

Gender Dynamics During And Post The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990 Through A Marxist Feminist Perspective

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Abstract: In the following paper I wish to investigate the status of women and their socio-economic conditions during the second civil war. As it was common during that period of time, the war was transferred to the womb of women, and sectarian conflicts during that time and even later usually involved “mudding” the blood of future generations of one sect. Therefore, I wish to examine whether this was the case in Lebanon. In order to do so, I will divide my paper into five sections. The first section of the paper will discuss the socio-economic background of the working class families of different sects in Lebanon. The second section of the paper will investigate the other means that were used during the war to weaken the Other, i.e. the focus will be directed at unarmed forms of violence. The third part of the paper will discuss the effects of the war, and more specifically it will focus on how women perceived, experienced, and the extent to which they were affected by the war. The fourth section will attempt to draw a comparative analysis in which the situation of women in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, have been affected similarly during different conflicts at different locations and periods. The last part of the paper will attempt to draw some conclusions about the eruption of the war and whether its consequences still cause distress to Lebanese women today.

Keyword: Lebanon, Civil War, Gender Dynamics, Marxist Feminism, Violence Against Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

“My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated.”

– Edward W. Said

“إن عقل المرأة إذا ذبل ومات، يفقد ذبل عقل الأمة كلها ومات.”

– توفيق الحكيم

Civil war is remarkable in light of the fact that it displays a test to basic parallels of good and evil. An attacking adversary is anything but difficult to denounce however, when war breaks out between nationals of a country, it gets to be hard to distinguish heroes from villains. The Lebanese sectarian civil war was an instance of shared othering by Lebanon's numerous groups. Every side was without a moment's delay casualty and con artist. The vicinity of the Other was viewed as an interruption into the asserted national space, and was controlled by endeavoring to bind it to the marginal or oust it outside of the national body. Women were at the heart of the contention. The war appeared to be organized by men, yet women both bore its brunt and partook in its execution. The two quotes presented above indicate the direction of this paper and what it shall focus on; women during conflicts, specifically during the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. More specifically, they emphasize what exactly I will be striving to find out: The silences in historical statements. Modern wars have transformed to do more damage than the traditional means; where wars before the 20th century were men standing in opposition to each other and shooting at one another under their different paradigms and political ideologies, modern day wars and constituted of leaders fighting the wars against entire populations and civilizations in exchange for socio-economic and political gains. The Lebanese civil war erupted in April 1975, twenty-nine years after the withdrawal of outside troops from Lebanon in 1946. The civil war was at long last settled in October 1989, under an agreement of national compromise, arranged by individuals from the Lebanese Parliament under Arab protection in the town of Tai'f, Saudi Arabia.

This settlement, known as the Tai'f Accord, was approved and ratified that month by the Lebanese Parliament. Real battling did not totally end, in any case, until a year later, in October 1990. In the following paper I wish to investigate the status of women and their socio-economic conditions during the second civil war. As it was common during that period of time, the war was transferred to the womb of women, and sectarian conflicts during that time and even later usually involved “mudding” the blood of future generations of one sect. Therefore, I wish to examine whether this was the case in Lebanon. In order to do so, I will divide my paper into five sections. The first section of the paper will discuss the socio-economic background of the working class families of different sects in Lebanon. The second section of the paper will investigate the other means that were used during the war to weaken the Other, i.e. the focus will be directed at unarmed forms of violence. The third part of the paper will discuss the effects of the war, and more specifically it will focus on how women perceived, experienced, and the extent to which they were affected by the war. The fourth section will attempt to draw a comparative analysis in which the situation of women in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, have been affected similarly during different conflicts at different locations and periods. The last part of the paper will attempt to draw some conclusions about the eruption of the war and whether its consequences still cause distress to Lebanese women today. My thesis will revolve around how women perceived the civil war and how they handled the situation, i.e. I will look at migration, stories of women recited after the war, the quota of women seeking education (therewith also the rates of illiterate females during and after that period), and the income per-capita. My research question is: have women been subject to violence to the extent where they could not resume living a “normal” lifestyle during and after the civil war? In order for my readers to grasp a better understanding of my research paper, I will start by providing a list of definitions. In this reading I will not use the word “empowerment” since it is a liberal discourse, which illustrates that one party has power and another party lacks power. Therefore I will use the word “power struggle” to

stress on the didactical relationship between different parties. To clear any confusion, the difference between sex and gender should be identified. Sex is the biological attribution that differs men from women. Gender on the other hand is a set of socially constructed characteristics that govern the interaction between sexes; men and women. There are multiple definitions of feminism. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) defines feminism as "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes". Another definition is "[Feminism] describes a culture in which women, because they are women, are treated differently than men, and that, in that difference of treatment, women are at a disadvantage; feminism assumes that such treatment is cultural and thus possible to change". I prefer the first definition because it is straightforward and because it does not advocate or share the blame of women's unequal relationship to men, as a culturally bound factor. The second definition assumes that some cultures treat women as equal forces to men while other cultures don't, which is not the case. Defining what I mean by Marxist feminism is also important for the comprehension of this paper. Marxist feminism is an emancipatory, critical framework that aims at understanding and explaining gender oppression in a systematic way. While there are multiple feminisms (e.g. radical feminism and liberal feminism) I see that Marxist feminism is the one with the least amount of fallacies, in addition to it being the most critical. According to Martha Gimenez, Marxist feminism, also referred to as critical or material feminism, is "A theoretical position held by relatively few feminists, who sought to develop the potential of Marxist theory to understand the capitalist sources of the oppression of women". I have chosen a Marxist feminist framework of analysis because first, liberal and radical feminists ignored the class inequality and the economic realities of women's lives. Second, radical feminist analysis of patriarchy is not sufficiently historical, meaning that it ignores historical and material attributions that have led to the patriarchal attitude. I have specifically chosen to use a Marxist feminist approach because it is "[an] emancipatory tradition of social theory built around the critical analysis of particular forms of oppression – class oppression and gender oppression respectively – rather than as well-bounded, integrated explanatory theories" (Wright, 1994). In other words, feminist Marxist lenses do not approach women as a separate entity that is not affected by other forces like class relations, economic power relations, and stability, rather that it explores all factors that may contribute to the oppression of women. Furthermore, Marxist feminism "argues that society is fundamentally constructed of the relations people form as they do make things needed to survive humanly. Work is a social process of shaping and transforming the material social worlds, creating people as social beings as they create value". In other words, Marxist feminism recognizes the socially constructed gender roles that govern the relationship between men and women in the public sphere, as well as that those roles are ascribed values according to the capitalist definition of value; labor time. For these reasons, my paper will approach the Lebanese Civil War through a Marxist feminist perspective.

II. The Socio-Economic Status of Families

The Lebanese economy prior to the civil war had been growing rapidly between the years 1946-1975. The private sector of the economy, which heavily relied on the trade and services contributed for the most of the National Gross Domestic Product (NGDP) of Lebanon. The fact is that the Lebanese government adopted a *laissez faire* economic system which depended on the terms of non-intervention within the economy and an immense support to the private sector initiatives. As a continuation of this system, the government had permitted the private sector to enter into business relations with outside forces, hence the state law permits bilateral and multilateral business treaties to be established between the private sector and other non-Lebanese enterprises. This stands in contrast to the economic policies of Lebanon's neighboring countries, whose economic laws do not permit trade relations between the private sector and foreign investors without the permission of the state. Some scholars believe that this policy of non-intervention is what has led to the huge economic boom of the Lebanese state especially in the pre-war period, which is believed to have caused the economic and financial stability in the Lebanese state where sectarian conflicts were beside the point. According to The World Bank the average annual rate of growth from 1950-1974 was estimated to be around 7%. The annual rate of inflation was estimated to be about 2-3% until 1971; after that it tended to increase, averaging about 8% in the three years prior to the outbreak of the civil war. Per capita income increased significantly, standing in 1974 at about \$1,200, one standard was also relatively advanced; for the same year gross school enrollment for the first and second levels stood at 74%. Yet despite the economic prosperity, the socio-economic disparities in Lebanon persisted to exist. Some could even say that the economic prosperity had blinded outsiders from concerning themselves with the sectarian conflict that was still ongoing in Lebanon. The sectarian issues were strongly and strikingly manifested in the uneven development among the various groups and regions of the country. The fact is that the discrepancies between the socio-economic class and sectarian groups in Lebanon were unprecedented. El Khazen states that up until 1974 almost 54% of the entire population could have been considered to be poor, although the state as a whole was classified as a middle-income state. The fact is that the only equality that this system produced is that in each sect the ratio of rich and poor was equally divided and distributed. Yet this also gave the state a confessional theme. Regardless of the striking economic growth in Lebanon and the rising income per capita, the Political tension was still highly emphasized, and the reasons for this phenomenon were mainly domestic unrest among the three main fractions of the society (The Maronites, the Sunnis and the Shi'a). This system has been in place since independence in 1943, although it was modified under the Ta'if Accord. While the constitution of the newly-independent state guaranteed equal rights to all citizens, Article 95 specified that, for a temporary but unspecified period, religious communities would be equitably represented in public employment and cabinet posts. The principle of equitable representation was not defined. In practice, the institutionalization of sectarianism and the codification of it in the Ta'if Accord were most evident in the

governmental structure where quotas for representation were set and never amended, consequentially, especially with the constantly changing demographics of Lebanon, a misrepresentation of the reality occurred that further aggravated the situation even in the post-war period. The cabinet, which was appointed according to the quotas set in the Accord, were neither representative of the actual number of sects present in the community, which has led to the exclusion of officially recognized communities, such as the Arminian community, furthering the uneven communal division and distribution of income. The predominantly Muslim and Maronite representation in the Cabinet is proof for the unequal representation of demographical realities. Similarly, parliamentary seats are distributed amongst the same two dominant communities in accordance with outdated demographical census, which on the whole favors the Christian community. This formula has led to Christians entitled to 55% of the total number of seats.

III. Institutionalized Patriarchy in Disguise?

Women in Lebanon are often perceived as more free and better off than their female neighbors in Arab Countries, whether economically, socially or politically. When the status of Lebanese women is put in contrast with Saudi Arabian women who are not permitted to drive, women in Lebanon have no obvious legal restrictions. While women in Kuwait have recently obtained their right to vote, women in Lebanon have preserved that right since 1952. According to Khaled Al-Masri women in Lebanon have the constitutional right to own businesses, and since 1988 they have been allowed to enroll themselves into the Lebanese army. Since 1974, married Lebanese women do not require the permission of their husbands in order to travel abroad or to acquire a passport. Moreover, the number of Lebanese women acquiring higher education is equivalent to the number of men. In the database of the World Bank, women constituted 18.4% of the workforce in 1975. All these things combined form this false image about the status of women in Lebanon, where the emancipation of women is being portrayed as a central mission executed by the government apparatus. However behind this façade of rosy-tinted imaginary conclusions lie a highly patriarchal legislative power, that is reflected in the social and political system, where women do not enjoy the equal status of men. A UNICEF report on the conditions of women in Lebanon in 1995 concluded that: Women are more often than not marginalized at various levels including: "1) discrimination against women in existing laws; 2) in norms, habits, traditions and social culture; 3) political discrimination especially in the real participation in political leadership and decision making positions at all levels; 4) economic discrimination regarding attaining production resources, type of jobs, salaries and participation in the economic process; 5) statistical discrimination where there is a need for specific information on women." The problems that have been identified by UNICEF in 1995 convey to the readers the situation that dominated prior- and post-Civil war period. With the findings of UNICEF one can infer that political participation of women in Lebanon is rather set at a minimal amount. Nonetheless, the Lebanese constitution itself does not foster an environment of discrimination against women regarding their political participation and visibility. Yet, the first female to gain a parliamentary seat was Mirna

Boustany in 1963, but she only gained that seat after the death of her father, whom she was elected to replace. This itself sets forward the power dynamics within different sects within Lebanon. Boustany was only elected to office because it was believed that she would maintain the objectives of her sect, regardless of her gender. This emphasizes that the goals set forward by the sects will be maintained, and representatives are mere political puppets that occupy a ceremonial and symbolic position, motivated by the agenda of the sect. If it was not her it would have been someone else; the interest of the sect is above all. This is further emphasized if we take a look at the 2005. Before that time no woman had ever been present in the cabinet, until Leila Solh Hamadeh, Wafaa' Diqa Hamzeh and Nayla Moawad were appointed Minister of Industry, Minister of State and Minister of Social Affairs. The joyous occasion was rather short-lived seeing that in 2008 only one woman was appointed into the cabinet; Bahia Hariri as Minister of Education. Lebanon is supposedly a democratic state, where the constitution grants equal rights to all its citizens regardless of gender, religion or sectarian affiliation. According to Article 7 of the Lebanese constitution states: "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". The elasticity of this law and its openness to interpretation is problematic, seeing that the article does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender. This paradoxical situation in the Lebanese constitution makes the point of institutionalized discrimination seem more vital and credible. Although article 7 states that all citizens are equal before the law, the personal status law in Lebanon, which should govern and regulate gender relationships in Lebanon is peculiar, seeing that it contradicts article 7. According to an article published by the Human Rights Watch "Lebanon's religion-based personal status laws discriminate against women across the religious spectrum and don't guarantee their basic rights (...) Lebanon has 15 separate personal status laws for its recognized religions but no civil code covering issues such as divorce, property rights, or care of children. These laws are administered by autonomous religious courts with little or no government oversight, and often issue rulings that violate women's human rights." The late Laure Moghaizel, one of Lebanon's most prominent campaigners for women's and human rights, summarized the discrimination against women as follows: "In Lebanon, children only inherit their father's nationality. A mother can only pass her Lebanese nationality to her children in two cases: if the child is illegitimate and she recognizes him before the father, and if she is a foreigner and after the death of the husband, who is also a foreigner, she takes on Lebanese nationality". The fact is Lebanon's constitution explicitly guarantees respect for the "personal status and religious interests" of the individual, whatever their religion. This constitutional protection has often been used as a justification to keep personal status laws under the exclusive realm of religious authorities, block attempts to adopt a civil code or ensure greater oversight over Lebanon's religious courts and laws. The 1936 decree that established the basic personal status order and that remains operational recognized freedom of belief, granting each person the right to opt out of their religion's personal status laws and marry under a civil code.

But Lebanon has yet to adopt a civil code despite numerous campaigns since independence to do so. Institutionalizing and codifying patriarchy according to radical feminism preceded private property, where it is believed that the basic contradiction is between the sexes and not the economic classes, meaning that they consider all women to be a class. In contrast stands socialist feminism that accept that women are neglected by the legislative systems. They do not consider "patriarchy to be a universal or unchanging system because of their commitment to a historical, materialist method as well as of their own observation of variety in the sexual division of labor. Socialist feminists view the struggle between women and men as changing historically with changes in modes of production." The material base of the institution of marriage benefits both the capital and the husbands, seeing that patriarchy is men's control over women's labor power through executing the same amount of work for half the wages male receive, therewith benefiting the capital system and still maintains the power relation between men and women. This could be applied to Lebanon, where women are living in constant fear of "the other" (here the sect) therewith perpetuate male domination of the productive and industrial spheres.

IV. Rape as a weapon

Rape has been used in modern wars as the non-murderous type of aggressive behavior and to a large extent even a weapon of psychological, physical, and even social hostile action, intended to punish the "other". It is a mechanism and tactic that could be used to instigate terror in the minds of the population or the enemy. This tactic however could be counterproductive in the sense that it does more harm than good; honor killing and honor aggression is of highest significance in the rather conservative Arab region, henceforward it rather leads to an aggregation of the hostilities by both parties than creating a rule of terror. Linda Khatib divides the types of rapes into two categories. She states that during the civil war rape it was rather counterproductive for military personal to engage in the act of rape, seeing that it shifts and distracts the focus of combats, making it a rather dangerous mechanism to use. Rape, although effective if the objective is to establish a rule of terror, could lead to a sympathetic attitude in the hearts and minds of some soldires, therewith break down the image of the enemy and humanizing the other. This is for militaries a serious harm. The other category that Khatib identifies is focused of acts of rape in civil wars. She states that while "other types of violence are typically committed in escalating cycles in which fighters mimic the brutality of their foes, rape is only occasionally perpetrated by both sides of a civil conflict". Some scholars have maintained that rape is a particularly well-suited weapon for conflict and war. Rape is, obviously, low-cost and does not require advanced technology to perpetrate. Additionally, political actors had only criminalized the act of rape as a crime against humanity very recently, which was correlated and justified through comparing it with ethnic cleansing genocide (although ethnic cleansing is the physical action of intending to eradicate an ethnicity, rape is the psychological eradication of an ethnicity or group through traumatizing the natural bearers of children, making it impossible for the traditions and norms of that aggregate of individuals to continue). Nonetheless, rape is still

considered to be a "lesser crime" than ethnic cleansing or genocide. What many do not recognize is that rape has a physical benefit for the solders seeing that it reiterates the feelings of victory, superiority, and power. All things aside, rape is a rather dangerous act that could lead to a destruction of an army. First, the act of rape could lead to sexually transmitted diseases (gonorrhoea, syphilis, etc.), consequentially leading to poor health conditions, making it harder for rebels and militia fighters who believe they are fighting an "enemy" to be effective. Second, rape is rather an act that requires a longer time to be executed, making it inefficient when put in contrast with guns. Lastly, because of the physical contact required, rape carries the potential of emotional hardship on the perpetrator that other types of more removed or abstract forms of violence arguably do not. Retrospectively, it does not make sense to use rape as weapon. Given the wide range of available weapons and options to carry out acts of violence and aggression, why choose rape? I argue that the answer lies in the fact that rape, in addition to its well-documented value in terrorizing a population, is an unusually successful tool in facilitating bonding between new members of a combatant group. For certain types of combatant groups, the social benefits of committing acts of sexual violence outweigh the physical and emotional costs. That rape is part of a socialization process is clear when examining the details of how rape is committed, in particular, the fact that rape in civil war often is a public act of gang rape, which furnishes the new member of the combatants with "social acceptance". An important but unanswered question in discussions of genocide and ethnic conflict concerns the psychology of the combatants and the perpetrator. Lina Haddad Kreidie and Kristen Renwick Monroe piece is an accumulation of interviews conducted with survivors of the Lebanese Civil war, with the attempt to explain why ordinary people turn to violence and social atrocities as a result of the war. They state that "Regardless of their specific ideological position, political affiliations, allegiances, or individual past, all of our participants felt constrained by their basic sense of who they were and their perceptions of how they saw them selves in relation to other people. All of them claimed to want an end to the violence yet each felt they had no choice in committing what at least to outsiders seem to be acts that can only add fuel to the fires of hatred and increase the level of violence in the region". The stories recited by women were horrifying. A woman stated: They ordered us to go to one of the rooms, to stand facing the wall and not to look back. My J1/2-year-old sister lifted up her arms to my mother, asking her to hold her because she was terrified. My little sister was then shot with a bullet in her head and my father in his chest but [he] remained alive. My brothers Shady (3 years old), Fand (8) and Bassam (11), and two sisters Hajjar (7) and Shadi (11/2) and our neighbor were all shot and immediately surrendered the soul to the Creator ...It was a horrible time! I will never forget this all my life. About 10 a.m. three gunmen came back to take the money they've forgot at our house and they saw me moving, trying to come closer to my father. my father. They cursed me and said. 'Look what we are going to do to you in front of your father. ' They raped me, one after the other. Then they shot me in my left hand and left leg. I became paralyzed. My father then said to me, "May God be with you, " and he died. I will never forget this....

Help me! I am desperate, and I am ready to fight. I pray that war happens again. If I see them, I will kill them with my bare hands! Oh, my God, their voices are in my ears! I hate this. I do not want to talk about this anymore. I am tired of living like this. (Saud, Witness to Sharon's participation in the Sabra Shatila massacres of 1982) My argument is that combatants use rape as part of a rational strategy during civil war. Rape is widely recognized as a means to intimidate and to terrorize a population. In Lebanon, rape served an important role in the conflict as a "weapon of war," or as a tangible military strategy. Through this research I found that rape in major towns and cities seem to be of a different form than rape in many small villages. Typically small, rural territories of one or two dozen people the strategy was usually committed during brief hit-and-run style attacks, in which combatants would swiftly steal food, loot property, rape women and occasionally kill unruly villagers. In a Human Rights Watch report it was implied that rape was "part of a well thought-out strategic military and political campaign, specifically designed, for example, to "dominate and degrade not only the victim but also her community". Women are increasingly becoming the targets in armed conflict, and the case of the Lebanese Civil War is no exception to the paradigm. The UN Platform for Action (1995) described how girls and women are especially affected by armed conflict because of their unequal status in society and their sex. Among the specific effects experienced by women of all ages are "displacement, loss of home and property, loss or involuntary disappearance of close relatives, poverty and family separation and disintegration, victimization through acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, and sexual abuse. If one intends to destroy a culture, women are tactical targets of special significance because of their important roles within the family structure". All in all, these stories and facts yield two important predictions for rape during civil war, concerning which combatant groups are more likely to rape, and which wars are more likely to experience rape. First, on the microlevel of analysis, combatant groups with "lower cohesion are the groups that are more likely to commit rape. Low-cohesion, high-turnover combatant groups have a far greater need for "testing" membership than do groups with a more permanent, more familiar membership base". Second, on a cross-national level, civil wars with higher numbers of combatant groups, and thus "those wars with fluid membership between groups and those with lower cohesion within groups, are wars with higher rates of mass rape".

V. Conclusion

All around the world women have been marginalized and subject to gender based discrimination and violence. In Lebanon the case is not different where prior, during, and after the Lebanese Civil War women have been subject to gender based discrimination in the public (political and institutional) and private (economical and social) spheres. Prior to the civil war women in Lebanon earned less than their male counterparts, did rarely occupy key positions in the government, were minimally involved in decision making processes, and were institutionally discriminated against supported by legal frameworks directed to disgracefully marginalize women. During the war, women

are suspected to have been subject to gender based violence and rape could be considered as a military tool that was directed at implanting fear and diluting, if not completely eliminating, a certain sect in the society. This paper has used the Human Development Index, UNICEF reports, and Human Rights Watch, reports to investigate the extent to which women have suffered during the war. The lack of literature discussing the status of women in the Lebanese society the author used the case of the civil war in Sierra Leon to try and draw parallels with the Lebanese civil war, seeing that both countries share similar global developmental status and type of regime. The research concluded that the war was a war of a war raged against humanity, in which women are the primary victims of violence and are exploited as weapons to instigate terror within sects. It is highly recommended that further research on the socio-economic and political status of women in Lebanon should be initiated, in order to enhance human development and end the rule of sectarianism in Lebanon.

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