Diasporas and Homeland Discourses:

What Diaspora Narratives Can Tell Us About Contemporary Conflicts

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1. Introduction

My people died from hunger, and he who did not perish from starvation was butchered with the sword; and I am here in this distant land, roaming amongst a joyful people who sleep upon soft beds, and smile at the days while the days smile upon them....

What can an exiled son do for his starving people, and of what value unto them is the lamentation of an absent poet?

-Gibran Khalil Gibran

In 1895, renowned Lebanese poet Gibran Khalil Gibran emigrated to the United States, where his essays and short stories greatly focused on the politics of his homeland. His writings made him a national icon back home, and abroad he became the face of the Mahjar (i.e. the Lebanese diaspora). His writings spoke to the loneliness of Lebanese immigrants in the New World and essentially captured the experience of diaspora consciousness. Indeed, diasporic narratives provide a window into the collective identity of these groups, and tell us a lot about conflicts in their country of origins. Conflict studies scholarship has called for the need to pay attention to this phenomenon (Demmers, 2007). Discourses on war and peace inform the ‘being’ of diaspora groups and sustain diasporic life (ibid, 2007). These narratives create arenas for research and debate. Diasporas, especially those formed out of conflict, construct varying narratives of victimhood, which are reproduced and re-invented in countries of settlement, which serve as markers of identification within diaspora communities (Demmers, 2007; Féron, 2017). Undeniably, the diaspora component has been profound in changing national narratives of conflict, and can play an important role in shedding light on the causes and consequences of wars within conflict studies research.

The current scholarship on diasporas within conflict studies and international relations, has predominately focused on their role in transnational politics. Indeed, diasporas have become major actors in the political arena. In our increasingly globalized world, enhanced connectivity and trans-border networks have enabled diasporas to maintain engagement with their homelands. With the
development of new communication technologies, communities abroad are able to easily receive updates from their homeland in real time, enabling groups to react instantly to domestic affairs back home. As such, diasporas have become influential political actors in their own right. Several studies have already explored their impact on homeland conflicts (Koinova, 2010; Pande, 2017). The biggest bone of contention within the scholarship is whether diasporas contribute to conflict or the promotion of peace-building or both simultaneously (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006). Nonetheless, a consensus in the literature indicates that diasporas matter. Diasporas now hold more political, economic and social leverage than ever - a fact that homelands are aware of. Many countries rely on their diasporas for external support, be it political, such as lobbying, or economic, through remittances; using them as strategic assets (Shain & Barth, 2003). While much work has paid attention to diasporas as transnational actors, particularly focusing on conflict-generated diaspora groups, there has been little investigation into the inner workings and internal complexities of diasporas and the importance of their narratives (Féron & Lefort, 2018). Specifically, how internal differences and the migration process influence the construction of their narratives and perceptions of homeland conflicts.

In this context, this thesis aims to explore diasporic perceptions of homeland conflicts, and the factors that shape their view. This research will present the Lebanese diaspora as a case study. The Lebanese example provides an interesting case study of a complex diaspora that is worth investigating. The country has experienced five successive waves of migration, spanning from the years under the Ottoman Empire to the post-civil war era. The Lebanese community abroad originated as a trade diaspora, when early merchants left Ottoman-ruled Lebanon for the New World. However, this is not the reality of the whole diaspora, as a significant amount of the population abroad is linked with the civil war. As a result, the Lebanese diaspora consciousness possesses characteristics of both trade and conflict-generated diasporas. The multifaceted nature of Lebanese migration can indeed be a pertinent factor in shaping perceptions and identities of the diaspora. As a country that lacks a national narrative of the cause of their civil conflict, turning to the diaspora may provide important insights for an analytical point of view. This research will attempt to shed light on how the diverse Lebanese migration processes have impacted its diaspora, in terms of their identity and their understanding of civil conflict in the homeland. In this sense, this research will examine how the identities, perceptions and narratives of the Lebanese diaspora have been affected by the various waves of migration, particularly comparing the views of the Syro-Lebanese or trade section of the diaspora against the civil war or conflict-
generated faction of the diaspora. The following sections in this chapter will lay out the purpose of this research, provide the academic and social relevance of this thesis topic and finally, will present the research themes and expectations.

1.1. Purpose of Research

The primary focus of this research is to shed light on the role that diasporas play within the discourse of conflict. More specifically, what diaspora memory and narratives can tell us about the causes of civil war, and how these perceptions can be shaped by migration patterns. Very few studies have explored spatial and temporal heterogeneity within a diaspora community and the effects this has on their perceptions of the homeland (Féron & Lefort, 2018). Through this investigation, this research aims to fill a gap in the literature that explicitly examines complex diasporas and the role of migration processes on their interpretations of homeland conflicts. Significantly, this thesis seeks to explore how the narratives of the Lebanese have been reproduced and re-invented in the countries of settlement, and if there is any consensus, or a unified narrative amongst the cause of the Lebanese Civil War.

1.2. Academic and Social Relevance

Research on diasporas is important in furthering our understanding of their complex role in the political arena. With the rapid changes that globalization and migration flows have presented over the past several decades, our conventional understanding of citizenship and identity has shifted and what it means to be part of a diaspora, an expatriate and a migrant have changed significantly. Today, around 3.3% of the global population lives outside of their country of origin (United Nations Population Fund, 2015). More than ever, the need to understand diasporic politics is necessary, both academically and socially.

The Lebanese diaspora, like the homeland population, is extremely heterogeneous in its religious makeup. As a socially fragmented society strife with sectarian violence, a history of civil wars and political instability, understanding how the Lebanese diaspora perceives homeland conflicts can provide important inferences on identity formation and reproduction of historical grievances outside of the homeland. Research on the Lebanese diaspora can be used to make inferences on other diaspora communities that comprise several waves of migration where only a part of the diaspora was formed out of conflict.
1.3. Research Question

In attempt to narrow the research gap, this thesis aims to explore the theme of diaspora diversity within one ethnic group. This thesis thus poses the question:

*How does the Lebanese diaspora perceive civil conflict in the homeland? More specifically, is there a difference in perception between the trade diaspora and the conflict-generated diaspora?*

Assessing this research theme leaves open a series of critical sub-questions, primarily, how are narratives reproduced and reinvented in the host country, and what factors shape the construction of these narratives? Do intra-diaspora differences impact likelihood to participate in transnational activities? In order to address these questions, this thesis will explore the role of diasporic institutions and make use of narratives of members of the Lebanese diaspora, particularly from North America, South America and West Africa.

1.4. Research Expectations

This paper will set forth two competing expectations. First, I expect to find that there is a difference between the Syro-Lebanese, or the trade portion of the diaspora and the civil war, or conflict-generated section of the diaspora in how they perceive the causes of civil conflict in the homeland. This expectation is rooted in the fact that the older community was formed as a trade diaspora and not conflict-generated. Diasporas formed out of conflict tend to maintain and reproduce their ethnic and religious cleavages for generations (Féron, 2017). As the Syro-Lebanese diasporic communities did not bear witness to the civil war and ensuing sectarian violence, their perceptions and narratives will differ from those of the conflict-generated diaspora. Specifically, I expect to find that the trade diasporic communities will see the civil war as an outcome of external, regional influences, while the conflict-generated diaspora will view the civil war as an outcome of internal sectarian hostilities.

However, there has been a continuous blending between sections of the diaspora and the homeland. The concept of maintaining Lebanese identity, through communication with family back home and visits, has been of importance to the diaspora. Lebanon’s tourism industry is significantly supported by its diaspora, who have traditionally made annual trips during the summer (Hourani, 2007).
Further, for such a widely dispersed population, the Lebanese diaspora had unprecedented high rates of return migration to Lebanon during the early 1900s (Cohen, 2008). Additionally, family reunification policies in host countries meant that those fleeing the civil war were able to join their families abroad who had left earlier for economic or trade reasons. In such circumstances, newer communities would have integrated with the pre-existing trade diaspora. Given the amalgamation of the trade diaspora and conflict-generated diaspora, as well as the relationship with the homeland, perceptions may not be distinct along the lines of trade or conflict-generated diaspora divisions. This thesis therefore presents a second expectation, that there will be no difference in perception between the old and new diasporic communities.

In order to create a framework through which the research questions can be efficiently assessed, this thesis will first explore the existing literature and discourse around the concept of diaspora; transnationalism and transnational activities, and collective identity and narratives in chapter two. On that basis, the case of the Lebanese diaspora is examined by looking at the context of Lebanese migration, sectarian politics and the civil war in chapter three. Chapter four covers the methodology section, and describes and justifies the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews with diasporic institutions and diaspora community members themselves in this study. The results of the obtained data will be discussed in chapter five, including an analysis of transnational activities and homeland perceptions in the case of the Lebanese diaspora. Finally, chapter six presents the conclusions and outcomes of this study and gives recommendations for further research.
2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter seeks to provide an overview on theoretical discussions on diaspora and set forth a comprehensive framework exploring relevant arguments and concepts. This framework will lay down the basis for a critical analysis of the empirical findings of this research. The first section of this chapter will identify conceptual terminology and theory around diasporas. Moreover, this chapter will present a typology on diasporas, making the distinction between different categorizations of diaspora groups. Next, this chapter will move on to discuss transnationalism and the political, sociocultural and economic transnational activities that diasporas engage in. Finally, this chapter will look at collective identity and narratives as they inform diaspora consciousness.

2.1. Defining Diaspora

Understanding what constitutes a diaspora has become a point of contention amongst scholars. The usage of this phenomenon is highly contested and broadly applied. While its origins are traced back to Jewish theology, where the term was used to refer to the dispersion of Jewish people living outside of Israel during the Babylonian Exile, it has also been commonly used in reference to the Greek and Armenian diasporas (Cohen, 1996; Féron & Lefort, 2018). Traditionally, the concept has denoted the narrative of forced migration, persecution and displacement (Cohen, 2008). Throughout the 20th century, particularly in the post-Soviet Union era, the concept of diaspora has proliferated. Its contemporary application has been used more broadly to include groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees and expatriates (Tölölyan, 1991). In its simplest form, diasporas have been defined as a “segment of a people living outside the homeland” (Connor, 1986, p.16), or “emblems of transnationalism” (Tölölyan, 1991, p. 6). The over-simplistic and broad application of the term makes it hard to make theoretical inferences about such groups. Brubaker (2005) has coined this phenomenon the ‘diaspora’ diaspora, explaining the dispersion of the analytical meaning of the term. The need to adequately define diaspora is essential in order to further our theoretical understanding and to distinguish them from other forms of communities (ibid., 2005). There has been some work done on identifying distinct themes that are unique to the diasporic experience. In particular, three defining criteria emerge within the literature that can be used to frame our conceptual understanding of diaspora.
Primarily, the concept of ‘dispersion’ from the country of origin has traditionally been used to characterize the diasporic experience. One of the earliest and most influential analysis on diasporas was put forth by William Safran. In his seminal work, Safran defines diaspora on the basis of six characteristics, beginning with dispersion. Notes Safran, “They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions” (1991, p. 83). Similarly, Brubaker (2005) identifies dispersion as a straightforward criterion of diasporas. As opposed to Safran, Brubaker’s take on dispersion is broader, explaining it as any kind of dispersion in space, be it forced or traumatic. Building on this, he notes that, dispersion should include the crossing of state borders, however, dispersion within a state is also sufficient in characterizing a diaspora (2005). Likewise, the definition put forth by Demmers (2007) includes the notion of dispersal, either of a forced or voluntary nature, to two or more host countries. Additionally, when defining diaspora, Demmers (2007) explains that the identification diasporas have with their dispersal is more essential than the actual dispersal (p. 9). In sum, dispersion from a place of origin informs the ‘being’ of diaspora communities. That a group would identify as being a dispersed people, sustains their diaspora consciousness.

A second defining criterion that emerges in the literature on diasporas is that of homeland orientation (Brubaker, 2005). Linkages with the homeland are an essential feature of diasporas. As technology continues to improve, diasporic groups are able to maintain these ties more effectively. Benedict Anderson (1992) has referred to this phenomenon as long-distance nationalism. He explains this notion as someone who is a “citizen of the state in which he...may feel little attachment, he finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating... in the conflicts of his imagined Heimat - now only fax-time away” (p. 13, 1992). By the same token, Brubaker emphasizes the connection of a diaspora with its homeland, real or imagined as a part of diasporic life (2005). Influenced by Safran (1991), Brubaker sees an ethnic group’s orientation to its homeland as a definitive criterion. In Safran’s definition of diaspora, several of the characteristics he presents speak directly to the connection with the homeland (1991). He notes that diasporas:

Retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements...they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate...they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and they
continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (1991, p.83).

Correspondingly, Vertovec (1997) ascertains that diasporas, as social forms, maintain “a variety of explicit and implicit ties with their homelands” (p. 3). Further, he proposes the concept of the triadic relationship which characterizes diasporic entities (1997). He notes that this relationship exists between the dispersed ethnic group, their host country and their homeland (1997, p.5). Similarly, Tölölyan uses this characteristic of diasporas to differentiate them from other ethnic groups. He argues, “Yet an ethnic community differs from a diaspora because the former lacks the latter’s twin commitment to maintain connections with its homeland and its kin communities in other states” (2007, p. 652-653). Hence, in order to conceptualize a group as a diaspora, there exists a requirement for them to have attachments, directly or indirectly, to the place of origin.

Lastly, diasporas are characterized by their distinct identities in their host country, a process Brubaker refers to as boundary-maintenance (2005). This notion indicates that diasporas maintain their identity in their host countries, either voluntarily or through self-imposed measures (2005). This criterion is particularly important in the formation of diaspora identity and consciousness. As Brubaker (2005) notes, the concept of distinctness from the host society allows us to discuss diasporas as a “distinctive ‘community’, held together by a distinctive, active solidarity, as well as by relatively dense social relationships, that cut across state boundaries and link members of the diaspora in different states into a single ‘transnational community’” (p.6). Collective memory of the homeland thus informs diasporic identity in the countries of settlement and kin groups in other states.

In a similar fashion, Safran also includes this criterion in his definition of diaspora, stating, “they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it” (1991, p.83). Likewise, Tölölyan proposes boundary maintenance as a distinct feature of diasporas. He notes, “They may mark symbolic boundaries that preserve a collective identity other than the hegemonic one that dominates the larger society in which they live and which is, in fact, their home.” (2007, p. 652). According to Tölölyan, the concept of identity preservation embodied by diasporas sets them apart from ethnic groups, who do not practice self-preservation of cultural differences to the same extent (2007). However, postmodernist approaches to diasporas suggest that these groups are much more nuanced than typically theorized, as diaspora
identities are malleable and fluid (Mavroudi, 2007). In order to understand contemporary diaspora dynamics, it is important to also suppose notions of flexibility within diaspora communities. This is particularly necessary when assessing how and why diasporas might view their homeland conflicts in the way they do. Thus far, this framework has taken a broad approach by identifying the various aspects involved with the connotation of diaspora. In that regard, this thesis puts forth a working definition that this research will use in its investigation of the Lebanese diaspora:

Collectives of individuals who identify themselves, and are identified by others as part of an imagined community that has been dispersed (either forced or voluntary) from its original homeland to two or more host-countries and that is committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland. (Demmers, 2007, p.9)

2.2. Diaspora Typology

Today, diasporas have by in large transcended the victim narrative originally used to define them and emerge for a number of reasons (Cohen, 2008). It is essential to understand the ways that diasporas form in order to assess their political, social and economic transnational relationships with their countries of origin, and their connection to conflicts in the homeland. While a categorization of diasporas runs the risk of oversimplifying groups, putting forth a typology provides a lens of which carrying out an analytical exploration of internal complexities and differences within a group.

In his formative book, *Global Diasporas*, Cohen (2008) presents a comprehensive typology of diasporas in which he identifies five ideal types of such groups. The first classification Cohen identifies is the victim diaspora. He explains the victim diaspora as that which is formed following a traumatic event afflicting the group collectively, this is exemplified by the Jewish diaspora (Cohen, 2008). Cohen extends this category to include the Armenian and African diasporas, noting the parallels between these groups and the Jewish diaspora.

Next, Cohen identifies the second ideal type, that of the labour diaspora. This group, he explains, emerges out of voluntary movement from the homeland “in search of work, to further colonial ambitions or in pursuit of trade. These circumstances can give rise, respectively, to a labour diaspora, an imperial diaspora or a trade diaspora” (p. 61). Critically, Cohen notes that this category is not applicable
to all groups that emigrate in search of work, as diasporic consciousness is not guaranteed to develop from migration on the individual or familial level, since assimilation into the host country is more likely in those circumstances (2008). Rather, this type of diaspora evolves if cultural, linguistic and religious group ties are maintained over time, narratives of the homeland are held and exclusion from host societies exist (2008, p.61).

Further, the imperial diaspora, such as the British, is identified within Cohen’s typology. This type of diaspora, argues Cohen, was established by imperial powers, within their colonies abroad. Imperial diasporas were used to further colonialist agendas by these powerful empires, particularly in Europe.

Moreover, Cohen discerns the trade and business diaspora as the fourth ideal group. This diaspora is exemplified with the Phoenicians as the historic prototype of this category (2008). This type of diaspora was formed from commercial and trading networks amongst kin groups. Critically, Cohen identifies the Lebanese diaspora as an example of a trade diaspora that emerged with two motives: as labourers and as merchants (2008, p. 92). He argues that these two strands of Lebanese migrants amalgamated in the diaspora and established themselves as traders (2008, p.93). This example is useful in furthering our understanding of the existence of divisions within a typology of a diaspora. Cohen’s illustration of the Lebanese diaspora is particularly relevant for the research of this thesis that focuses on the Lebanese case.

Finally, Cohen distinguishes the deterritorialized diaspora. The most contentious category, this type refers to stateless groups whose collective identity is formed around the imagined homeland (2008).

In keeping with typological overviews of diasporas, Bruneau (2010) proposes a classification similar to that of Cohen’s. Bruneau illustrates ideal categories of diasporic communities which revolve

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1 The Phoenicians were an ancient Mediterranean civilization in classical antiquity with origins in modern day Lebanon
around religious, entrepreneurial, political and racial-cultural domains. The first group Bruneau identifies is that which is formed around an entrepreneurial pole (i.e. Lebanese or Chinese diasporas). In this manner, Bruneau’s typology resembles Cohen’s in his placing of the Lebanese diaspora within the enterprise pole. Moving on, the second group is established around spiritual elements. More specifically, a monotheistic religion connected with a sacred language, such as the Jewish, Assyrian and Chaldean diasporas (2010, p.40). Bruneau identifies a third group, that which is formed around a political pole. This type of diaspora, argues Bruneau, “is established when the territory of origin is dominated by a foreign power and the main aspiration of the population of the diaspora, is the creation of a nation-state” (2008, p.40). Essentially, the Palestinian diaspora serves as an example of this type of group. Finally, Bruneau identifies diasporas established out of racial and cultural elements, such as the Black diaspora (2008).

While these schematic categorizations of diasporas might fail to capture the homogeneity of such communities, they create an important lens for assessing diasporic identity, transnational activities and narratives. Diasporas are not only defined in terms of how they are perceived in their host countries. Rather, why they left their homelands can be important factors in shaping their perceptions of political affairs back home. More specifically, the migration process they go through can highlight divisions and cleavages within a diaspora of the same ethnic group.

2.3. Theorizing Complex Diaspora Dynamics
As previously noted, diasporas are not homogeneous entities. Rather, they possess internal complexities and differences which can directly affect the way they mobilize and operate. Very little work has paid attention to understanding such internal divisions within diasporic groups and their causes and consequences. However, these internal differences must be taken into consideration if one is to theorize diasporic perceptions of homeland conflicts. More specifically, an understanding of these differences is essential when comparing different sections within the same ethnic group. Indeed, diasporic narratives and perceptions of homeland conflicts may vary, dependent on several factors, including temporal and spatial components of the migration process (Féron & Lefort, 2018). It is over simplistic to assume a diaspora as a unified body, as not all diasporic members mobilize around a homeland, and its conflicts, in the same way. It is of particular importance within the scope of this
research on the Lebanese diaspora to take into account key factors that have come to shape diasporic perceptions and involvement with conflict.

One of the most influential theories on how diasporas coalesce around conflicts is that of Férón’s. Paying particular attention to the complexity of diasporas vis-à-vis the migration process, Férón has noted how conflicts are reproduced and transported into the diaspora. Specifically, Férón has argued that the very process of migration can lead to autonomisation; a term she coined to explain the transformation diasporas go through when emigrating (2017). In other words, she argues that through autonomisation, diaspora’s politics are changed as a result of the migration process and this may transform the way the conflict manifests within the diaspora. According to Férón and Lefort (2018), several factors are responsible for the complexity within diasporas and their relationship with homeland conflict. They note that diasporas from societies which are fragmented along ethnic or sectarian lines can cause this type of complexity and divisions (2018). Further, they argue that “The multiple generational layers that gradually composed diaspora groups have also to be taken into account, all the more since these successive waves might have been generated by different causes” (2018, p.37). In this regard, very few studies have compared a conflict-generated section of a diaspora with its counterparts that emigrated for trade or economic reasons (Férón & Lefort, 2018).

In addition, the authors assert that time and place of migration also play a role in the construction of diasporic communities, as these spatial and temporal factors create differences, even within the same nationality (2018). Hence, the various waves of migration account for plurality within a diasporic community. For instance, some conflict-generated diasporas encompass communities that emigrated prior to the conflict, which further complicates the cohesion within a diasporic community. As Feron (2017) maintains, “Another complexity that they display is that some diasporas commonly labelled as ‘conflict-generated’ actually include members who have migrated before the core conflict erupted, thus implying deep differences in terms of direct experience of violence.” (p. 362). Therefore, differences between sections of a diaspora may vary given the exposure, or lack thereof, they had to conflict and violence. This assessment is important for analyzing diasporic engagement, responses and understandings of homeland conflicts. For instance, diaspora groups that are comprised of several waves of migration, such as that of the Lebanese, may hold differing views on homeland conflicts. Likewise, diasporas that possess elements of trade and conflict-generated groups may also contain such
cleavages. In this regard, understanding these differences is necessary in order to compare perceptions between trade and conflict-generated communities of the same diaspora.

The literature on conflict-generated diasporas explains that these groups tend to transport their grievances with them into their host countries. Koinova (2010) asserts that “conflict-generated diasporas differ from those originating in economic and other voluntary migration on the basis that their trauma has become ‘frozen in time’ in distant lands” (p. 440). Indeed, the literature tends to describe conflict-generated diasporas as static entities. Lyons (2007) aptly explains this sentiment:

The trauma of violent displacement is vivid in the first generations’ minds and is often kept alive in subsequent generations through commemorations and symbols. In fact, one function of conflict-generated diaspora networks is to ensure that displacement’s original cause is remembered and the grievance passed on to the next generation. In contrast to many cases of economic migration where certain categories of people such as young men or female health care providers look for work abroad, in conflict-generated cases the initial migration was often rapid, included entire extended families and villages, and the impediments to return are political rather than economic. (p. 532).

Hence, the identities of conflict-generated diasporas are largely shaped by their grievances and forced migration, which may not be as relevant for the factions of that ethnic group which left several generations prior, for economic, trade or labour reasons. Understanding the formation of diasporas, both the conflict-generated and trade sections, sheds light on their transnational engagements. In terms of transnationalism and diasporas, some diasporas tend to be more active than others. This framework will now turn to transnationalism and transnational activities undertaken by diaspora groups.

2.4. Transnationalism

The rise of globalization has generated increased mobility and migrant movement, and the need to conceptualize transnational relationships between diasporas and homelands emerged. Glick-Schiller et al. (1992) coined the term transnationalism, to describe the multifaceted, cross-border activities that diasporas engaged in with their homeland and ethnic kin groups. Essentially, transnationalism encompasses the fields that connect diasporas to their countries of origins on political, sociocultural, and economic levels (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992). Similar to the triadic relationship as described by Vertovec (1997), transnational activities not only link a diaspora with its homeland, but also incorporate their countries of settlement (Glick-Schiller et al, 1992, Basch et al., 1994).
Werbner (2004) aptly discusses the role of diaspora groups as mobilized, transnational actors. She explains that diasporas are:

Cultural, economic, political and social formations in process, responsive to global crises and multicultural or international human rights discourses. This means that diasporas are culturally and politically reflexive and experimental; they encompass internal arguments of identity about who ‘we’ are and where we are going. Diasporas as full of division and dissent. At the same time, they recognize collective responsibilities, not only to the home country but to co-ethnics in far-flung places. The reality of diaspora is crucially both representational and material. (p.896)

Essentially, Werbner (2004) makes the point here that transnationally, diasporas play a key role in the public arena, not just in regard to their homeland but also with their host societies and their kin groups around the world.

Moreover, the literature looks at the levels in which the transnational relationship between the diaspora and the homeland manifest. Several scholars have emphasized the need to distinguish between the different levels of transnational engagement (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landlot, 1999). Indeed, transnationalism often develops from below, namely by diasporic communities. However, this phenomenon can also be established through a top-down approach, in which transnationalism is initiated by the homeland, which typically involves economic activities such as funding and remittances from receiving countries (Guarnizo et al. 2003). In their seminal article on diasporas and transnationalism, Portes et al. (1999) critically identify a typology of transnational activities, highlighting a “useful distinction between transnational activities initiated and conducted by powerful institutional actors, such as multinational corporations and states, and those that are the result of grass-roots initiatives by immigrants and their home country counterparts. These various enterprises have been respectively dubbed transnationalism ‘from above’ and ‘from below’” (1999, p. 221). Nowadays, homelands have become more aware of the strength of their diasporas. Several countries, including Lebanon, have adopted migrant policies that explicitly deal with diaspora-homeland transnational relations. This type of transnationalism from above, or ‘external citizenship’ (Hourani, 2007) encompasses state-led initiatives and policies to network and mobilize their diasporas. In this sense, homelands aim to reassert their sovereignty over their communities abroad (Baubock & Faist, 2010).
Baubock and Faist (2010) outline five policy measures that states develop to reach their diasporas, these are:

(1) seek to change host state policies through diplomatic advocacy or treaty protections; (2) fund diaspora community organisations and the creation of educational, cultural, political and entrepreneurial institutions; (3) offer full or limited forms of political citizenship, such as voting rights, special forms of representation, dual citizenship or dual nationality; (4) offer full or limited forms of social citizenship through welfare state and labour market access and direct subsidies to diaspora members; or (5) extend the benefits of cultural and symbolic membership through rhetorical inclusion, ethnic identity cards and trans-border cultural exchanges. (p. 142)

In this context, and with particular consideration of the Lebanese case study, it is important for this framework to make a distinction between these two forms of transnational engagement when assessing the political, sociocultural and economic spheres of transnational engagement.

2.4.1. Political, Sociocultural and Economic Transnationalism

Transnationalism from below, or diaspora-led transnationalism, conceptualizes diasporic activities relating to their homelands on political, social and economic levels (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). In terms of political transnational activities, the advancement of communication technologies has allowed diasporas to remain actively involved with the political life of their homeland. Borrowing from Anderson’s previously stated concept, these global advancements and transnational linkages enables diasporas to engage in ‘long-distance nationalism’ (1992). Diasporas have become more politically involved in their homeland conflicts, a phenomenon Demmers (2007) refers to as a ‘delocalization’ of contemporary conflict. Aligning with Anderson, she argues that diasporas engage in long-distance participation through mediums such as the internet, television and telephone (2007). In this regard, diasporas work as political entrepreneurs, engaging in political transnationalism through lobbying efforts, advocacy, and human rights and social justice issues (Vertovec, 1997). According to Pande (2017), diasporic groups can “influence policymakers and the media, acting like any other lobby group, or can provide direct political support to create a softer version of the homeland conflict” (p. 54). This type of political engagement is supported and facilitated through the use of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) as well as Transnational Social Movement Organizations (TSMOs) (Vertovec, 1997; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001). The extent to which diasporas engage with such institutions
Many scholars (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002) distinguish between narrow and broad transnational political practices to indicate level of involvement and identify diasporic groups as transnational actors. ‘Narrow’ transnational practices require more involvement and participation in diasporic organizations, such as memberships of parties and hometown alliances. On the other hand, ‘broad’ transnational practices refer to a less committed role, such as participating in some events and meetings (ibid., 2002). The narrow/broad typology provides a useful lens to assess the structure of transnational communities (ibid., 2002).

With regards to the Lebanese diaspora, political networking has allowed them to play an important role in the homeland (Hourani, 2007). Older diasporic communities were responsible for lobbying for a sovereign Lebanon under the Ottoman and French Mandate (ibid., 2007). Additionally, newer waves of the Lebanese diaspora have engaged in political transnationalism by lobbying their governments and INGOs during periods of conflict in Lebanon (ibid., 2007). On the political relationship between the diaspora and homeland, Hourani explains, “These political activities have rallied around them descendants of the Lebanese pioneer migrants and the offspring of the new expatriates and have been able to reawaken concerns towards Lebanon and renewed their contacts with the country of origin which, in return, strengthened the diasporic-homeland relations.” Migrant-led political transnationalism has thus worked as a mechanism of bringing old and new diasporic communities together on a political level.

On a sociocultural level, transnational activities and processes are motivated by affective and symbolic purposes. These include practices of sociability such as social obligations and mutual help (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002). Social processes of transnationalism also extend to include maintaining cultural behaviours and traditions as well as religious and linguistic traits which are connected to the country of origin. This usually takes the form of membership of social diaspora clubs and organizations; social gatherings, and/or weekend schools for children.

The concept of cultural maintenance has been part of the Lebanese diaspora since the early 1900s. The Mahjar movement founded in New York saw the establishment and proliferation of Lebanese arts and culture, which specifically included literary societies, Arabic-language newspapers and
magnanimes and social organizations (Cohen 2008). In terms of social transnational activities, the Lebanese diaspora in particular has played an essential role in establishing social welfare institutions, supporting the health sector, and promoting education in the homeland (Labaki, 2006).

Finally, the economic sphere of transnational activities can be distinguished between everyday economic activities and professional economic activities (Snel et al., 2006). Everyday economic activities encompass processes such as remitting money and goods to family in the homeland, real estate acquisition in origin countries, and donations through philanthropic and charitable projects (ibid., 2006). As for professional economic activities, business development, trade networking, and investments in different sectors of the economy account for economic transnational processes (Snel et al., 2006; Labaki, 2006). In many cases, the role of economic activities has been profound in the development of homeland countries (Labaki, 2006).

2.5. Collective identity and Narratives
The previous section of this theoretical framework examined transnationalism and transnational activities within three spheres: the political, sociocultural, and economic. However, it is worth noting the determinants of diasporic participation in the transnational realm. One determinant in particular that tends to stand out within the literature: collective identity. Arguably, the likelihood of diasporic transnational engagement depends on how strongly diasporic groups relate to their homelands on political, sociocultural, and economic levels. Hence, in order to understand diasporic transnationalism and consciousness, it is important to understand what is meant by identity.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) provide a comprehensive breakdown of the concept of collective identity. Specifically, they refer to the concept as “the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders” (p. 19). They argue that the term identity is unambiguous in this application. Rather, the usage of terms such as commonality, connectedness, and groupness. Furthermore, they maintain that this proposed set of words is important in furthering our conceptualization our connotations of ‘collective identity’. The proposed terminology is meant to
develop a concept that speaks to the “multiple forms and... ways in which actors attribute meaning and significance to them. This will enable us to distinguish instances of strongly binding, vehemently felt groupness from more loosely structured, weakly constraining forms of affinity and affiliation” (p. 21).

Another explanation is proposed by Eder (2009), which explains collective identity as a socially constructed phenomenon that employs “psychological needs and motives for providing an answer to the question “whom do I belong to” or to the question “whom do we belong to?” Collective identities make use of such psychic references in specific social constellations.” (p. 5). Accordingly, social relations amongst groups of people are essential markers in identity formation.

The literature on collective identity relies heavily on the use of narratives, particularly those around trauma and victimhood, which informs the development of these groups. Essentially, these narratives foster the socially constructed “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1992).

In like manner, Demmers (2007) describes how diaspora consciousness is permeated by narratives. Specifically, Demmers argues that:

Since diasporic and homeland groups live in distinct contexts they have different interests in maintaining the ‘homeland’ as a collective identity, and a source of cultural reproduction. National histories are shaped along notions of national interests and threats to national security. Both diaspora and homeland actors put their own ‘spin’ on the national narrative and live out their shared identity in its own way. (p. 12)

The argument that Demmers presents here essentially emphasizes the difference between diaspora and homeland perceptions of collective identity, and the interplay with national narratives. However, such differences can, arguably, exist within diaspora groups, who differ in relation to their homeland in terms of trauma and victimhood. Sectors of the population that have self-belief about their victimization are likely to construct a national narrative aligned with their perceptions. Demmers continues, “Diasporas and homeland discourses of war and peace are produced in different settings and contexts and are shaped by local structures of domination, signification and legitimation.” (2007, p. 12)
This relationship with diasporas and narratives are becomingly increasingly important as conflict dynamics change. Therefore, there exists an analytical need to incorporate diasporas in assessment of homeland conflicts, especially as more dynamic and contemporary conflicts emerge. As Demmers as maintained, “diasporic networks will be of increasing importance both as actors in the “new wars” and in changing national narratives. Hence, the study of contemporary conflict is impossible in the absence of close attention of diasporic dynamics.” (p. 7). Thus, understanding diasporas – their perceptions and narratives – can provide useful insights to understanding conflicts and transnationalism.
3. Context

Before this thesis can present the empirical findings of the Lebanese diaspora, it is first necessary to provide a contextual understanding of the political situation in Lebanon. This chapter will begin with an overview of sectarianism and power-sharing as it functions in Lebanon. Further, this chapter will provide an account of the Lebanese Civil War, an event that generated a large portion of the diaspora. As the aim of this thesis is to assess differences between the trade and conflict-generated perceptions of the civil war, understanding the dynamics of this event is necessary. Further, this chapter will explore the successive waves of migration, and the associated push factors, in order to distinguish between the trade and conflict-generated groups around the world.

3.1. An Introduction to Lebanese Sectarianism

Today, Lebanon has become synonymous with sectarianism. A small country, it boasts 18 officially recognized sects, all of which are minorities, and receive proportional representation in the 128 seats of Parliament. Confessionalism in Lebanon is not restricted to its parliament. Rather, its system of confessional democracy is a breakdown of society, civil service offices and governmental institutions. In recent years, sectarian hostilities have manifested into violence. A number of factors – its colonial history, power sharing model, involvement in neighbouring conflicts – could explain this dark turn. Understanding the roots of sectarian conflict in Lebanon is contested, and for the most part, there tends to be disagreement among Lebanese politicians, historians, and sociologists on this issue.

However, this wasn’t always the case with Lebanon. The country has served as a cultural and political reference throughout history. It is not uncommon to hear a Lebanese reminisce on the nation’s golden age. *Paris of the Middle East* or *Pearl of the Mediterranean* were popular phrases for describing the small Middle-Eastern country which fused Western and Eastern cultures. During Lebanon’s golden age, its capital was considered a hub of banking and commerce. The tourism industry was vibrant, as people flocked from around the world to explore its snow-capped mountains and pristine beaches. Lebanese society was hailed as the most liberal and tolerant country in the Middle East (Salibi, 1988). As a heterogeneous society, comprised of various tribes, ethnic groups, and sects, it was once seen as a successful example of religious coexistence in an area of the world synonymous with war (Najem, 1998).
Its system of confessional democracy was seen as a success in maintaining a peaceful balance among its diverse population.

Sectarian power sharing in Lebanon can be traced back to the late 1800s, when the nation was ruled by the Turkish-Ottoman Empire. An 1860 uprising-turned civil conflict between the feudal Maronite Christian\(^2\) peasants, against their Druze\(^3\) landlords saw the need to create a system to ease religious tensions along the Christian-Muslim divide (Issawi, 1993; Salibi, 1988). In response, European powers and Ottoman Pashas intervened and implemented administrative and judicial reforms. The result was the creation of the *mutasarrifiyya* governing system, which established Mount Lebanon as its own semi-autonomous administrative region within the empire (Salibi, 1988). Under the authority of a *mutasarrif* (governor), an administrative council was appointed, representing all the religious communities proportional to their overall numbers (Issawi, 1993). The *mutasarrifiyya* system worked to balance the sectarian and class divisions and was sustained until the ending of the First World War.

With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, Lebanon fell under control of France, in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Under the French Mandate, Mount Lebanon was expanded, as *Grand Liban* was formed in 1920 (Zahar, 2005). This expansion meant a shift in demographics. The Maronite Christians significantly lost their numbers, and the Druze lost their position as the largest Islamic sect to the Sunnis. As Greater Lebanon became more heterogeneous, the French governors and High Commission were faced with the issue of stabilizing religious divisions, not just along the Christian-Muslim divide, but among the well-established sects (Traboulsi, 2007). The French sought to implement a model similar to the Ottoman *mutasarrifiyya* system. As a result, a confessional system which allotted representation proportional to each sect’s size based on the results of a 1921 census, was created. While this confessional system was originally created as a temporary solution, it has informed Lebanon’s power-sharing system of government ever since.

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\(^2\) Maronites are an Eastern Catholic ethnoreligious group that form the Syriac Maronite Church which emerged in the Levant in the 4\(^{th}\) century.

\(^3\) Druze is mystic, monotheistic off-shoot of Shi’a Islam with its teachings largely based on Greek philosophy.
Within six years of the establishment of *Grand Liban*, a new constitution transformed the country into The Republic of Lebanon and confessionalism was implemented into all sectors of politics and society to maintain a balance of power (Zahar, 2005). As Zahar asserts, “France helped to consolidate the new Lebanese state. French Representatives prevented Maronites from completely dominating state institutions, tempering the opposition of the Sunnis and other communities to Lebanese independence” (2005, p.227). The implementation of these confessional policies had serious repercussions. As Zahar notes:

Although they maintained a balance among the various communities, the power-sharing policies of French officials left Lebanon vulnerable to political sectarianism, feudalism, and clientelism. Old and new elites managed to strengthen their control over the state by portraying themselves as guardians of their communities’ rights...France’s policies in Lebanon and toward the Greater-Syrian Nationalists in Syria invited Syrian intervention in Lebanese politics. The Syrians exploited sectarian, factional, and personal divisions against France. (p.227).

The sectarian rifts and elitism only continued to grow under French Mandated Lebanon. The Maronite Christians in particular, had become the most privileged faction in Lebanese society, receiving support and a political backing from the French. The results of a 1932 census, the last one to be conducted in Lebanon, saw that the Maronite Christians enjoyed a statistical advantage, if only marginally (Najem, 1998). The same census placed Sunnis as the second largest sect in the country. With the historical and political events unfolding in Europe during the early 1940s, the French Mandate in Lebanon was coming to an end. Lebanon gained Independence in 1943 and the National Pact, an informal agreement between the Christians and Muslims, was put in place. The Pact divided the positions of the republic as following: The President and Commander of the Lebanese Army would always be a Maronite Christian, the position of the Prime Minister will always be carried out by a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament by a Shiite Muslim. However, the Pact did not work to deter sectarian strife. Quite the contrary:

After 1943 the Lebanese electoral system failed to fulfill its unifying role. Traditional leaders used intimidation and patronage to secure the election of their lists...The legislature turned into a private club as leaders promoted their protégés. The elites almost secured a monopoly of representation. Hence patronage politics did not bode well for legislative responsiveness to popular demands. (Zahara, 2005, p.229).
The post-Independence period was one of instability, both in Lebanon and regionally. Political events unfolding in the Arab world had reverberations within the country and challenged the already weak power structures that existed. Particularly, the formation of the State of Israel and the successive Arab-Israeli wars had a profound effect on the country. Political instability coupled with the rise of Pan-Arabism helped to upset the balance within Lebanon.

With the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt in the 1950s and the burgeoning Pan-Arab movement, sectarian balance in Lebanon was confronted. For those against the movement, Pan-Arabism appeared to be a strain on Lebanon’s democratic confessional system that had been implemented in the National Pact. As Pan-Arabism grew, it affected the balance of power between the Maronite Christians, Sunnis, Shiites and Druze (Rubin, 1991). More specifically, Lebanese Christians saw the rise of Pan-Arabism as a threat to their role in government and society, especially as their Muslim counterparts began adopting the ideology (ibid., 2000). As for Muslim and socialist factions of Lebanese society, the Pan-Arabism movement was one of hope and pride, that would hinder Western and colonial dominance in the Middle East. More specifically in the case of Lebanon, proponents of the movement saw it as a way to defeat Maronite hegemony and enable them to resist their status as second-class citizens in their own country (ibid., 1991). Further to this, the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland led to a major displacement of the Palestinian people. An influx of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, following the Black September event in Jordan, worked to exacerbate sectarian divisions. By 1967, Lebanon’s confessional system met its largest challenger: The Palestinian Resistance Movement. A drastic shift in religious demographics and differing stances on the Palestinian question deepened internal divisions.

3.1.1. The 1975 Lebanese Civil War

By the time that Pan-Arabism lost traction in the mid 1970s, Lebanon had become extremely instable and war violently erupted. Understanding what caused the civil war has been a point of contention amongst Lebanese historians and scholars. To date, there has yet to be an agreed upon narrative of the events that sparked the war and occurred during it. Without the existence of a national narrative, the Lebanese history curricula does not refer to the event - with Lebanese history stopping after Independence in 1943 (Barak, 2007). As a result, those that had not lived through the war, namely, the post-war generation, has largely learned about the civil war from the narratives of their families.
Generally, groups tend to remember the grievances they acquired during conflicts as opposed to what they may have done to other groups in society. As such, the post-war generation of Lebanon has inherited the collective memory and trauma of their family and kin, and have developed deeply biased perceptions of the civil war (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011). It is in this context that understanding how the diaspora perceives the causes of the civil war provides us with important insights. The Lebanese Civil War was complex and multifaceted. Some refer to it as a sectarian war, while some refer to it as a ‘war of others’. Understanding to what extent it was either of these types of wars is important in our understanding of heterogeneous societies. By using diasporas of the same nationality but who underwent different processes of migration, we, as academics, may be able to draw connections between the role of migration, diaspora consciousness and trauma narratives within the context of civil conflict.

Many attempts to theorize the cause of the Lebanese Civil War have been made. Within the literature on this, there tend to be two camps: internal blame versus external blame. In other words, there are those who see the civil war as a direct outcome of sectarian divisions, and a fragile confessional system featuring an unfair quota system. This camp asserts that the rise of Shiites in Lebanon sparked tensions along the Sunni-Shiite divide, while Maronite hegemony and elitism had created an unequal balance of power in the country that fueled sectarian divides.

The temporary solution of confessional democracy as implemented by colonial powers had failed the Lebanese, created an unfair distribution of power and ultimately collapsed, resulting in civil war.

On the opposing side of the debate, there are those who deem that sectarianism served as a catchall explanation to the war. In this point of view, external factors have been conceptualized as the main causes of the war. Namely, the Palestinian armed presence, Syrian military intervention, and Israeli occupation are seen as the driving factors of the war, which threatened the success of Lebanon’s power-sharing model. Ghassan Tueni’s influential 1985 book, Une Guerre Pour Les Autres (‘A War of Others’) asserts that foremost, the question of the Palestinian Resistance Movement divided left-wing and right-wing Lebanese. Further to this, interference from Syria and Israel worked to create competing alliances between the largest political parties and divided the nation. In the same regard, Iran’s uprising during the late 1970s saw the strengthening of the Shiites, under the auspices of Iranian financing and support.
These external factors, according to Tueni, led to a destabilization of the Lebanese state and the start of the civil war.

While the exact causes will continue to be disputed, there are some themes that emerge when attempting to understand what triggered the violence. Though these narratives are highly contested, there tends to be some agreement that the origins of the Lebanese Civil War can be traced back to 13 April 1975, known as the Ain al-Rammaneh incident (Haugbolle, 2011; Ghosn & Khoury, 2011). As previously mentioned, the Palestinian Resistance Movement had been proliferating at this time, and from Lebanese soil, large factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) fought Israeli forces from the South of Lebanon, bordering Northern Israel. On the morning of 13 April, a confrontation occurred between members of the Christian Phalangist Party, an ultra-right-wing Maronite group, and members of the PLO outside of a church in East Beirut, where a baptism was taking place (ibid., 2011). While there is no record of what occurred between the two groups, the confrontation resulted in the death of a PLO member (ibid., 2011). Within hours, retaliations began, including a drive-by shooting outside of the church, which saw the death of some of the attendees. Violence quickly ensued between the Kataeb Regulatory Forces (KRF) and various PLO groups. The breaking point was an event known as the Bus Massacre, where members of the KRF attacked a bus on route to Tal el-Zaatar Palestinian refugee camp (ibid., 2011). There is general agreement among historians that this event was the starting point of the civil war. The war was carried out in successive phases, each encompassing the involvement of varying sects.

The first phase was referred to as Two-Year War. This phase began immediately following the Ain al-Rammaneh incident (ibid., 2011). A two-year episode of fighting broke out between the Christian Phalangist militia and the PLO. The initial two years of fighting divided Beirut into East, which was controlled by the Christian population, and West which was controlled by the Muslim populations (Najem, 1998). Many civil war narratives revolve around the division of Beirut and the ‘Green Line’ which divided the city into East and West. The line ran through the city center, forcing its population out, creating a displacement within Beirut. The second phase of the war, from 1976-1982, saw the Syrian military intervention in Beirut, and the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon, which supported the Maronites against the Palestinians (Haugbolle, 2011). During this time, internal migration and displacement were widespread. The third phase of the war began with the withdrawal of Israeli forces.
from the Chouf district in 1983. Following the withdrawal, the Battle of the Mountain, a sub-war, was triggered between the Christians and Druze, who had been in conflict since the 1860s. Critically, as the War of the Mountain occurred without foreign actors (i.e. the Palestinians, Syrians or Israelis), it worked to challenge the notion that the civil war was influenced by external forces. Finally, the fourth phase of the war, from 1984 – 1990, involved many sub-conflicts of inter-factional violence. The War of the Camps, for instance, was fought between the Shiite Amal militia forces against the PLO for control of the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps (ibid., 2011). The final phases of the war were comprised of the War of Liberation in 1988, and finally the War of Annihilation in 1990, fought between the Christians and Syrians, eventually turning into intra-Christian battles. The fighting finally came to an end in 1990.

The Taif Agreement, also known as the Document of National Accord, was introduced in 1989 during the last year of fighting, and laid down the groundwork for ending the civil war. The agreement restructured Lebanon’s confessional system, relinquishing control from the Maronites and distributed it among other Christian factions. The reforms also gave the Sunni Prime Minister power over the president (Barak, 2007). The agreement was accepted by all parties under the guardianship of Syria. However, the accord only consolidated political sectarianism in the state and created an inefficient political system by reserving important governmental roles for particular sects (Bahout, 2016). Maronites, for instance, were given key roles such as commander of the army, the head of military intelligence, the state security services and the governor of the central bank (Bahout, 2016). What was critically missing from the Taif accord, however, was how to deal with the issue of reconciliation. The postwar era was one of depoliticalization. The Taif Agreement consisted of an amnesty law clearing all political parties and militia groups for their involvement (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011). As investigations into war crimes were not conducted, politicians sought to move forward from the events of the war. The traumas of the Civil War had run so deeply, that speaking about the war, reconciliation or commemoration became a national taboo. Lebanese scholars have come to refer to this period as ‘state-sponsored amnesia’ (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011; Bou Khaled, 2018). In other words, it was seen as a deliberate attempt by political elites to completely erase the memory of the conflict from national consciousness. Mia Bou Khaled (2018) has written extensively on the collective amnesia that took over the post-war climate in Lebanon. She asserts that in the post-war period, the Lebanese government used a top down post-conflict resolution model. This approach, according to Bou Khaled, considers that the “costs of a process of truth and reconciliation exceed the benefits... and should be sacrificed for the
sake of peace and stability.” (Bou Khaled, 2018, p.1) In order to move on from the consequences of the war, the government created campaigns, urban planning projects which saw the reconstruction and gentrification of downtown Beirut, and the use of prewar narratives to garner nostalgic sentiments for Lebanon’s golden age (Sawalha, 2014). As a result, the causes and consequences of the civil war have never been addressed in an open national dialogue. Consequently, the sectarian tensions that existed before and during the civil war have never been dealt with, which has laid down the groundwork for sectarian strife to continue, especially in response to regional unrest.

Following the civil war, sectarian divisions deepened. More specifically, sectarian tensions along the Sunni-Shiite divide erupted following the 2004-2005 series of assassinations and bombings, which peaked with the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. Since the assassination of Hariri, the country has been in political paralysis. Domestic politics have become greatly polarized between two competing coalitions: The Iran and Syria aligned March 8th alliance (with political parties such as Hezbollah) and the Saudi backed March 14th alliance (such as the Future Movement). Following the 2004-2005 series of bombings, the Cedar Revolution erupted, calling for the withdrawal of the Syrian military presence that had been in Lebanon since the Civil War. The following year, the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, known as the July War, broke out, which furthered internal and external instability. Since 2006, several protests around employment and corruption have occurred, as youth grow increasingly frustrated with their government and the sectarian problems they encounter. Prominent Lebanese activist, Gino Raidy, described the sentiments of the post-war generation, stating:

We’re the ones that inherited a bias to one side or the other depending on where our parents stood during those dark 15 years. We’re the folks that suffer the consequences of the war we were never part of, witness to or even taught about after the guns were silenced. We’re the folks that got stuck with the war’s warlords as our politicians and leaders, warlords that we never chose...Those that were alive during the war, have failed us miserably after it. The hostilities stopped, but the war mentality never did. The warlords took off their military fatigues and donned ill-fitting suits, gave themselves amnesty and pretended like nothing happened (Raidy, 2017).

Sectarian tensions have gone unaddressed and have only fueled grievances and victimhood narratives. Those that left during and after the civil war carried their trauma with them in their host destinations. Hence, there is reason to believe that the conflict-generated diasporas differ from those
who left prior. With regards to the Lebanese diaspora, those that left during the civil war may hold different opinions than those that left earlier, for trade and economic reasons. Thus far, this thesis has not directly spoken of the trade diaspora. This paper will now explain the formation of the two sections of the Lebanese diaspora: The waves that established the trade diaspora and those that formed the conflict-generated diaspora.

3.2. Why did they leave?
Migration is not a new phenomenon for the Lebanese, rather it has always been a part of Lebanese history. Migration from the Mount Lebanon region of Greater Syria can be traced back to as early as 1850, when the Levant was still under Ottoman rule. Traditionally, the destination of choice for the early Lebanese migrants was the Americas, particularly Brazil. In the 20th century, West Africa, Australia and Europe would become more popular destinations. Those who left did so for a number of reasons; economic inequality, hopes of a prosperous future abroad and most notably, civil conflict. Today, the Lebanese diaspora is hardly insignificant. There have been many attempts determine the size of the Lebanese diaspora, although this has largely been a politically-driven initiative (Migration Policy Centre, 2013). While figures are contested and greatly vary, it is estimated that the diaspora ranges somewhere between 4 and 13 million people worldwide (De Bel-Air, 2017). As Dr. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre (LERC) puts it, “It is almost an uncontested truth that every Lebanese household has been touched by migration, be it a family member, a relative, or a friend” (2007, p.3).

Since the seventeenth century, Lebanon has experienced five waves of migration. While the push factors for these migration flows differ, the dominating themes in Lebanese migration have been economic factors (i.e. the emergence of the Trade Diaspora) and civil war (i.e. The conflict-generated diaspora).

3.2.1. Lebanon’s Trade Diaspora
The first major wave of migration from Lebanon can be traced back to 1880, while the region was under control of the Ottoman Empire. During the years from 1880 until 1914, an estimated 45% of Mount Lebanon’s population left the country for the New World, with Venezuela, Argentina, and Brazil
as the more popular destination countries (Khater, 2017). Those who left did so for a number of reasons. The harshness of the Ottoman Empire and military conscription are typically seen as push factors for this wave of migration. The likeliest culprit for this wave of migration, according to historians, are economic reasons. More specifically, the silk crisis in the late 1800s (Fersan, 2010). Throughout the eighteenth century, the silk industry served as the backbone of the economy in the Ottoman-ruled region of Greater Syria (modern day Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine) (Issawi, 1993). This industry was hardly insignificant; the silk and textile economy accounted for 60% of the country’s GDP, and was responsible for 82% of its exports, to predominately European markets (Khater, 2017). During the silk industry boom, Lebanon’s agricultural sector and agrarian traditions were dominated by sericulture. The harvest had become predominately dedicated to mulberry tree cultivation in order to support the vast production of silk and textiles. Many farming families destroyed their own crops in order to grow their own mulberry trees. During this period, the mulberry trees accounted for 40% of the country’s cash crops (Fersan, 2010). However, the strength of the industry was challenged with the influx of cheaper and better quality Chinese silk in Europe markets. This led to the abrupt collapse of the Lebanese silk industry (Jacobs, 2015). As a result, many looked to migration for its economic opportunities. There had already been, at this time, some cases of Lebanese merchants generating financial success in the New World.

Language and education also played an important role in encouraging this flow of migration. The presence of American missionaries and Jesuits, during the end of the seventeenth century had established a strong culture of education (Issawi 1993, Jacobs, 2015). By the mid-nineteenth century, foreign and local clergy had founded several English language schools and a printing press (Issawi, 1993). The establishment of the Syrian Protestant College, known today as the American University of Beirut, introduced the language and cultural skills that would make migration towards The United States easier (Jacobs, 2015). With even basic English skills, the Lebanese migrants that arrived in the United States were able to navigate and assimilate more effectively. With some resourcefulness and business acumen, Lebanese migrants quickly established strong and thriving communities in their host countries (Jacobs, 2015). This era saw a proliferation of migration, predominately young men, well until the First World War.
For the most part, migration from Lebanon had slowed down during the early years of the French Mandate. However, France’s poor economy following the end of the First World War meant that they lacked the ability to invest in the Lebanese economy (Fersan, 2010). The poor economy and famine that struck Greater Syria served as a push factor for many Lebanese, during this period, who had heard stories of others obtaining success abroad. This wave of migration was responsible for establishing the diasporic communities in West Africa (Leichtman, 2010). According to Leichtman:

Lebanese migrants first arrived in West Africa as the result of a colonial fluke...emigrants left Lebanon due to economic hardship for Marseilles, the transportation hub of the time. They planned to continue on to the United States or South America... The ships docked at Dakar, and the French colonial power convinced the Lebanese to stay in West Africa to work as intermediaries in the peanut trade between the French in the cities and Senegalese peasants in the rural areas. The best solution to these difficulties was to settle in West Africa, where fares were cheap, health requirements were lax, and French reports were favorable. (2010, p.275).

Another theory is that Lebanese emigration to West Africa was encouraged by the French, in order to stimulate economic growth in the colonies (Cheaib, 2015). The Lebanese communities in West Africa were predominately Shiites and worked as entrepreneurs and business founders. This wave of migration also saw an increase in female emigrants.

The third wave of migration began during the post-Independence era and lasted until the start of the civil war. This time period was marked by political instability both inside Lebanon and regionally. In addition to political unrest, the 1960s in Lebanon was a period of unemployment and a high cost of living. Following the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, emigration began to increase (Tabar, 2010). As a result, 164,000 Lebanese left the country, predominately to Canada, Europe and Australia (Fersan, 2010). Significantly this wave of migration not only saw a change in destination of migration, but also in the demographics of Lebanese migrants. Rather than fleeing from poverty and economic inequality, this era saw an increase in young women and men leaving the country in search of better education abroad (Fersan, 2010).
3.2.2. Conflict- Generated Diaspora

The Lebanese Civil War plays a huge role in the formation of the Lebanese diaspora. More specifically, the conflict-generated sections of the diaspora are linked with the events of the Civil War. The fifteen years of conflict disrupted the economy, internally displaced 800,000 families and forced out a significant amount of its population. The civil war accounts for the largest exodus of Lebanese. It is estimated that roughly one million people fled the country, about 40% of the population (Tabar, 2010). As Paul Tabar explains:

The fighting that ravaged Lebanon for fourteen years resulted in whole scale destruction of the economy and rendered large sectors of the economy inoperative. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced out of their homes, villages, and towns. Many civilians ‘lost their resources and became homeless without income or health, social, housing and educational services’...The rate of unemployment rose to 21% by the year 1985, and the minimum monthly salary declined from US$280 at the end of 1983 to US$27 in 1987. (2010, p.5).

The beginning years of the civil war saw a large number of Lebanese leaving the country and returning upon relative peace and stability (Fersan, 2010). However, migration became more permanent in the 1980s. Family Reunification Laws in host countries, such as Canada, allowed Lebanese to join their families abroad. As Asal asserts:

During the civil war, special measures were in place to facilitate the entry of Lebanese immigrants to Canada. Networks of older Lebanese migrants played a leading role in the acceptance of this huge wave of new migrants: they pressured officials in the host country and contributed to the settlement and integration of their compatriots. Canada helped by providing subsidies to organizations, but families, churches and community associations carried the brunt. (2012, p. 7).

Indeed, this indicates that the conflict-generated wave not only mixed with the older diasporic communities but were supported by their ethnic kin. Interestingly, this wave of migration saw the most diversity in its migrant demographics. Lebanese from various economic backgrounds and religions chose to emigrate, with Australia, The United States and Canada as popular destinations (Tabar, 2010).

Nowadays, Lebanese migration is that of a brain drain. This flow of migration, which has been ongoing since the end of the civil war has been the most youth orientated flow of migration and the
most concerned with socio-economic problems. The push factors predominately associated with this wave of migration have been the continuous corruption and ongoing political insecurity that has come to dominate the post-civil war climate in Lebanon. As youth unemployment increases, highly skilled and educated Lebanese look abroad for opportunities. The corruption that followed the civil war has created a sense of hopelessness for youth, who have found themselves too qualified for the Lebanese job market (Fersan, 2010). Brain drain has become such an issue in Lebanon that Prime Minister Saad Hariri vowed to create more jobs for youth, stating “The Lebanese youth cannot be free if the first thing they think about on graduation day is how to leave the country to achieve their dreams and guarantee their future” (Lebanese Ministry of Information, 2017). Additionally, finding jobs at home is somewhat of a challenge. Sectarian quotas within the labour market, particularly in federal positions, makes it all the harder for qualified youth to obtain good jobs within Lebanon. Hence, finding work abroad has become an easier option, particularly as many Lebanese hold dual nationalities and degrees from American and European Universities (Fersan, 2010).

3.3. The Lebanese Diaspora Today

Today, the Lebanese diaspora has become an active actor in transnational politics. The 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel was an especially important event in fostering homeland-diaspora relations. According to Leichtman, who referred to the 2006 war as a turning-point for West African Lebanese, “For the first time since their formation as a community, the Lebanese in Senegal organized a demonstration in Dakar displaying solidarity with Lebanon” (2010, p.269). In addition to protesting, voting has also become an avenue that allows Lebanese abroad to engage with their homeland. In 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Lebanon’s federal branch that deals with the diaspora, passed a law allowing Lebanese citizens abroad to vote for the first time. The elections in 2018 saw diaspora communities in 33 countries take part in the voting (Haboush & Obeid, 2018). Previously, the Lebanese government did not allow voting from abroad. Diaspora voting has largely been a transnationalism from above process, in which Lebanese political parties campaign to their constituents abroad (Hourani, 2007). Finally, the Lebanese Citizenship Programme also serves as another example of the how the Lebanese government has been attempting to reach its diaspora. The programme was launched in 2015, under the tenure of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gibran Bassil, who is also the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement and the son-in-law of current president Michel Aoun. The
programme encourages the concept of “Lebanity” (a term coined by Bassil to explain Lebanese identity), and allows descendants to obtain citizenship through patriarchal lineage. This programme has been closely linked with religious groups, particularly the Maronites, in order to have their diaspora abroad reclaim their heritage. The Maronite Foundation in the World, for instance, claims the following mission:

The overriding objective of the Foundation is to raise the awareness of the Lebanese expatriate communities regarding their legal rights such as their eligibility to the Lebanese citizenship and their right to vote. The Maronite Foundation also seeks to awaken the Maronites around the world to their heritage and consolidate their links with their Lebanese and Maronite roots. On the local front, the Maronite Foundation strives to lobby the Lebanese government and the legislative body in taking the necessary action to advance laws related to helping the Lebanese immigrants regain their Lebanese citizenship. (Maronite Foundation in the World)

In sum, through protests, voting and citizenship reclamation, it is apparent that the Lebanese diaspora is highly politicized. Further, this relationship exists on two levels, from above and below, as the government has made explicit attempts to mobilize the diaspora.
4. Methodology

This thesis project is based on data collected from diasporic institutions and members of the Lebanese diaspora based in South America, North America and West Africa. This chapter will provide an overview of the qualitative research design used to gather this data and describe how the research project was conducted. In the first section of this chapter, I will explain the research design that was employed, as well as the advantages and justification of the methodologies used. This chapter will then go on to describe the interview questions that were posed during my research. Next, this chapter will then provide an overview of the respondents, their demographics and their involvement with this research. Finally, this chapter will present the challenges and limitations of the research design used in this project.

4.1. Diasporic Organizations: Document Analysis
Prior to conducting interviews with diasporic organizations and members of the diaspora, online documentation from diasporic institutions were gathered and assessed. Materials, such as manifestos, brochures, annual reports and website mission statements were used for an analysis in order to discover certain themes within the Lebanese diasporic discourse. Additionally, the Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies at the University of North Carolina boasts an archive of over 2000 historical and cultural resources on the Lebanese diaspora. The archives, which include newspapers, books, photographs, family papers and audio and visual recordings, were also used to make some inferences about the diasporic communities, especially the older diaspora. Reading and assessing these documents helped to lay out the groundwork for the interview portion of the methodology. These resources worked to set a framework for the questions that were asked to my respondents.

4.2. Interviews
The qualitative research design of this thesis project involves the use of in-depth, semi-structured, interviews with diasporic institutions and diasporic community members themselves for the purposes of gathering data. Specifically, this thesis project used descriptive and interpretive semi-structured interviews in order to explore the themes mentioned in this paper.

The first stage of interviews were conducted with diasporic institutions during the months of April and May. The interviews with diasporic institutions primarily focused on identifying the activities
they conducted with their associated communities as well as how they worked with the homeland. Throughout the interviews, I was also interested in understanding how these institutions perceived sectarian conflict in Lebanon and the civil war. Three interviews were conducted with diasporic institutions. These were with the Maronite Foundation in the World (South America Chapter), The Lebanese Society of Nigeria, and Lebanese Diaspora Energy. The latter of these organizations works transnationally with the Lebanese diaspora globally, while the others work primarily with the diaspora in the regions which they are based in. All but one of these interviews were conducted by email.

Moreover, the interviews with diasporic members focused on gaining a sense of their perceptions, identities and narratives. The aim of these interviews was to understand how the members of the Lebanese diaspora, both the old and the new, perceived the civil war and what kind of narratives they inherited. Additionally, the interviews attempted to understand how these members of the Lebanese diaspora identified themselves and how this affected their transnational practices.

The interviews with members of the diaspora were quite casual, and were conducted over Skype or mobile video calling. The interviews were semi-structured and featured open-ended questions. I felt that it was very essential to allow the respondents the flexibility to share their own stories and experiences. I also found that I often went off-script, working off of the answers that the participants would share. By conducting interviews in this method, participants were able to provide extra information that was not necessarily covered in my questions.

The respondents in this study were initially contacted via email or WhatsApp messaging. I initially reached out to my network in Canada, which then snowballed. Through my network, I was put in contact with people in Ivory Coast, the United States and Suriname. The Skype calls typically lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and were one-on-one. The interviews were conducted in English with some Arabic words used for emphasis. The Skype calls were recorded and transcribed. In total, I conducted 6 interviews with members of the diaspora. The respondents varied in age, ranging from 24 to 89 years of age. Religiously, participants represented the three dominating sects of Lebanon; Maronite, Sunni and Shiite, as well as one respondent who identified as Protestant. Another factor worth mentioning is that
the participants were first and second-generation Lebanese immigrants. Those that were born outside of Lebanon were born to Lebanese parents that were of the same religion.

4.3. Limitations of Methodology

In attempting to conduct and gather data, I came across some complications. Primarily, language was a key factor. I struggled to communicate with diaspora communities in France, Francophone Africa, and South America. While much data could have been gathered from the Lebanese diaspora in Brazil and France, language barriers prevented that. Likewise, my Arabic was not sufficient enough to conduct a complete interview in.

Additionally, I felt that the content of my thesis was too political to engage respondents’ participation. I noticed that many organizations would respond to my request for an interview, then lose interest upon receiving a list of questions in advance. These organizations would then abruptly cut off contact. I believe that timing may have played a critical role in this as well. I had reached out to participants in the months of March and April, close to the anniversary or the 1975 Civil War. I think that participants may have been fatigued from the topic of the Lebanese Civil War as well as sectarian and civil violence in general. The on-going Syrian Civil War may also have contributed to this disinterest. There was not very much I was able to do about this situation and instead chose to focus more attention on the personal testimony of members of the Lebanese diaspora.

4.3.1. Insider/Outsider Positionality

Conducting interviews with members of the Lebanese diaspora was much easier and accessible than with diaspora organizations. However, as I conducted these interviews, I became very aware of my positionality in the context of this research as well as my status as an insider and an outsider. While conducting this type of qualitative research, which aimed to compare varying political perceptions, I experienced some obstacles in negotiating my positionality with the opposing political stances that I was engaging with. Some scholarship has noted the advantage of embracing the fluidity of insider/outsider positionality in social science qualitative research (Flores, 2018). As I come from a Lebanese – Iranian background, with Maronite and Shiite roots, I attempted to use my duality to make participants feel at ease and see me as one of them. However, I wanted to ensure that I could still embrace my duality while maintaining objectivity to avoid compromising the validity of my interview results. Overall, I felt that my
Lebanese heritage both hurt and helped my respondents’ openness. As most of the people interviewed were connected to me through my network, they were all well aware of my own religious and ethnic background prior. On one hand, I felt that some of my respondents were hesitant or untrusting of my intentions. This made me feel that perhaps some of my interviewees were reluctant to express their true sentiments about the causes of the civil war, in order to avoid blaming or pointing a finger towards any one sect. On the other hand, I felt that some of the participants saw me as ‘one of their own’ which enabled them to open up to me due to a similar religious stance.

4.3.2. Narratives and Anecdotal Fallacy
Further, another issue I considered with my research design is that diasporic narratives will most likely be biased and fall prey to anecdotal fallacy and agency bias. However, recent scholarship has focused on the ‘narrative turn’ in social science research, which recognizes narrative analysis, stories and storytelling as an important source of empirical knowledge (Bruce et al., 2016). Further, narratives allow for the interviewee to share their personal testimony at length, which can provide some analytical understanding and nuanced details around events that may not be accessible otherwise (Matthias-Boon & Head, 2017). As this research aims to assess perceptions within the diaspora, rather than providing causal evidence, I believed that this method was justified and proved to be an effective way to obtain the information needed.

4.4. Ethical Considerations
Upon first contact with the participants, I had made them aware of the intent, purpose and content of the research. I received consent from the participants, either through a consent form that I sent them or through their verbal consent. Additionally, during this research, participants anonymity was maintained using randomly assigned numbers and stored securely. No one other than the researcher had access to the interviews. Furthermore, permission was obtained prior to recording and transcribing the interviews.
5. Actual Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings obtained from the interviews with members of the Lebanese diaspora as well as and diaspora organizations. The results from the interviews with diaspora members will be presented and discussed first. These results will be used to make an analysis on whether members of the trade diaspora and members of the conflict-generated diaspora diverge or align on their perceptions and narratives of the Civil War vis-à-vis its onset, duration, and consequences. The results of the interviews with diasporic organizations will be presented in the second part of this chapter and will be used to make inferences on the sub-research themes of this thesis. Essentially, the findings from these organizations will be used in assessing whether the groups within the diasporas differ in terms of their political, sociocultural or economic transnational activities. Through these findings, this research will be able to determine the answer to our research question: How does the Lebanese diaspora perceive civil conflict in the homeland? More specifically, is there a difference in perception between the trade diaspora and the conflict-generated diaspora?

5.1. Interviews with Members of the Lebanese Diaspora

In order to understand how the Lebanese diaspora perceives the civil war, interviews were conducted with members of the old and new diaspora. Several questions around identity, sectarianism and views of the civil war were asked. While these interviews were kept anonymous, type of diaspora and geographical location will be referred to so as to be able to make a distinction between the two groups.

5.1.1. Lebanese Identity and Citizenship

In terms of identity, interviews with members of the diaspora cut-across both groups proved that a sense of Lebanese identity was important to them. Particularly, themes around citizenship, and passing it down to their (future) children emerged within these interviews. All of the participants interviewed noted having a sense of Lebanese identity or ‘pride’. All participants, including those born outside of Lebanon, held a Lebanese citizenship. When asked how they identify themselves, there was a general consensus among all participants that their identity played a large role in their life. As one respondent explained:
I personally feel like my Lebanese identity is stronger because I’m outside of Lebanon. I follow the news there via programs and apps on my phone like Tayyar and Kataeb where I get daily automatic news updates. When an event happens there it impacts me, I’ll consistently be reading Lebanese news articles. I also follow the politics there religiously and I voted here last year for the Lebanese elections when they opened the voting for the people living abroad... What I personally notice when I compare myself to my relatives living in Lebanon, I feel like I care more about topics and issues and politics happening in Lebanon where as they don’t and they live there... They don’t even care to talk about these things. (Conflict-generated diaspora From North America)

The above quotation is very much in line with the theoretical concepts around diaspora that were identified earlier, namely, that diasporas are constructed by homeland orientation. This respondent’s answer also demonstrates some of the political transnational activities the Lebanese diaspora participate in. Overall, almost all of the respondents mentioned feeling that their identity was somehow shaped by being outside of Lebanon. The concept of boundary maintenance, or distinction from host societies was also present in these findings. As one respondent explained:

I definitely feel that I am Lebanese. I also know that I want to marry someone Lebanese, especially since citizenship can only be passed through the dad, so I want my kids to be Lebanese as well and it’s important to me that they speak Arabic and we go on trips to Lebanon in the summer since all of my family is there also. I just feel that being Lebanese is part of who I am in the sense that, sometimes, I feel like my non-Lebanese friends don’t understand my culture or jokes or way of thinking. (Conflict-generated diaspora, North America)

As the previous respondents’ answers indicate, feeling distinct from society is part of the Lebanese consciousness. As well, the above quotation demonstrates practices of sociocultural transnationalism through sociability, language, and travel to the homeland. While these above-mentioned answers demonstrate self-identification along ethnic lines, sectarian self-identification was also relevant. As one respondent noted:

Yes, of course my Lebanese identity is important to me but my religious identity is also important. As Shi’as from Lebanon, we need to be more proud of our religion, especially since we are the least represented group. Hezbollah does more for us than the government [...] Being
Shi’a is very important for me […] I’ve lived in Iran […] I try to do the things that are important, Ashoura⁴, taking hajj to Karbala⁵ […] (Trade-diaspora, North America)

This respondents answer illustrates the sectarian divisions that exist within Lebanon. Interestingly, this member of the diaspora, although part of the trade wave of migration, demonstrated some level of sectarian self-identification. However, one respondent noted that ethnoreligious factors and markers of identity were not as relevant:

When I first moved to Abidjan […] we never got involved in politics. People didn’t even care much between Shi’a, Sunni, Muslim, Christian. They were more humble and happy back then. But when we used to go back to Lebanon, even for vacation, the political groups like Haraket Amal⁶ used to contact us to get us to join them because we were able to make good money in Africa. (Trade-Diaspora, West Africa).

This response informs us that in some places, sectarianism did not spill over into the diaspora. In sum, these narratives provided very important insights into the Lebanese diaspora identity and the types of transnational activities they engage in. Differences in these ethnic and religious identification markers can be attributed to temporal and spatial factors. These diversions play into Féron’s theory of autonomisation (2017), which explains that the configurations of the host society, as well as time and place of migration can create differences amongst diasporas of the same homeland. In conclusion, identity formation amongst the Lebanese diaspora appears to be very much informed by the relation to the homeland and a distinct culture in the host society, as Brubaker theorized (2005). Further, respondent’s answers displayed participation in political and sociocultural transnational practices, such as language, religious celebrations, voting and following homeland news. In addition, transnationalism from above also manifests between the homeland.

5.1.2. Civil War Narratives
This section will focus on the narratives that respondents provided around the civil war. Specifically, these narratives speak of the member’s own perceptions of what they believe the causes of the civil war were.

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⁴ Ashoura is day of mourning the martyrdom of Imam Hussain
⁵ Karbala is a Shiite holy site in Iraq that houses the Tomb of Imam Ali
⁶ Haraket Amal, or the Amal Movement is a Shiite political party
to be. As Demmers (2007) notes, “Diaspora communities are sustained by narratives of violence and trauma. The ‘being’ of diaspora is inextricably bounded up with histories of war and violence in the homeland. Ironically, war and catastrophe in the home country justify diasporic life.” (p. 15). Hence, these narratives are critical in constructing the identities of diaspora groups and can provide an important contribution to the debate on causes of civil conflict.

In general, respondents varied on how they perceived the cause of the civil war. What was most striking, was the use of conspiracy theories that emerged within these narratives and perceptions. As one respondent stated:

*The war was caused by a conspiracy against Lebanon to take out the Christians and put the Palestinians in their place and make it a Muslim country because it was the only Christian country in the Middle East* (Conflict-Generated, North America)

This respondent’s answer demonstrates a sense of national myth or folklore and sectarian victimhood. This aligns with Safran’s definition of diaspora which argues that diaspora communities maintain myths about the homeland (1991). In like manner, other respondents also relied on the idea of the war starting as a conspiracy. Some respondents noted the multifaceted nature of the war, blaming both internal and external factors for the war. One respondent explained their perception on the civil war onset:

*I think the main cause of the civil war was to fulfil the interests of some of the superpower countries in the region. The cause of the civil war was the displacement of the Palestinians from their land by Israel and the arranged solution was that they would take the place of the Christians in Lebanon. That plan didn’t work because the Christians stayed and fought to keep their place and so the war began. Lebanese Muslims then sided with the PLO and fought alongside them against the Lebanese Christians. So another factor of the war has to do with internal Lebanese issues that we’ve had since Lebanon gained independence and which we still have, which is the Muslim’s lack of Lebanese nationalism and aspirations to unite with neighboring Muslim countries, such as Syria, Egypt at the time, under the banner of the united Arab republic and the Christians issues with Arabism and their tendency to look to the West for democratic ideals and modernity. Also, Syria played a role too by taking advantage of the situation in Lebanon. Syria thought it could take a part of Lebanon too to make up for the Golan Heights. It entered Lebanon during the civil war without anyone’s permission to supposedly help with the situation and didn’t leave for 30 years.* (Conflict-generated, North America)
The multifaceted approach came up several times among respondents theorizing of the civil war. Another participant also pointed to this conclusion:

There are too many variables [...] first economic, of which some parties will benefit from arms dealings and reconstruction of the country [...] Other reasons were to weaken the Palestinians and push them away from Lebanon [...] There were talks between Israel and Syria to exchange Lebanon for Golan Heights and secure the water source for northern Israel [...] Indirectly, it started on a religious and nationality basis (Conflict-generated, South America)

Finally, a narrative that stood out to the most to me came from a respondent from the trade diaspora who perceived the outcome of the war as multifaceted but with an emphasis on sectarian, or internal factors:

Lebanon stayed under the French mandate until 1943 when the skirmishes between the Jews and the Palestinian began, and as we know it the Palestinians lost and started in waves to crash other Arab countries [...] Lebanon was one who hosted 300,000 to 400,000 refugees and it was the only Arab country that gave them freedom. In Jordan, the Palestinians started to take advantage and King Hussein kicked them out, and of course Lebanon was the country that took them [...] By that time, they established themselves, they started to take advantage like they did in Jordan, but of course many Lebanese Christians were not amused but the Lebanese Muslims took their side since all, if not most, Palestinians were Muslims. Certain skirmishes started here and there and finally it blew up and nobody can pin point the real reason. I believe until now the whole problem is religion [...] The civil war started in Lebanon based on religion and culture, also poverty and social existence in certain parts of Lebanon with unemployed people, and lots of hatred between two peoples. (Trade diaspora, North America)

Overall, respondents’ answers provided key insights on the onset of the civil war. Critically, what became apparent from these narratives was the role that conspiracy theories played in the construction of a national myth or narrative. Respondent’s conspiracies about conflict onset related to both internal factors (sectarianism) as well as external factors (regional powers interfering in Lebanon). In terms of external blame, the role of Syria, Israel and the Palestinian question played an important role in shaping these narratives. Taking everything into account, diaspora narratives about the civil war point to the idea that conflict onset was too multifaceted to determine a single factor. In sum, there does not appear to be a distinct difference between diaspora groups’ perceptions on the causes of the civil war. In general, the idea that there were a number of factors responsible for the conflict onset was prevalent.
5.2. Interviews with Diaspora Institutions

Interviews with diaspora institutions and organizations were conducted in order to get a sense of whether both types of diaspora interact transnationally with the homeland. As the concept of collective identity is a key factor in determining likelihood of transnational participation, understanding how the diaspora interacts with these organizations can allow us to make inferences about how the old and new diaspora identify themselves (Lyons, 2007; Koinova, 2010). Additionally, interviews with diasporic institutions aimed to assess what kind of, if any, narratives these organizations had about the civil war and memory. This section provides an overview of the role that organizations and institutions have played in the Lebanese diaspora. More specifically, whether they operate at a grassroots, bottom up approach or from the top down.

5.2.1. Diaspora Institutions, Transnational Activities and Perceptions

Before conducting interviews with diasporic organizations, I did a mapping of these institutions to get a better sense of the work they conducted and the stance they took. Predominately, I found that most of these organizations tended to declare a non-sectarian position.

In the case of the Lebanese diaspora, one of the most influential institutions is the Lebanese Diaspora Energy (LDE). The organization serves as an example of transnationalism from above, as it was created in Lebanon but operates around the world, mobilizing the diaspora on a global scale. LDE was developed under the tenure of Foreign Affairs Minister Gibran Bassil, who has also been responsible for the development of other diasporic outreach, as previously noted. The goal of the organization is to foster Lebanon’s relationship with its diaspora and to promote investment opportunities in Lebanon. Aligning with most diasporic organizations I encountered, LDE tends to maintain an apolitical stance, without speaking directly to the causes or consequences of the civil war. When asked how LDE thought the diaspora perceives causes of civil and political conflict in the homeland, they explained:

*It is without a doubt that the Lebanese abroad have an emotional connection with their homeland which is the reason behind their attachment to it even in the most difficult of times. Given that the overstretching of the Lebanese across the world, their status as a sizeable diaspora is a direct cause of the policies Lebanon follows and the direction it has been going in past years. Homeland politics has always led to this distance between the Lebanese and their homeland and directly affects them abroad. Whether in terms of economic or social public*
policies, or decisions related to regional or international politics, the possibility and feasibility of return [to] the homeland hinges on the ability of the State to guarantee and maintain internal stability on all levels, political, security, social, financial and economic.

While the organization made no explicit reference regarding the diaspora’s perceptions of homeland conflict, the sentiment expressed implied the homeland orientation of the diaspora via institutions and organizations, such as LDE. This response highlights the diaspora’s transnational political networks and practices which include implicit and explicit participation via international organizations. This in turn, has impacted migrant policies in the homeland.

Moreover, the Latin American chapter of the Maronite Foundation in the World works on an agenda of advocating for descendants to reclaim their heritage, particularly in Brazil, where the largest Lebanese community resides. Specifically, the promote the Lebanity programme that assists diasporas to obtain Lebanese citizenship through their patriarchal lineage. The head of the chapter explained that:

Registering and obtaining citizenship maintains the connection between the present and future with our past as Lebanese people. By getting citizenship, Maronite Lebanese around the world can take advantage of their rights, celebrate their Lebanese culture, heritage, customs, traditions [...] No Lebanese father should deprive his child of the rights that the citizenship gives them [...] inheritance rights, political and social rights and rights for property[...]

While the LDE maintains an apolitical stance, it, as well as the Maronite Foundation in the World, have their roots in the Maronite tradition. According to Tabar and Skulte-Ouais, (2010) because of hybridity within the Lebanese Maronite diaspora, the numbers of Maronites abroad is decreasing. He states, “They are now struggling to find a way, conceptually, and spiritually to include the 3rd and 4th generation descendants of Lebanese immigrants.” (2010, p.17). As such, these diaspora organizations aim to encourage religiously-based constituents abroad obtain their citizenship in order to support sectarian balances back home. This sociocultural transnational practice demonstrates the ‘transnationalism from above’ (Portes et al., 1999; Hourani 2012) approach previously identified. Transnationalism from above, in particular, seeks to reincorporate diasporic constituents into their political practices (Hourani, 2007).

It is clear with these organizations that political, social and economic transnational activities, such as diasporic voting and investments play an important role. As LDE informed me:
In the past 10 years the strategy of the state towards the Lebanese diaspora has changed allowing the Lebanese diaspora to participate in the Lebanese general elections with hopes to expect bigger voter turnouts in future elections. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has played a vital role in facilitating the coordination of the Lebanese General Elections between the state and the diaspora, ensuring that the Lebanese can engage in the civil rights and duties from abroad in an efficient way. This has led the Lebanese diaspora to become a prime component of Lebanese politics giving them the ability to shape the Lebanese political landscape themselves.

These findings indicate that the Lebanese diaspora is a vital political and economic asset to the homeland. Specifically, transnational practices cut across both groups of diasporas. This is likely due to the fact that all Lebanese diasporic groups have a strong homeland orientation and affinity with the Lebanese identity. On Lebanese diaspora identity and diaspora consciousness, LDE maintained the following:

The Lebanese identity has been promoted to new heights by the Lebanese diaspora and has reinforced its roots in the world leading it to be embraced by many to the extent that the “Lebanese way of life” has been sought out by many foreigners across the world. Lebanese culture and lifestyle play big roles in tying the Lebanese to their homeland, whether on a gastronomical or environmental level, Lebanon has always had a big impact within these dimensions. The Lebanese abroad have always highlighted Lebanese culture and exported it to many parts of world introducing it to foreigners, which has given a way for Lebanon to be recognized for its uniquely developed hospitality sector. Many cultural institutes are being established abroad to maintain the Lebanese culture and history in addition to teaching Arabic to Lebanese and non-Lebanese students. The role of the LDE as a medium between Lebanon and the diaspora, has enhanced the connection between the diaspora and the homeland and the interconnectivity within the Lebanese diaspora, ultimately leading to broader network of Lebanese around the world.

What these findings highlighted was that, with regards to the Lebanese diaspora, transnational practices on political, cultural and economic levels were important ways to maintain ties with the homeland. It appears that, in spite of various waves of migration, the diaspora has always maintained this connection with the homeland. These insights determine that intra-diaspora differences do not affect the likelihood of transnational participation, answering one of the sub-questions of this research. Further, organizations, like the Lebanese Ladies Society in Nigeria, engage in local philanthropy. This organization works to fund development projects in the host society. The work of this organization supports the triadic relationship that ties diasporas to their homeland and host societies:
By assisting the less fortunate in Nigeria, we, as the Lebanese community, show our host society appreciation. By providing assistance, promoting educational development, and supporting the welfare of Nigerians, the Lebanese community can positively contribute to the host country, Nigeria.

These findings have allowed for an understanding of how the Lebanese diaspora engages in transnational activities with both the homeland and host society. Additionally, these interviews shed light on the concept of Lebanese consciousness and identity formation with the diaspora. What was particularly interesting for the sake of this research, was that the diaspora and the organizations told a different story. The members of the Lebanese diaspora that were interviewed tended to be very political in their response, whereas organizations were not. The fact that all the organizations interviewed have predominately apolitical stances illustrates the depoliticalization and top-down conflict resolution approach that has existed in Lebanon since the end of the civil war (Bou Khaled, 2018). In sum, these interviews have demonstrated that the Lebanese diaspora’s transnational engagement does not discriminate against wave of migration, as the tendency to participate in political, sociocultural and economic transnational activities exists along all sections of the diaspora.
6. Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to analytically assess complex diaspora dynamics. Namely, diasporas that are comprised of different sections, which have been shaped by various temporal and spatial factors and processes of migration. This investigation aimed to analyze how diasporas with different sections perceive homeland conflicts. Specifically, how their war narratives are reproduced and reinvented in the homeland. In doing so, this research has made use of the Lebanese diaspora as an example of a complex case. Diaspora narratives as well as input from diaspora institutions were used to answer the research question: How does the Lebanese diaspora perceive civil conflict in the homeland? More specifically, is there a difference in perception between the trade diaspora and the conflict-generated diaspora? The first section of this conclusion will highlight the results and main outcomes of this research as well as the sub-research themes. Finally, this chapter also presents suggestions for further research.

6.1. Outcomes and Answering the Research Question

This thesis provided a detailed overview of the Lebanese diaspora and the 1975 Civil War that ravage the country for fifteen years. Crucially, there has yet to be an accepted national narrative of what caused the civil war. Lebanese historians and scholars have debated the onset of the war, and two camps have emerged. There are those who believe the war was caused by internal factors, namely sectarianism, and those that blame external factors, such as regional superpowers. Without a national narrative, the Lebanese people and its diaspora have had to come to terms with relying on their own accounts of what happened during those fifteen years of violence. This thesis set forth two competing hypotheses. Firstly, that the different sections of the diaspora would have different perceptions of what caused the civil war. Specifically, the older diasporic community, that was formed out of trade and economic reasons, would take the external blame approach when theorizing the cause of the civil war. Correspondingly, the section of the diaspora that was conflict-generated, would conceptualize the onset of the war as sectarian factors, in other words, taking the internal blame approach. This hypothesis was based on the notion that conflict-generated diasporas have a tendency to maintain ethnoreligious cleavages, even after emigrating, fleeing or seeking asylum (Feron & Lefort, 2019). As such, those who had experienced the civil war and sectarian
violence would see it as the driving force of the war, while the older community, who had not
directly experienced the sectarian strife of the civil war, would believe that external factors were the
primary cause.

Contrastingly, this thesis presented a competing hypothesis, that there would be no difference
between these two diasporic groups’ perceptions of the cause of the civil war. Essentially, this
hypothesis was based on the notion that the Lebanese diaspora has a long history of maintaining a
connection with the homeland on various levels (political, sociocultural, economic as well as
emotionally). Additionally, return migration, as well as family reunification in host lands has been
common within the Lebanese diaspora. Taking this into account, it was hypothesized that there would
be no difference in perception as these two groups were not distinct entities, but rather amalgamated
within the host countries.

Interestingly, what the narratives of diaspora community members indicated was that they
generally perceived the onset of violence as an outcome of multifaceted factors. Essentially, the
members of the Lebanese community tended to feel that the war was sparked by both internal and
external factors. In this regard, there was no difference between the diaspora groups. However, their
perceptions were not based along the external-blame/internal-blame divide that has come to dominate
the Lebanese Civil War scholarship. Rather, the narratives of the diaspora took a multifaceted approach
and theorized a number of plausible causes. What this can tell us about the involvement of diasporic
narratives within international relations theory is that diasporas hold important insights about their
homeland. They work as arenas for discourse on the past and future of their homeland nations. In host
countries, diasporas are able to reproduce their narratives with their own spin (Demmers, 2007). With
the case of the Lebanese diaspora, these narratives have tended to include myths and conspiracy
theories in order to live out their trauma and collective identity. These findings are important for the
study of diasporic imaginations. Specifically, as a mobilized and homeland oriented group, the Lebanese
diaspora’s perceptions of the civil war has largely been influenced by symbolic diasporic imagination
(Demmers, 2007). While these insights proved that there is yet to be a consensus on the civil war causes –
both in the homeland and in the diaspora – these narratives shed light on how diasporas perceive their
homeland conflicts and the factors that shape these interpretations.
Moving on to the sub-research themes that emerged from this research, namely, how are collective identities and transnational engagements affected within a complex diaspora. Essentially, members of the diaspora, despite whether they were affiliated with the trade era or conflict-generated era, tended to view themselves as Lebanese. This concept of Lebanese identity spread across regions, as those in West Africa also maintained this identity. Connections with the homeland are largely sustained through diaspora organizations. The Lebanese Diaspora Energy (LDE) as well as the Maronite Foundation in the World, support transnational engagement with the diaspora in order to foster and spread the Lebanese collective identity between the global diasporic groups and the homeland. In doing so, citizenship acquisition and consequently, voting, were important avenues in shaping the Lebanese diaspora consciousness.

In summation, diaspora identity is largely shaped by homeland orientation. The cultural, such as linguistic and social aspects, as well as political affiliations, are an important part of constructing the Lebanese identity abroad. Consequently, these markers of identity amplified involvement in transnational practices and processes.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the limited response of interviews within this research, a primary suggestion for further research would be to include a larger set of participants. Specifically, a larger set of participants that come from various sects as to provide a wider ethno-religious understanding of narratives on the civil war. Having a larger pool of participants would be necessary in order to fully comprehend the dynamics within the Lebanese diaspora and provide more larger variety of narratives on the topic of civil war and memory.

Additionally, it would be interesting to understand whether the multifaceted conceptualization exists with the homeland population as well. As Lebanon lacks a national narrative on the civil war, comparing the diaspora’s interpretation with that of the homeland may move the country closer to having a unified stance on the violence that occurred. As such, as a comparison between diaspora attitudes and that of the homeland population would be useful in bridging the gap between how diasporas compare to their homeland counterparts in terms of the civil war memory.
Finally, host societies also play an important role in diaspora politics. It would be worthwhile to conduct research on the diaspora that takes into account the various geographical locations in which they live. Examining diasporas by their geographical locations would be interesting in determining how identity forms in different contexts and host societies.
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