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HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR

Civil reconciliation in post-war Lebanon

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Introduction

It is only recently that economists started raising the challenge of rebuilding war torn countries and dealing with the reconstruction of survival economies; that psychologists, are trying to examine the individual responses to traumas associated with violence, uprootedness, and the breakdown of families; but remarkably little is known on what happens to *societies* in the aftermath of war. In Lebanon, where social structures are in shambles after fifteen years of war, rebuilding civil society is a key problem. The collective healing of the community requires more than economic and physical reconstruction; building the relationships between people that are no longer capable of trusting each other, is a priority in a country where a whole generation grew up in a climate of hatred, suspicious of the 'other', totally ignorant of the long tradition of coexistence and of the pluralism on which the country was founded.

This paper focuses on the social aspect of the peace process in Lebanon, and more particularly, on the reconciliation between the *returning displaced* and the *local residents*, within the wider frame of the political and national reconciliation.

The first part gives an overview of the breakdown of the society during the 1975-1990 war and the collapse of the state, challenged by armed movements that lead to its disintegration. It raises the question of the social impact of post-war reconstruction, the nature of which, it is argued, can further marginalise the vulnerable groups neglected by projects of development.

The second part, deals with the government planned return of the displaced population to their places of origin, after the 'successful' attempt of the militias to re-write the human geography of Lebanon. It questions the appropriateness of an *imposed* plan of return, and its eventual consequences on the civil reconciliation promoted by the same government for the returnees.

The third and main part, will examine the traditional mechanisms of dispute settlement and the role of customary and tribal laws in Lebanon, through the programme designed by the Ministry of the Displaced to facilitate the reconciliation between the returnees and those who caused their flight. Despite a general discourse of peace, that has replaced the discourse of war at the political and religious level, civil reconciliation remains a huge task. In a country where social life is so essential, the programme on reconciliation, allows conflict resolutions that are oriented towards preserving relationships or putting people back on the track of negotiating their relationships with one another. Rituals of reconciliation are seen as a means of channelling violence and reducing it.

It will also examine, the social organisation and power structures relevant to the dynamics of dispute settlement. It finally raises the question of the relevance of solutions based on the past, when we know that civil wars result in transformed societies and changed perceptions of the state. There is an abundant literature on the interplay of forces before and during the Lebanese war, but what remains of old structures and values has yet to be appreciated.

The breakdown of the country

Since the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, to the birth of the II Republic in 1989 , Lebanon has always been struggling to maintain its plural identity. The necessity to conciliate the interests and aspirations of its different communities, have led the country to adopt a confessionally based system. The sectarian identities were recognised by the unwritten constitution of 1943 that established the complex scheme of power distribution, based on the proportional representation of the various confessional groups (the President had to be a Maronite- allegedly the largest community -, the Prime Minister, a Sunni and the leader of the Parliament, a Shi'a). The country's history since, has been made of successive periods of peaceful coexistence and instability, followed by the outbreak of the *wars* that were to last fifteen years (1975-1990). The Lebanese society fragmented and rallied around the different political parties that were divided along communal lines . Before 1975 the political parties played only a limited role. Only three of them rejected community affiliations: the *communist party* with its military 'popular guard ' , the Lebanese Arab *Baas* calling for one Arab nation, and the Nasserist movement with its armed *Mourabitoun* (vigilantes) that played a prominent role in the war. Under the leadership of the charismatic Druze feudal lord, Kamal Joumblat, the *Socialist Party* (PSP) claimed to be anti-confessional (but more than half of its members were Druze, and when the leader was assassinated in 1977, his son succeeded him both as the head of the party and as the head of the community). Together these parties formed the National Movement but their military wings were largely integrated to Palestinian organisations. However, on the whole, the parties followed sectarian cleavages. The Shi'a movement *Amal*, succeeded to the 'Movement of the deprived' created by Imam Moussa Sadr ; it remained neutral in the beginning but played a crucial role in the war. Later, *Hezbollah* was formed of extremist Shi'a trained by Iranian pasdarans (guardians of the Revolution).

On the other hand, the coalition of militant Christians was the main opposition against the presence of the *Palestinian Liberation Front* (*PLO*) that was headed by Yasser Arafat since 1969 (the Palestinians represented fifteen percent of the population of Lebanon). The most important party was the *Kataeb* created in 1963 by Pierre Gemayel . The *National Liberal Party* (*PNL*) was 'absorbed' in a tragic way by the dominant Christian party, which resulted in the creation of a single militia called the *Lebanese Forces*. Other Christian parties developed (Al Marada, brigade of President Franjeh, El Tanzim, the Guardians of the Cedar etc.). A 'Khaldunian *Ghalaba*', a struggle for domination, 'between factions more or less defined by their sectarian affiliations' (Salame 1991), was taking place in Lebanon.

The breakdown of the balance between the various sects had given rise to a 'new order'. The figure of the warlord replaced the traditional political heads. The militia leaders exercised their authority through de facto governments of their own, that had no legitimacy. With the collapse of the state authority, the armed partisans (militiamen), acted as surrogate police forces and administrators. The army fell victim to its own contradictions and lost its cohesion. Some of its dissidents formed the Arab Armies of Liberation (pro-Palestinian), others joined the Christian camps, specially in the South where they formed a militia , now under the control of Israel.

Peace and reconstruction

In 1989, after a dramatic escalation of the war, the Lebanese deputies met in Taef (Saudi- Arabia) and adopted the document of National Reconciliation. The Taef Accord determined the nature of the Lebanese society as one of communities bound by their desire to live together (*al aysh al mushtarak*). The pact of co-existence reaffirmed the National Pact of 1943 and recognised confessionalism as a regulating principle. It addressed both issues of internal reform of the state and Lebanese sovereignty.

The Taef Accord was to mark the 'theoretical' end of a war (Picard.1993), that had taken its terrible toll in human lives and in physical destruction. Lebanon is gradually recovering and trying to rebuild its infrastructure. However, until now, the country has been in the process of physically *repairing* and restoring telephone lines and electricity cables, but not *rebuilding* - where human beings become the centre of issues- the social fabric. No priority has been given to the welfare of those who are impoverished and exhausted after fifteen years of war, where social cleavages have increased dramatically. All the economic gains and highly publicised 'reconstruction' of Beirut would be built on very fragile foundations, if the needs of the people were to be ignored. Despite some good programmes aiming at the social reconciliation between returnees and local residents, this general trend is clearly visible in the resettlement process of the Internally Displaced. The allocation of funds for their resettlement does not give priority to their human development.

II . The Displaced : Al Awda¹

The division of the Lebanese population along sectarian lines was later materialised by their residential separation. The militias provoked massive population shifts to create homogenous self-contained zones and exclusive communities. The planning of a demographic re-distribution has displaced hundreds of thousands people who are now likely to be 'redistributed' again and sent back to their places of origin according to the programme of 'voluntary' return.

The majority of the Lebanese have been displaced at least once during the war, so who are the people considered as 'displaced' ? The report of the university St Joseph(Beirut) and the Laval university (Canada), defines the internally displaced as those who

¹ Al Awda: means the return. It is also the name given by the Ministry of the Displaced to the resettlement programme.

'at one time or another since the war started (April 1975) were forced to flee their place of residence in order to live in another place in Lebanon- without being able to return- because of real danger, specific threats, anticipated dangers or because they lived in an insecure area'. They are 'refugees in their own country'.²

According to the same report, the estimated number of internally displaced is 671000 and represents 22% of the population. The causes of displacement were different and are identified as follows :

- people have fled an *exposed area* (demarcation line)
- people lived in *politically hostile areas* under direct or indirect threat of neighbouring villages or under a hostile political party. These displacements were preventive in nature.
- people lived in *military hostile areas* that were being attacked and bombed.
- people who were forced to flee because of *massacres* and systematic destruction of their houses. Those were termed catastrophic displacements.³

Displacements were not continuous but occurred in separate, successive waves, that corresponded to the different 'rounds' of the conflicts. During the 1975 -1976 round, 300,000 persons were displaced in the capital city of Beirut. From 1978 to 1982 , an additional 150,000 persons fled due to fighting in the country and the Israeli invasion . From 1982 to 1990 another 360,000 people were uprooted. During the war, from 1975 to 1990, out of 949 villages affected by this phenomenon, 83 were totally destroyed and 91 partially destroyed (Lebanese NGO Forum(LNF)). Military hostilities targeted and destroyed public utilities and the infrastructure throughout the country. Many of the displaced have returned or have 'been returned' hurriedly to the war-affected areas where roads, schools, dispensaries are totally devastated (L N F 1994) .

3 Translated by the author.

4 See also Walvogel 1994.

In order to re-create multi-confessional regions and re-establish pluralism and inter-religious living, the Ministry for the Displaced -formed in 1992- has devised a re-settlement programme to support and facilitate the *voluntary return* of the internal refugees to their places of origin. This programme is said to be 'an important development in the political rehabilitation and reconciliation process, as well as a fundamental pre-requisite for the process leading up to the political agreements establishing a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the conflict' (LNF 1994). Such an ambitious programme can hardly be based on voluntary return. In 1991, the Lebanese government attempted to solve the problem of the displaced by using force, this solution of ' forced clearing out' (Walvogel. 1993) was forsaken for more 'moderate' means . Yet , the displaced who are said to be 'squatting' in flats, are still being forcibly removed and returned to their houses -if those were not destroyed. Lately, a government project mentioned the need for the army to protect the returnees and 'encourage those *who hesitate* and reassure those *who are scared* ' to go back..⁴

A survey conducted in 1990 by the USJ/ Laval universities shows that the majority (up to 76% of the households) thought that return was impossible; 20 % thought it was possible but that problems of security remained; 16.4% thought they could go back but their houses were destroyed. Only a minority expressed the desire to go back (although most dreamed of going back to an idealised past) . The men who wished to return owned land or estates. Women were more keen, but youth did not believe in returning to their home areas.⁵

The assumptions that Repatriation is the *natural* solution for the displaced can lead to further suffering and worsen their plight. Given the lengthy period over which some of the displaced have been living outside their original home area, it is likely that there

4 in : Programme for the Civil Reconciliation. Ministry of the Displaced (1994). Translation by the author.Emphasis added

5 Figures may have changed due to more peaceful times.

will still be differences in attitudes to return. For many, 'going home' may not be a natural outcome of a decade of exile, while making a new home in a new area may be perfectly consistent with their aspirations now. Going back will not automatically create a sense of belonging : population shifts have created new ties and reinforced community solidarities that cannot be ignored. Links with those who remained were totally severed; some links were maintained with the people who fled as well. 69,6% of the refugees never visited people from the original home area (US/Laval report). In order to create the preconditions for the integration of the displaced it is essential to understand that return will mean another *adaptation* and another *exile* from the community where they have settled for more than a decade. As Daniel Warner remarks 'there is no going back ... just as there is no re-adaptation. There is only creation and adaptation' (Warner 1994). There is much more to return than merely taking people back, building relationships and establishing accountability between neighbours will take a long time.

III - Healing the wounds of war

Violence

' sleep, thou must sleep and we must take revenge ' ⁶

Despite their many differences, the Lebanese people have been homogenised by their experience of violence and unified by their suffering. They share a common memory of war and uprootedness. The displaced, and more particularly those who fled the massacres, described the feelings associated to their flight as those of panic, real terror, numbness, hatred for the perpetrators and terrible guilt towards those who were left behind. The psychological traumas lasted long after they had fled and most still felt hopeless, feeling a lot of anger and bitterness (USJ/ Laval .1991) .

6 In Granqvist 1965.

However, beyond the personal responses to war, we should consider the local *structures of power* and status in Lebanon to understand the urgency for social reconciliation and for dispute settlement. Lebanon is a society of competing tribal groupings dominated by landlords (*zaim*), assisted by their armed men (*abadaye*). Their authority was unquestioned; their domination over the people, the land, and the resources was maintained by physical coercion and symbolic violence (exclusive appropriation of honours). Little has changed in modern Lebanon, only the landlord became an elected official who represented his community (Picard 1993). On the other hand, the Lebanese society is segmented into religious communities, each of them divided into factions and clans that are in perpetual conflict. The antagonism between 'tribal segments is one of the structural principles of society (and) arms are one of the primary symbols of male identity and freeborn status' (Gilsenan 1982), it involves patterns of aggression and reprisals against neighbouring groups. Each insult, 'whether by word, gesture or deed' (Gilsenan 1986), calls for a response that will have to be reciprocated, since no affront can remain unavenged. The code of honour maintains the cohesion and solidarity of the group. As one woman in a village commented : ' if a man kills someone...he is not alone. he is a limb in the body, and a member of the clan. they must all pay (the blood money), there is no way out' (Granqvist 1965). These divisions and power structures have preceded the creation of the state and were still perpetuated when the war began in the middle nineteen seventies.

An in-depth research on how the experience of violence during war, combined with traditions of honour and violence, has affected the behaviour of people, will be crucial for the success of projects aiming at social healing and reconciliation.

Reconciliation

Within the general framework of national reconciliation, the state has passed a General Amnesty law on all crimes committed during the war, allowing even those responsible to return without prosecution. It has devised, as mentioned earlier, a programme to return the displaced to their places of origin. Although the majority of the Lebanese are weary of violence and are expressing their need for a peaceful co-existence and their desire for inter-communal dialogue, people cannot be expected to forget all about it ! It must be expected that some of the returnees who suffered badly and who will be suddenly face to face with the murderers of their sons and brothers will have violent reactions or express their anger and desire of vengeance. It will be difficult to avoid and contain an escalation of violence when people feel that criminals enjoy a total impunity. If the displaced are to build relationships of *trust* among themselves and those who remained, a system of *accountability* has to be established so that all can have a sense of justice being made and, most importantly, so they could come to terms with their dead, because 'the nightmares on the brain of the living lies in this paradox of the (dead)'s presence and absence' (Gilsenan 1994).

The government has made a meaningful contribution to help returnees and local residents create such systems of accountability. In 1994, the Ministry of the Displaced devised a programme to encourage the local reconciliation between potential returnees and local residents. The programme concerns more specifically the villages that have been the scene of bloody confrontations and massacres, either between the inhabitants or between them and the neighbouring villages. It encourages the participation (*mousahamat*) of the returning populations through the creation of villages committees for the return (*Lijan el awda*), that represent the returnees (committees of the displaced), and the stayees (committees of the residents).

The project identifies four types of problematic returns due to violent conditions of flight, and sets out different treatment of dispute settlement :

A. Individual displacement

1) because of *threats or attacks without losses in human lives*. The reconciliation will precede the return and disputes will be settled with the help of traditional mediation (mayors and sheikhs).

2) because of *threats and attacks with losses in human lives*: there will be payment of *blood money* according to the General Amnesty law and to customary law.

B. Mass displacement

1) *following confrontations and threats* but with no casualties. People will have to meet each other a number of times in the presence of a third party.

b) *following destruction and theft* of belongings and properties without physical harm to people (the criminal must be from the village and known by the victims).

c) *following slaughterers and massacres*. These are by far the most difficult, and problematic cases. There are different degrees:

* in case there is a balance in casualties on both sides reconciliation will be easier than,

* when violence has been perpetrated by one party against another and provoked human losses and the flight of one group;

* or when violence has been perpetrated by one party against individuals and not against a collectivity, and resulted in the death of one or more victims.

In the three cases, displaced are *not allowed* to go back (and some are certainly not willing to go back (USJ/ Laval)) before a satisfactory solution has been found.

The events forcing the displacement have been so dramatic that both culture and law are being forced to respond in a creative way. The reconciliation programme incorporates *local traditions* to find different modes to settle disputes and help people negotiate their relationships with one another. Before going into more details about the use of customary and tribal law in the reconciliation programme, it is necessary to see how both formal and informal systems can co exist or overlap in Lebanon. By *tradition* we mean, the 'generally accepted codes of legislations, activities, rhythms and sanctions and as a model for social life with a very important religious component' (Gilsenan 1984). *Customary law* (*qaanun aarfi*), is concerned with property disputes, cases of adultery and elopement; while *tribal law* (*qaanun ashiri*), is concerned with the killing of a man of a clan by a man of another clan. The blood-price is demanded for murder and the arrangement is made by the respective chiefs.

Lebanon has a national system of civil, criminal and appeals courts with codes based on European models - but each religious community has legal jurisdictions over the domestic affairs of its members (marriage, divorce, inheritance). In cases involving violence, disruption of general peace, the internal security police intervenes and the case is taken to court. As the distance from the capital increases the application of national law diminishes. Witty (1978) remarks that 'the village system of conflict management and dispute resolution articulates with the national system in a very limited way'. In her research on a Lebanese village, she found that the national courts are used by the inhabitants as means of changing local power patterns or challenging local alliances, such procedures are avoided in cases of violence and in cases in which, it is important for the village to 'achieve ideal patterns of social justice'. Recourse to the state is used as the very last resort, and often, criminal sanctions imposed by the state conflict with villages' own principles.

Villagers feel that the court system is not equipped to handle such matters as family honour, compensations or dispute settlement.

Another way of measuring the realm of formal justice is through people's access to legal forums. It was very difficult for the poor and the powerless to use the legal system in Lebanon, not only because of the distance, the lack of knowledge and costs involved -including the corruption of magistrates- (Picard 1993), but also because, feudal lords incarnated the state, and 'to the mass of rural population,(they were not) mediators of a higher authority and certainly could not be circumvented because no other alternative channels existed' (Gilsenan 1986).

By allowing customary practice to bridge the gap between the law and the social needs and opinions of people, the programme on the reconciliation gives precedence to procedures that are oriented towards *preserving or creating relationships*. Even if the relationships between local residents and returnees were completely severed, as mentioned above(USJ/ Laval report), and became very distant between the displaced in exile - which 'increases the likelihood of broader confrontation' (Nader et al. 1978)- , return does make the building of these relationships vital for both groups.

All the paths chosen should reinforce this priority, considering the essential part social relationships play in the Lebanese life and in the dispute resolution process: each decision making, conflict or dispute will involve support and alliance systems; it will include not only an individual, but his family, his group and even an entire village. One sees the threat of escalation and the spectre of violence in this social organisation, especially when after the war, family loyalties have gone stronger and identification with both the family and the community has strengthened (see Hanf's survey 1993).

Some knowledge of *local social structures* is important to understand why these often act either as a constraint or as an escalating factor in disputes and conflicts.

The basic unit of social structure is the *patrilineage*. It is composed of all who date their descent through males from male ancestors. They share strong sense of group solidarity and responsibility. *The clan*, is composed of two or more lineages claiming descent from an ancestor; they unite for political reasons, dispute purposes. A dispute of a lineage member becomes a lineage dispute and can escalate to include the clan and *factions* that divide the lineages of a village in two opposing groups (Rothenberger 1978). In mixed villages where Christians and Muslims live, communities tend to define themselves on more level : the primary religious affiliations (Maronite/ Sunni / Orthodox /etc.); the secondary religious organisation (Christian , Muslim); and the village against outsiders (Witty 1978) .

It is therefore easier to understand why traditional procedures of conflict resolution and dispute settlement in Lebanon tend towards the continuation of relationships and the promotion of reconciliation. It also explains why persons who wish to preserve a relationship will *avoid* conflict by remaining in the 'as if' area and 'make as if such an insult had not occurred because nobody saw it' (Gilsenan 1984). A remark that could have been taken as an insult, a 'challenge to a verbal duel or worse, is much reduced ' (Gilsenan 1984).

The main task of a *mediator* or a judge in the case of the return, will be to make it possible for the parties to *live together*. In the context of the programme, the third party was appointed by the Ministry of the Displaced not solicited by the parties: the representant of the Ministry and, in accordance with the custom, : the mayor (*al mukhtar*) of the village. The *mukhtar* is the only formal government official; his duties have become mainly administrative since the independence of Lebanon, but as a person with prestige and authority, he is still consulted by villagers in time of

crises, and plays an important role in tempering violence. In a mixed village, two mayors represent respectively the Christian and Muslim communities. Another official, the President of the Municipality (*Rais al baladiya*) is consulted for disputes over water or over projects in the village. Both the *Mukhtar* and the *Rais al baladiya* cannot impose binding decisions upon parties although the 'containment value' of their mediation is quite high (Witty 1978). Only the Imam or prayer leader for the Muslims and the *Sheikh al Solh* - Sheikh of Peace- for the Druze community have this power. Those 'sanctified men of peace guarantee the functioning of the social system of the men of honour and violence' (Gilsenan 1984), and can play a very important role in exaggerating disputes, but their authority and importance cannot be ignored. However, they are seeking, through the inter-religious dialogue on the national level, to draw upon symbols of forgiveness that both the Quran and the New Testament make abundant reference to.

The unfolding of the dispute-settlement process and the sanctions imposed, have been designed to combine traditions, customary and tribal law -the latter being still very vivid in the country (Feghali 1994)-. In order to reach an agreement and to impose sanctions *before* the return, the reconciliation process has been based on a varying number of *encounters* -between parties and the Ministry's representants and between the parties themselves -depending on the seriousness of the case. In the village, the 'two primary factions of the dispute do not see one another personally in order to contain ...outbreaks of violence and verbal insult' (Witty 1978). The mediator's role is to *listen* to the parties to let them vent their anger and gather information. Once they have reached an agreement, the village committees will carry on the encounters and then implement the decisions. Sanctions are imposed according to both the General Amnesty law and to the customary and tribal laws, like the payment of blood money (*diye*) in the killing of an individual, 'it is said, blood for

blood, head for head, but in practice, it is often modified and the law of retaliation may be replaced by compensation in some sort or the other'(Granqvist 1965). The payment of compensation at the final meeting is traditionally passed from one family to the other while reviewing the dispute. 'Then coffee is served and the matter is considered closed' (Witty 1978).

Forgiveness and Reconciliation rituals

Payment of blood money (according to tribal law) or of other symbolical compensations are only a part of the Reconciliation process. Justice has to be visibly meted out to those responsible for the suffering of the people, through the performing of certain rituals. Those who have killed must be cleansed before they return to normal life.

The reconciliation programme makes few references to the patterns of ritual purification and forgiveness that are used by people to avoid the dissolution of their relationships. It encourages those who have committed acts of violence to confess their faults and ask for forgiveness. Thus allowing a powerful cathartic effect -but also appeasing the grieving party whose honour requires satisfaction. Satisfaction 'may be required through an apology which is verbal act of self humiliation' (Pitt -Rivers 1977), especially if performed publicly, in a country where public opinion is the worse tribunal . All the stories reporting on such rituals in the Middle East, insist on the 'humility' of the guilty asking for forgiveness (see Granqvist 1965). The criminal adopting an attitude of submission, bareheaded, ('to be bareheaded means to surrender' (Granqvist 1965)) , he will enter the house of the victim and claim protection.

In the Arab world, anyone entering the 'sacred space of a host (is) under his charge and protection. Such is 'the sanctity of *hospitality* that the host protection was assured even towards t h o s e from whom he felt enmity' (Gilsenan 19 8 4).

A person could place herself under the *protection* of the house by touching a child or a woman or just by entering into their sanctuary. He will say: 'I am under the protection of this house', and will ask for mercy to be given (Granqvist 1965) . Putting his life in the hands of the bereaved male parent and exaggerating verbal humiliation he then will say : 'I have slain and God has written I am the meat and thou art the knife' (Granqvist.1965). Thus he calls upon the magnanimity and generosity - highly prized virtues in the Arab world- of the victim's parent. If the apology is accepted the offended man will say 'I have released thee before the face of God'. The offenders head will be shaved and he will be dressed in new clothes (Granqvist 1965) that will symbolise his rebirth. The ceremony terminates the enmity and allows the exchange of food and money. Traditionally a great feast will seal the reconciliation and express the repaired relationship. The sharing together of food and drink (a common substance) creates a bond and always has ritual value (Pitt - Rivers 1977). This does not mean that the hostility and violence have suddenly disappeared. Only they have been transferred into /and neutralised by the highly institutionalised rituals of hospitality. The articulation of the relationship between the offended and offender has been replaced by the relation of the magnanimous host and the invited repentant. By putting himself (and his group) into the supplicant position, the latter tacitly renounced any claim of dignity and power. He has become a guest (who has to bring the food) under the protection of his host, and is therefore not an equal. On the other hand, by bestowing his forgiveness and receiving the other party for the feast, the host maintains the '*rapport de force*'. Violence has been transposed and maintained on a different level. The conflict has been replaced by a reciprocal code of honour.' It (was) not eliminated but (was) placed in abeyance' (Pitt-Rivers.1977). Neither party could breach the code of hospitality without jeopardising the newly repaired relationship.

An unknown quantity

A changed society

Is there a possibility for a resolution based on the circumstances of the past when long term conflicts such as the one that destroyed Lebanon results in a transformed society? Civil wars alter the people's concepts about the society and social behaviour. They are likely to have created new perceptions. Old values might be lost. The experience of war, flight and exile has probably generated a new social order after peace. To what degree will returnees feel tied to their home areas? Going back will not automatically recreate a sense of belonging or a sense of moral obligation to neighbours and kin especially if the flight took the form of mass exodus, accompanied by experiences of violence and death and if they are returning to areas devastated by war. Re-establishing a moral community would require 'some kind of new social movements ... that could possibly generate new relationships between people and between people and their conscience' (Wilson 1991).

A Changed Relationship to the State

Moreover, can a state which had *lost its credibility* claim to secure and guarantee peace? In Lebanon the state began to disintegrate before the war, when foreign armies started fighting on its territory. Gradually under external and internal pressure, the state collapsed. The army split; new forces emerged and imposed the militia rule to replace the state order, and became de facto governments (Picard 1993) . They succeeded in establishing order at the level of their communities. The country was divided into militia's territories that could only be entered through check-points and were defended by armed men. On a social level they set up generous assistance programmes to counter the ravages of war in the absence of a welfare state: the displaced have received almost no assistance from the state.

The involvement of the militias in social programmes was mainly a strategic campaign for popularity (Hanf 1993) but they built roads, supplied water, organised public transport, education, medical care etc. The deteriorating economy and the collapse of social institutions have added to these factor and contributed to the fact that the Lebanese have come to believe 'that the state is at the very least necessary and perhaps even a liability' (Beydoun 1991). This attitude was reinforced by the lack of access people have to the state as a group of institutions established to promote the general interest (Beydoun 1991) .

On the other hand, traditionally, the citizen *loyalty* was not to the state, but to the dominating families. The creation of a republic in 1920 did not eliminate the 'feudal ' system of domination. The landlord was now an elected official who represented his community and who remained the real holder of power. Gilsenan argues -as we mentioned before-, that the landlords(*Zaims*) were not the mediators of a higher authority, they simply could not be circumvented as there was no other alternative access to the state and this was true from the last phase of the Ottoman period through the French mandate and up to the middle seventies(Gilsenan 1986). During the war , the old powerful *Zaim* were replaced by the warlords and militiamen replaced their strongmen (*abadayes*). New loyalties had taken over the long tradition of patronage. In 1989 with the Taef Accord the second Lebanese republic absorbed the militia groups and turned them into political groups. Former warlords became civilians participating in a democratic system. The incorporation of their members into the re-structured army and of their responsables in the government was to be interpreted as a sign of reconciliation.

The power relations following peace have yet to be defined and understood. Who will replace the successors of the traditional leaders? Will the traditional ruling families re-establish themselves ? and in what way?

The state that was put in place by the Taef Agreement is modelled on the strong, unifying authoritarian states of the region. The reconstruction of the country and the construction of a post war society is in need of a strong state. Will the Lebanese state be able to reassert itself without resorting to repression (Picard 1993) ?

Conclusion

In this paper I have focused on the civil reconciliation between the displaced persons returning home and the local residents, within the wider frame of the political and national reconciliation.

* In the first part, I have argued that despite a good project setting the framework and mechanisms of conflict resolution between the two aforementioned groups, Lebanon was in the process of physically repairing and not rebuilding the country, where human beings become the major issue.

* In a second part, we have seen that the causes and effects of massive displacements, were the formation of homogenous and exclusive enclaves. The *spontaneous* return of the displaced can be a key factor of civil reconciliation, since they can initiate the real inter-communal dialogue at the grass-root level. Away from political discourses, they can help an entire society rediscover its tradition of co-existence. It was argued that the *coercive* aspect of the government policy can only mitigate against any plan of reconciliation, and that the 'generous' idea of refugees' *participation* in different projects in their original home areas, is totally meaningless if they have not decided to be there in the first place! It was argued further, that the assumption that return is the natural solution for refugees, can only lead to more suffering, and determine the resurgence of conflict between communities :

first, because a forced return will not create a sense of moral obligation to neighbours and local residents. Among those who do not want to go back are -understandably- those who fear retaliation. As a refugee said to me: 'we will never go back, there has been 'blood between us' '; second, because return will mean another exile for all the displaced who have adapted to a new way of life and have been with their community for more than a decade.

* In a third part, I have tried to look for the cultural factors that can provide a fertile ground for reconciliation, basing my study on the programme devised by the Ministry of the Displaced. My argument was that behind the rhetoric of peace and reconciliation, lies a different reality that needs to be dealt with : the violence and destruction due to fifteen years of war, combined with the violence inherent to the local *structures of power*; and that surely, a general amnesty for all crimes of war cannot guarantee collective amnesia... Healing the wounds of war, means being able to make sense of the immense suffering, and rebuilding a community life based on trust and therefore, a society seen as one of *accountability*.

I took into consideration the forms of *social organisation* in Lebanon, because of their importance in both the containment and spread of violence. The civil reconciliation programme has built a bridge between the traditional values and social needs of the population and the demands of the institutions. We have seen the culturally characteristic way disputes are settled, through *customary and tribal laws*, and the role of *mediation* in preserving the relationships . I have also considered the *reconciliation rituals* and essentially, *hospitality*, seen as a mode of negotiating a relationship and, most importantly, as a means of channelling and neutralising violence.

* Finally, I raised the question of *change* as a major variable. Considering the transformation of a society after almost two decades of civil war, how much of the social structures has remained? What has replaced the traditional power structures and the domination of the warlords? I argued that the reconciliation process needs a strong *state*, and not a state that resorts to repression. On the other hand, can a state that has lost its credibility guarantee peace?

Can a state be taken seriously when establishing mechanisms of accountability between the people, while the responsible at the highest level, the warlords, enjoy total impunity and immunity in their new found legitimacy as ministers? Ghassan Salame has translated the feelings of most Lebanese when he said that 'new blood should certainly be infused in the old establishment, but not the blood of those who have too much of it on their hands'...⁷

⁷ Translated by the author.

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