and the group divided. Thus Hezbollah, which favored Iranian intervention, was born. It wasn't long before the new player caught the

eye of Syria, who saw Hezbollah as an enemy's enemy. Although opposed to Iranian ideology, Syria also began backing the Shia against the Lebanese Maronites. In the following years, a young Hezbollah found itself waging pitched battles against Israel and the renegade South Lebanese Army. (Sorenson, 2010).

Following more than a decade of war and ethnic cleansing, Lebanese sectarian prejudices had reached heights that seemed irreparable. However, in 1989, Saudi Arabia led an international summit that arbitrated the end of the second Civil War. Both Israel and Syria maintained a military presence within the country, the former holding ground in the South and the latter in the east and west. In order to ensure a peaceful border with their primary Middle Eastern ally, the Americans permitted Syria uninterrupted control of Lebanese affairs (B. Sollukh, personal communication, November 2011). With a green light from Washington the Syrian administration was free to thoroughly exploit their western neighbors, establishing vast power centers within the government (Sorenson, 2010). Syria's unchecked foreign policy also allowed them to preserve Hezbollah as an armed insurgency, which was intended for use as a bargaining chip to reclaim the Golan Heights from Israeli occupation. Hezbollah had decided to recognize Syria's dominion over the Lebanese polity in the post-war period and in return the phrase "All necessary means to liberate all Lebanese territory" was added to the Ta'if Accords, which concluded the Lebanese Civil War (Blanford, 2011). Syria used this detail as authorization to allow Hezbollah to keep their weapons while all other Lebanese groups were given six months to disarm (Young, 2010). After decades of development Hezbollah has now emerged as a serious challenger to both foreign and domestic authorities operating a virtual ministate in the east and south.

Only a year after the ratification of the Ta'if Accords and only three years after the end of the Iran/Iraq War, Saddam annexed Kuwait. This rushed decision served as an ultimatum to the

monarchies of the Gulf, who had been producing crude above the quotas of their collaborative Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As the availability of crude increased the price per barrel began to dive. These market fluctuations betrayed the vulnerability of Iraq's oil-dependent rentier economy, and Saddam blamed Kuwait for attempting to engineer his downfall. His subsequent military incursion into Kuwait prompted U.S. response, which initiated the first Gulf War. As punishment for the invasion of an American ally, and for Saddam's pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD's) Washington began to impose a regime of massive sanctions against the Iraqi state (Gause, 2010). The timing inconveniently coincided with a new Baath policy of establishing a new university in each governorate that was hindered by the ensuing fiscal crisis (Issa, J., & Jamil, H., 2010).

Throughout the 1990's Iraq's economic isolation contributed to a climate of hardship and dissention. Funding for public services began to dry up. Gone were the golden days of educational triumph. Iraq's one-time academic model suffered stagnation and devolution, as did many other categories of essential public services. Subsequently, the shortcomings of state provisions drove citizens back to their primordial ties, which reinvigorated ethnic and religious fractionalization (Hazran, 2010). To placate his nation Saddam tried to maintain his grip on society by pursuing populist theatrics. Throughout the decade he became progressively more outspoken about the strength of his faith and even introduced religion into the state curriculum (UNESCO, 2011). Nevertheless, Iraqi national unity continued to degrade under the burden of sanctions until the American invasion of 2003.

The U.S. led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), in charge of reconstructing Iraq, wasted no time and embarked on a campaign of drastic restructuring. Alternative frameworks proposed by the CPA reflected the authorities' ignorance of Iraq's sectarian rifts, which were

unleashed with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and his Baathist henchmen. George W. Bush, Commander and Chief of U.S. Armed Forces, himself was oblivious to the nuances of Islam. According to former Ambassador Peter Galbriath, when he informed Bush of the Shia/Sunni divide just two months prior to invasion, the President responded simply, “I thought they were Muslims” (Avard, 2006). Coalition forces, penned up within their Forward Operating Bases (FOB’s), managed to remain perennially uninformed of the intensifying sectarian violence escalating outside of their defensive perimeters. By the time it was realized that primordial communal animosities had been reawakened armed clashes had become a regular occurrence (Chandrasekaran, 2006). Caught off guard, the CPA attempted to maintain the coherence of the Iraqi state and preserve its fantasy of establishing an exemplary democracy in the Middle East.

Under the leadership of Paul Bremmer, the Iraqi Interim Governing Council (IGC) was created according to the confessional formula that had marred Lebanon for decades. The proportional quota system was imposed to fill council seats. Each community was afforded a mutual veto on constitutional proposals. The high government posts of the IGC were reorganized along sectarian lines so that the president was Kurdish, the prime minister was a Shia, and the speaker of parliament was a Sunni (Katzman, 2013). Later in 2008, a new election law codified a consociational distribution of parliament (Hazran, 2010). The application of this structure actually functioned to sustain sectarian struggles while institutionalizing them into national politics.

At the same time, Bremmer implemented an aggressive policy of “De-Baathification” that unemployed vast swaths of Saddam’s former bureaucracy. Overnight, approximately 30,000 officials (mostly Sunnis), found themselves out of work as the Shia majority maneuvered to fill the vacancies. By the time the new constitution was ratified in 2005, many of the victims of De-

Baathification had organized into an insurgent movement that openly fought the American occupiers to reclaim their historic post at the top of Iraqi society. This conflict destabilized a tenuous atmosphere of repressed sectarian hostilities. The Sunni, Shia and Kurds at last came to outright civil war in 2006 (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010).

The Modern Educational Structure

Despite sharing some common challenges today, historical differences between the Lebanese and Iraqi governmental frameworks contribute to their modern day differences.

The structure of the educational systems varies greatly when comparing each of these countries. In theory, public and private Lebanese schools are to operate in coordination with one another, although in practice these two sectors are quite independent (Nahas, 2011). The state of Lebanon offers free education from the primary through secondary levels. All schools are principally under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Higher Learning (MEHL). The Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) is supervised by the MEHL, provides administrative support and plays a leading role in structuring the state curriculum. Additionally an eight-member education committee evaluates institutions in conjunction with the MEHL based on an outdated 1961 law (Abouchedid, Nasser & Jeremy, 2002).

In Lebanon elementary education is universal and mandatory for children ages six through twelve. Education is divided into two main phases; Primary and Secondary. Primary education is further segmented into two stages. The first stage includes kindergarten and grades one, two and three. Until 2010 students were automatically promoted through these grades, however, due to repetitively low performance in grade four, this policy was repealed. Primary stage two involves grades four, five and six. Grades seven through nine then comprise an

intermediate primary level that culminates in “Brevet” exam, required for advancement. The Secondary phase extends until the age of 18 during which students work toward two baccalaureate tests in the first and third year (Mattar, 2011).

Lebanon boasts one of the highest graduation rates in the Middle East region. However only 37% of the total student body is enrolled in public schools (Nahas, 2011). For those that do attend public schools the curriculum is largely secular with special priority given to the construction of national identity. There are two primary categories of private schooling, those being fee-paying, and government subsidized (Mattar, 2011). The bulk of private schools is overwhelmingly administered by religious communities and operates highly independent of government oversight. These institutions are not required to teach the standard national curriculum and are not governed by the Ministry of Education but rather are under the supervision of their Governorates (Shuyab, 2007).

The Lebanese state has also set additional policy to expand the student’s extra-curricular involvement. The MEHL mandates all schools to establish student councils and encourage pupils to participate. Unfortunately, these organizations are absent in many public schools. Administrators are often apprehensive about actually instituting councils. In an interview one principal told researchers that the councils would be used for “political debates and trivial matters” (Shuyab, 2007)).

Iraq’s model is much more centralized in contrast. The Ministry of Education governs preschool through secondary education while the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research governs tertiary establishments. Within this framework each Governorate has a Directorate of Education that handles administrative responsibilities associated with education,

such as employment and training. Provincial education committees may make policy recommendations to each Directorate but have no official binding powers (Geopolicity, 2009).

Opposite of the Lebanese system, Iraq spends a large amount of its budget on education and covers the costs of schooling from the primary through university levels. However, after the 2003 invasion, U.S. led coalition forces have advocated the opening of Iraq to the international market and private schools have played an increasingly prominent role (Saltman, 2007).

At present, schooling may begin as early as age four with enrollment in kindergarten. Compulsory education starts with the Primary Education phase and includes grades one through six. Secondary Education takes place in two three-year cycles and is provided as a right to all citizens free of charge but is not mandatory. The first cycle is considered Intermediate Education, and spans ages 12-14. The second cycle is Preparatory Education and takes place over a three-year period from ages 15-17. During this final phase students may choose either arts or sciences based tracts. Following the baccalaureate year some may enroll directly in a state sponsored elementary teacher-training program or go on to university (Issa, J., & Jamil, H, 2010).

Trends in Education Reform

As previously demonstrated sectarian divisions now characterize both countries' political and social milieus. Mitigating internal communal conflict has emerged as the foremost priority in each of the states. In addition to producing civil wars in Lebanon as well as Iraq, the evolution of ethno-religious associations increasingly jeopardizes the legitimacy of the state as a sovereign entity. In order for government institutions to survive they must foster a cohesive sense of nationalism and unity for future generations. The study of Lebanon's past brought acclaimed

Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi to the conclusion that “for any people to develop and maintain a sense of political community, it is necessary that they share a common vision of their past” (1988). This reality places acute importance on the role of education in encouraging understanding between sects. In fact, an analysis of each country’s pedagogic reform initiatives reveals similar trends that reflect the prevailing ethno-religious polarization.

Second Chances

Firstly, both Iraq and Lebanon have come upon the opportunity to inaugurate new government frameworks and policies that could alleviate sectarian infighting. In both instances the decision making process was dominated by foreign powers and directly affected education protocol. For Lebanon, this juncture offered itself in the form of the Ta’if Accord that ended the second Civil War in 1989. Along with restructuring political institutions the treaty also set out to rehabilitate the collapsed education system. 15 years of combat had wrought havoc on Lebanese infrastructure, including schools. Lebanon’s only public university became disjointed, its campus split in half along the “Green Line” of foliage that constituted a no-mans’-land separating Christian and Muslim Beirut (Nahas, 2011). Reintegrating society would require new approaches to identity building.

Two primary objectives were set in response to these daunting challenges. The Ta’if aimed to re-socialize school children into a cohesive national identity. This was crucial to addressing existing consociational grievances. Secondly, the accords would attempt to standardize textbooks, which help to instill future generations with tolerance and protect the sustainability of the state (Shuyab, 2007). Not only were textbooks 20 years outdated, the fact that the majority of Lebanese students attended private, religious and semiautonomous schools

meant the promotion of several inconsistent historical narratives. This issue had become an enduring theme within Lebanese educational discourse. On the eve of the 1975 Civil War, Lebanon's communal leaders convened to acknowledge for the first time the need to compose a standard text to be mandated in all learning institutions (Abouchedid, K., Nasser, R., & Jeremy, V. B. 2002). However, ensuing factional violence made the reform of almost any type of public good nearly impossible.

Unfortunately the Ta'if Accord undermined the potential of its two educational goals in three ways. First, Article 95 redistributed the governments Grade-One Posts (the highest of five promotional levels) according to sectarian status. Secondly, a Constitutional Council was in order to introduce an additional layer of judiciary oversight, but it could only be appealed by religious leaders. These two provisions reinforced the importance of sectarianism that had been enshrined in the original constitution. Lastly, the Ta'if Accord upheld the power of private schools to teach their own variations of history (Shuyab, 2007).

According to a study by Nisreen Salti and Jad Chaaban "the Ta'if Accords reinforced sectarian rifts by focusing reform on power sharing and confessional redistribution rather than the creation of a secular citizenry." Researchers used voting records from 1993 until 2005 to estimate the sectarian composition of each district. Then the percentages were compared with the sects' share of public funding for development related fields such as Health Care and Education from 1996 to 2005. The results showed that the distribution of public expenditure closely mirrored each sect's proportion of the overall population. For example, the Druze, which account for 6% of the politically active Lebanese electorate were found to receive 6% of the government's total financial allocations for public services. Shia, 27% of the voting population, were a beneficiary of 27% of expenditures (Salti., Chaaban, 2010). These figures display the

disbursement of state capital as based on sectarian divisions rather than the educational needs of the citizenry.

Iraq's watershed opportunity arose with the drafting and ratification of the new constitution in 2005. Significant measurements were taken to mandate a nondiscriminatory provision of education services. Article 34 stipulated, "education is a right to all people and is necessary for the progress of society." Article number four established Iraq's two primary languages as Arabic and Kurdish while upholding the right of every citizen to use their mother tongue, i.e. Turkomen, Armenian etc (UNESCO, 2011). While the constitution attempted to promote equality the new government also systemized division along sectarian lines through the de facto sectarian distribution of government posts, thus reinforcing the effect it was meant to curb. Like the Ta'if Accord, the IGC's ethno-religious quota system struggled to fight fire with fire. A version of this quota system eventually materialized in de-jure form with the 2008 elections law (Hazran, 2011).

Reform Initiatives

Following these transformations, reform initiatives developed in a remarkably analogous manner.

Lebanon's 1993 Educational Development Plan had three primary ambitions, inspired in part by the guidelines of the Ta'if Accord. First, the plan would have worked to cultivate Lebanese national sentiments as a means to unify the 18 competing sects. Second, it would encourage tolerance and coexistence among youth in the school setting. Third, development was meant to include the promotion of democratic principles (Shuyab, 2007).

The 1993 plan was rejected by the ministers of the time, who criticized the specifics of the project as being modeled on the Jordanian system that could not have been introduced due to budgetary restrictions. Two years later committee personnel returned from the drawing board with the New Framework for Education in Lebanon. The “new” strategy carried over the goals of the Education Development Plan, which centered on the abolition of sectarianism through national upbringing and the creation of standard textbooks (Shuyab, 2007).

Iraq also proposed educational refinements three years after its major structural alterations. In 2008, the New Education Philosophy was finalized. Some of its most salient objectives included the promotion of democratic principles, stressing tolerance and coexistence, and teaching creative problem solving and critical thinking skills. However, the new blueprint also called for an integration of faith into the national curriculum (UNESCO, 2011). This ordinance could risk reinforcing primordial sectarian identities at the expense of state sovereignty.

In 2010 came the Education Development Plan. Like the New Framework for Education in Lebanon it adopted the doctrine of its forerunner. The Education Development Plan has a lifespan of four years and will be implemented until the 2014 year (UNESCO, 2011).

Contemporary Challenges

The core of these reform initiatives targets school curriculums, infrastructure deficiencies and learning environments at the grassroots level. In Lebanon these factors are further complicated by the autonomous nature of private schools set up by the constitution. This, in combination with a \$40 billion dollar national debt, has in effect evoked self-imposed sanctioning that severely restricts the resources available to public education facilities. Between

2004 and 2007, spending on education hovered at 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a rate well below the average for the Middle East. As a result it is estimated that 90% of government education spending goes directly to salaries and compensation. Consequent inadequacies in state schooling have driven citizens to widely prefer the sectarian-segregated religious alternatives. According to a study that surveyed students in public and private, secular and non-secular establishments, religious schools were reported to garner a strikingly higher level of satisfaction (Shuyab, 2007). Affording these private institutions often requires the support of a whole family and forces spending cuts in other matters of daily life. Private funding for education frequently exceeds 10% of total household expenditure (Abouchedid, K., Nasser, R., & Jeremy, V. B., 2002).

The overreliance on costly nonpublic schooling has resulted in an inverted enrollment pyramid where the proportion of students attending private schools is smallest at the lowest levels of education and highest at the university level (Nahas, 2011). It is estimated that only nine in 1000 children who enter the first year of primary school will eventually receive a baccalaureate (Abouchedid, K., Nasser, R., & Jeremy, V. B., 2002).

Not only are the costs of private schooling prohibitive, students enrolled in these non-state institutions are almost always highly segregated from compatriots of other religions. Socially isolated, children are then subject to the opposing narratives interpreted by the religious hierarchies that control them. Further, Lebanon's civil war forced the emigration of whole populations. Many in mixed areas relocated to the relative comfort of their religiously homogenous enclaves in an attempt to escape sectarian violence. By the end of the war much of Lebanon had partitioned itself into uniform localities. This effect of de-facto gerrymandering vertically dissociated government officials from their sectarian rivals by consolidating their

consociational constituents while expelling potential dissidents. Policy makers then had little incentive to compromise on public education reform, instead content to uphold the religious structures that helped maintain their power. Polarization deepened throughout levels of government and society at large. In the absence of Lebanese nationalism people turned to embrace foreign states that supported their sect against others as part of a larger, regional religious/ideological conflict.

Lebanon's attempts at improving the school system post Ta'if have been invested chiefly in resolving the divisive textbook issue. As mandated by the New Education Framework a revised standard set of textbooks were in fact produced by 1998. Arts and sciences related publications were widely implemented in both public and private schools. New editions of civic course materials were released again in 2002. However, the Minister of Education suspended the use of the revised history text in 2001 (Kriener, 2012). The setback meant that Lebanese curriculums would once again suffer the lack of a shared national experience.

Today there are two main curricula used for the teaching of history in Lebanon. One tract is from 1971 while the latest was approved by a presidential decree in 2000. Serving each program are over 40 series of history books that are used within the educational system, although three are used more prominently than others. Of these only one is authored by the CERD. The text, aptly named *History*, was published in the 1980's and includes almost no legitimate sources. Although severely outdated the books are circulated annually among some 34,000 students of primarily Sunni and Shia constituencies. The 4,500 students of the Druze community use another book entitled *Scientific History*. Whereas *History* lacks credibility, *Scientific History* lacks actual Lebanese events and reports mostly on past political decisions. Both of these series

purport that the Jews fought Jesus Christ while disregarding the fact that Jesus and his followers would have been Jews themselves (Kriener, 2012).

Lastly, approximately 25,000 students enrolled in the Shia south use *History and Us*, which was published in the early 1990's (Kriener, 2012). Schools of the region are administered by the Hezbollah ministate that has developed since the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) withdrawal in 2000. However, with Syria and Israel having long given up on Golan negotiations, IDF evacuation also meant that Hezbollah would have to seek new credibility as the defenders of Lebanon's border. The scramble for legitimacy ushered in the era at present in which the Party of God competes politically with the central government for control of service provision. Following the Hezbollah/Israeli war in 2006, Hezbi guerillas could be seen passing out hundreds in cash to those whose homes were destroyed (Fischer, 2006). The movement emerged from the conflict with minor setbacks in fighting capacities but with broad support from the Lebanese population.

With help from Iranian funding the organization has come to fill gaps in the substandard education system. Hezbollah's Education Unit operates schools from the elementary to college levels at low rates in comparison with other private sector alternatives (Flanigan & Samad, 2009). Religious Madrassas, vocational schools for girls, and health and fitness programs are also made available at the hand of the Education Unit (Sorenson, 2010).

Extra curricular life does not go unaddressed either. Hezbollah's Boy Scout troop, the Mahdi Scouts, is comprised of 60,000 children who can be seen wearing Hezbi uniforms, marching in the Hezbollah hosted Ashoura parades. Those who graduate from the troop go on to become militant fighters. Lebanese and tourists alike also enjoy Hezbollah sponsored public parks, skate parks, and theme parks (Sorenson, 2010). Within the last decade, a multi million-

dollar museum for resistance was constructed to showcase the destruction of Israel. Inside, patrons can gaze on dismembered Israeli tanks and other propaganda (Batty & Toolis, 2006).

The Education Unit operates two primary affiliates, the Mahdi and Mustafa Associations, which between them administer 19 schools. The students of low-income households are awarded scholarships and additional financial assistance. Prior to the start of each academic year Hezbollah purchases bulk orders of textbooks and resells them on street corners at more discounted prices (Harik, 2004). Their standard, *History and Us*, appears to be the most biased of the three leading texts. The series presents Judaism as having deviated from the original message of God's prophets. Further it states that the Jews attempt to "justify their self perception as the chosen people who others should serve as slaves. Christianity was a movement that tried to correct the Jews wrongs but fragmented into different sects that quarreled over the nature of Christ" (Keriner, 2012).

Another threat to the national identity is the use of language in Lebanese schools. Although the national language is Arabic, schools and students differ along sectarian lines when it comes to which languages are preferred. Divisions began in the late 19th century when France began to establish religious schools that taught French language to the Maronites and other Catholics. The British also opened up schools among the Druze areas that encouraged the spread of English (Ghaith, 2003).

In modern times the popularity of English has risen acutely (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003). This is partly due to the perception that the language is more pragmatically useful in the realms of business whereas French is viewed as the language of Lebanese cultural and artistic activities and Arabic that of Lebanese heritage (Haraty, & Oueini, 2000). Despite its role as the national language students often favor foreign languages over Arabic due to the difficulty of Standard

Arabic, which is taught in private and public classrooms. Sentiments however may differ among Muslim educators, whose schools generally use Arabic more in instruction, as it is the language of the Quran (Bahous, Bacha & Nabhani, 2011).

Finally the results of the 2010 Salti/Chaaban study on *the role of sectarianism in the allocation of public expenditures* show that Lebanese education also suffers from a misappropriation of government funding based of sectarian considerations as opposed to level of poverty, agency or other measures of need. This misallocation of capital is a testament to the perverse incentive that results from the sect-oriented structure of the Confessional model, which rewards sect-based decision-making.

In 1996 the effects of consociational corruption shut down the Lebanese University, the only state university in the county, for a period of months when government officials couldn't come to consensus regarding the sectarian distribution of deans. Ethno-religious infighting extends accordingly into grade school institutions as well. In a 2007 survey five principals' political ties were investigated of which four had direct ties to party leaders (Shuyab, 2007).

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In contrast, Iraq's immediate educational challenges suffer immensely from the consequences of war, economic collapse, and blundering restructuring policies as well as sectarian corruption. At the time of invasion, thirteen years of choking sanctions had bled the education system tremendously. Embargo had also set in among the research community, which was cut off from the outside world (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010). Hyperinflation depreciated Iraqi currency and Saddam brazenly cut import tariffs to encourage investment. The surge of foreign goods outcompeted many local businesses but prices for basic commodities

climbed. Washington's sparse Oil for Food Program did help to assuage the effects of the sanctions it had imposed, however service shortages continued to multiply (Issa, J., & Jamil, H., 2010). This climate encouraged systemic corruption that proliferated into many aspects everyday life.

The disintegration of Iraqi society was thereafter compounded by the invasion of coalition forces under the pretext that Saddam was producing WMDs that posed an existential threat. In the initial weeks following the fall of the Baath regime, theft, compelled by the poverty induced through the era of sanctions, ran rampant. 17 of 23 ministry buildings were destroyed, including the Ministry of Higher Learning and Scientific Research, which was looted repeatedly. 84% of tertiary establishments were gutted leaving Iraq's former trophy school system in shambles. Within the first month an estimated \$12 billion worth of equipment and supplies had been stolen across the country (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010). In 2010 Iraq was short 12,522 schools required to accommodate the student population. Children were packed into classes at a ratio of 44:1 (Geopolicy, 2009).

Those schools and agencies left standing were in poor condition and fell victim to national infrastructure deficiencies. As late as 2007 the Brookings Institute estimated that Baghdad received only about six hours of electricity per day, down from 16-24 hours prior to the war. Blackouts severely handicapped learning environments, disenfranchised students, and drove down enrollment rates (Ismael, 2008).

Initially the United States' singular educational goal was to restore the school system to its pre-war capacities. However, this goal was juxtaposed with the contradicting policy of DeBaathification, which terminated some 28,000 teachers. Replacements were haphazardly recruited and were chronically unqualified. The CPA further decided to dismiss the entire Iraqi

Army and rebuild from scratch. The decision to disassemble one of the country's largest workforces instantly added between eight and ten percent to the soaring unemployment rate (Lamani., Momani, 2010).

In an effort to spur development and kick-start economic recovery Paul Bremmer advocated large-scale privatization and diversification. His attempt to rapidly overturn 50 years of socialism was predisposed to the vexations of corruption and conflict. Business opportunities were granted to a myriad of American contractors who were enlisted in mass. Bechtel, a "Buddy Corporation," was awarded a \$2.2 billion dollar cost-plus contract to rebuild schools and restore other infrastructure. Despite its massive revenues Bechtel left without having completed a single project (Ismael, 2008).

Nepotism became increasingly institutionalized into Iraqi society. Ghassan Dibeh, professor of economics at the Lebanese American University, commented that, "the creation of a consociational democracy in Iraq in the post-invasion period has increased rent-seeking amongst the various ethnic and confessional groups." Even Nouri al-Malaki, two-time prime minister of Iraq, has been documented systematically discharging offices responsible for investigating and preventing corruption cases (Ismael, 2008). In 2007, 100 doctors petitioned Britain for \$33 billion in aid for development. Nearly \$14 billion of that figure was skimmed off through corruption, theft and mercenary salaries (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010).

The threat of violent injury came to weaken many aspects of Iraqi society and pervaded all aforementioned development initiatives. War, waged primarily between coalition forces, al-Qaeda, and a Sunni insurgency, intensified following the bombing of a sacred Shia shrine at Samarra in 2006. Soon after, Iraqi Shia militarized and civil war ensued. Kurdish Peshmerga forces also waged pitched territorial battles, however most of the fighting progressed as Sunni

VS. Shia. Heightened levels of insecurity resulted in the exaggeration of sectarian religious faith and adherence to their independent doctrines. In Basra, Shia militants even forced the segregation of classrooms between male and female genders (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., (2010).

The hazards of the civil war years often prevented Iraqis from venturing from their homes. Unrestricted by law enforcement, gangsterism proliferated and militia death squads sometimes terrorized the streets (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010). By 2006, there were an average of 30 kidnappings per day in Baghdad alone. That year, attendance rates plummeted to just 30%, which fell from 75% in 2005. The MEHL reported that only 40% of children passed their primary examinations, this percentile also down from 60% in 2005. One 2006 survey found that 92% of children suffered from learning impairments brought about by the stress of living in a war zone. Half of the respondents were determined to be on the verge of mental retardation due to “paralyzing fear.” Approximately 900,000 children were developmentally handicapped and required psychological treatment. At the same time, drug use among Iraqi youth increased by 20% (Ismael, 2008).

The American occupying force responded with a “Surge” that largely subdued the civil conflict. This however did not resolve the pedagogic plight of Iraqi children or address the destruction of Iraqi state education services. In 2008, Iraq hosted three million orphans, scores of whom wound up begging in the streets. A study that sampled from the population of beggar children reported that 43% of girls and 16% of boys were literate (Ismael, 2008).

In addition to repairing its education infrastructure and training a new generation of teachers, the new government must also find common ground in redesigning the state

curriculum. As was the case in Lebanon, Iraq's education system was deficient in fostering a sense of national unity during its period of civil war. Sectarian hierarchies were therefore unchecked in reinforcing primordial loyalties, which furthered factionalization.

This was compounded by the intensity of Iraq's ethnic conflict, especially following the 2006 bombing of the Al-Askariya Shrine in Samarra that held the bodies of highly honored Shia Imam's. The tomb's destruction galvanized Shia resentment and many organized into mobs that prowled the cities, retaliating against Arab-Sunnis and destroying mosques. Others were driven into the ranks of Shia militias such as the Badr Corps that was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Iraqis. According to government sources assassinations were conducted every hour for the entirety of the month of April (Bouillon, Malone, & Rowswell, 2007).

The alarming level of violence impelled Iraqi residents to flee from ethnically mixed areas and seek protection among their sectarian neighborhoods. As civil warfare continued Iraq became increasingly self-segregated into consociationally homogenous communities (Kaufmann, 2007). This de facto partition may result in ethnically uniform schools where the lack of diversity could facilitate the emergence of differing historical narratives, each favoring the various sects. Threats to a common national upbringing must be addressed to ensure a cohesive Iraqi nationalism.

In 2003 CPA authorities eliminated the previous national curriculum and appointed a committee to draft an entirely new, intermediate syllabus. Schools became broadcast towers for American proselytism. Bill Evers, an U.S. advisor to the Ministry of Education said, "entire swaths of 20th century history have been removed." The new learning strategy omitted the eight-year Iran/Iraq war, the 1991 Gulf War, and content that could promote Arab nationalism. "The

children are not learning about Iraq, they are learning about U.S. self-congratulatory propaganda,” said Evers (Lamani, M., & Momani, B., 2010).

Toward The Future

Lebanon took on a series of reform initiatives buoyed by optimism and ambition following the end of the civil war. However, their goal to abolish sectarianism from the school setting became mired within the sectarian political system. In 2010 new Quality Teaching for Development legislation was passed. The plan aims to improve the teaching abilities of educators over the next five years (Mattar, 2011). But no matter how qualified the teacher the lack of shared historical perspective will continue to impede Lebanese nationalism and contribute to ethno-religious segregation. Unfortunately, the prospects for reform remain bleak as the communal religious leaders with the most power to reform education also have the incentive to perpetuate the current system, which fortifies their leadership.

Iraq in contrast has intriguingly shown more promise in recent years. The 2010 parliamentary elections could signal a shift away from sectarian politics as the majority of successful candidates ran on highly secular platforms. However, a closer inspection of vote casting exposes that votes tended to be cast along sectarian lines. For example, although the two most victorious Shia parties campaigned on secular and national messages the majority of their constituent votes were also Shia (Hazran, 2010).

Education in Iraq could further suffer as sectarianism becomes complicated with geopolitical issues. At the end of 2012 tensions between the Kurdish regional government and Baghdad came to a head when Turkey forged a unilateral deal with the Kurds to build an

exclusive oil pipeline from northern Iraq to Turkey. Much of Iraq's oil, the country's primary source of revenue, is located in the Kurdish area of Kirkuk, which has made it the epicenter of political contention. In December, when Iraqi Federal agents went to arrest a Kurdish man in the northern autonomous region, a firefight broke out that spurred the deployment of Iraqi military forces to the area. In response the President of the Kurdish region, Masoud Barzani, deployed his Peshmerga forces (Arango & Adnan, 2012). The standoff drastically escalated Kurdish tensions with the Shia dominated government of Baghdad.

Unrest has also intensified between Iraq's Shia and Sunnis. In February of 2013 hundreds of thousands of Sunnia protesters took to the streets in an effort to pressure and even end the rule of Shia prime minister Nouri al-Malaki (Arraf, 2013). Sunni and Shia animosity then transitioned from largely peaceful demonstrations to violence as Iraq suffered a dramatic spike in public violence and terrorism into the month of May. According to the UN over 700 people were killed in April alone, which is the highest monthly toll since the years of civil war (Iraq violence, 2013). Some Shia have called for the declaration of their own Federal Region Status that would likely carve them an enclave with control of the southern ports. With Iraq's two most lucrative resources, Oil in the North and the ports in the South, under the control of the Kurds and the Shia federalism runs the risk of further alienating the Sunnis of the central west. Recently however, both Shia and Kurds are tilting toward pursuing their own regions (Wilgenburg, 2012). Sunni protesters have even warned of open war if their demands for a federal region aren't met (Saleh, 2013).

If sectarian violence or civil war results in the fragmentation of Iraq into 3 separate regions each ethno-religious group would be bolstered by a higher degree of autonomy

associated with the federal status. This would interfere with the implementation of a national educational curriculum.

Lebanon also faces the threatening effects of renewed sectarian fervor in 2013. The civil war in Syria has drawn in the involvement of Hezbollah that supports the Syrian Alawite regime against a mostly Sunni insurgency. The increasingly sectarian nature of the civil war has stirred tensions throughout Lebanon, but especially in northern cities with Alawite populations and in Hezbollah controlled areas (Illmer, 2013).

Secondly, the 2011-year brought the New Iraqi Curriculum Framework. The development of this framework aims to produce a standard competency-based learning plan to be implemented in schools in both Baghdad as well as the more autonomous Kurdistan federal region. Perhaps most importantly, standard textbooks are to be published and implemented throughout Iraq (Mattar, 2011).

Both Iraq and Lebanon currently face enormous challenges in creating a cohesive citizenry for a sustainable future. Although reform initiatives have tried to steer education development in constructive directions sectarian politics and foreign influences have reduced them to little more than rhetoric. It remains to be seen whether or not either state can move beyond their current challenges. Iraq however, shows more potential in moving toward a future of coexistence. As evinced by Lebanon's resume of reform mistakes, educational success will hinge on rehabilitating school infrastructure, checking the power of religious institutions and encouraging a shared sense of nationalism through common history texts.

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