

“Framing” the “Other” for Internal Policy: Lebanese Political Cartoons and the Representation of the “West”

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Policy:
Lebanese Political Cartoons and the Representation
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Transliteration

For the transliteration of Arabic words, I followed the standard set by the Deutsches Institut für Normung (the DIN 31635). The following table represents the Arabic letters encountered in the present thesis and their corresponding Latin characters according to the DIN 31635.

Arabic Letters	DIN 31635
Consonants	
ا	ā
ء	’
ب	b
ت	t
ث	ṭ
ج	ǧ
ح	ḥ
خ	ḫ
د	d
ذ	ḍ
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	š
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	‘
غ	ǧ
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k

ل
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Vowels

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To Rocco,

For reminding me, time and again, that life is a wonderful journey

1. Introduction

In December 2015, *The Los Angeles Times*, in search for a correspondent based in what the newspaper calls the Middle East, published the following announcement:

[...] We are looking for an accomplished writer who is capable of plunging into these [of the Middle East] ancient and dazzling cultures, capturing their mesmerizing variety, deep intellectual history, turbulent social upheaval and — from ISIS insurgents to entrenched dictators — their capability for brutish violence. The successful candidate will be the one who avoids the office and wanders the back roads; who will leave the others to tally the daily mayhem and bring us stories we will not have the power to forget [...]¹.

Steeped in essentialist generalisations, such a paragraph is worth of the best orientalist tradition. The “ancient and dazzling cultures”, even “mesmerizing”, of the Arab world² evoke images of an exotic and fascinating “Orient”, the lure of which is counterbalanced by the tendency of the same cultures to be inescapably violent and to prefer tyrannical dictatorships.

While in the case of the above transposed text, an essentialist-orientalist mentality might seem harmless, if not even funny, it is not so in other contexts. For example, as a reaction to the recent terrorist attacks targeting France and Belgium, common popular perception dangerously tends to consider “Arab” synonymous of “terrorist”, reminiscent of the “brutish violence” that such Arab cultures are allegedly inherently capable of. Such an attitude has led to the rise of xenophobia and outright racism against Muslim Arabs, especially in Europe, leading to the surge of popular movements that reject the presence of Syrian refugees in various European countries, on the

1 Sarah Moawad, “ ‘Ancient and Dazzling Cultures’: Why Western Journalism is STILL failing the Middle East”, <http://muftah.org/ancient-and-dazzling-cultures-why-western-journalism-is-still-failing-the-middle-east/#.Vy24oJ4vCkB>, accessed on 7/05/2016.

2 The reader will notice that throughout the entire research when referring to the geographical area where the Arab countries reside I use the term “Arab World”, intentionally avoiding the use of “Middle East and North Africa” (MENA). The latter reflects obviously a euro-centric view of the world, which politically chooses to ignore the historical existence of Arab nationalism and the formulation of an Arab nation that would unite all Arab countries.

ground that Europe will irreversibly expose itself to terrorist attacks.

Aside sustaining a climate of hostility if not outright hatred, presenting such an image of the Arab world demonstrates that current mainstream media (and such a tendency is by no means a prerogative of the media), in spite of Edward Said, still sustains and fosters a perception of the Arab World that does not distance itself too much from a quite old Western, especially European, literary tradition. Mainly thanks to the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, in academic circles some scholars gradually became conscious of a Western ideology of power that was producing on purpose an image of an essentially backward and putatively existent “East”, in order for the “West” to pursue its own interests in the Arab region. So, colonialism was justified as a means to foster development, while nowadays invasive military operations from the part of the United States and some of the European countries are excused in the name of democracy and freedom.

However, one of the critiques of Said’s *Orientalism* was exactly that by exclusively focusing his attention solely on how European colonial powers have formulated the image of the mythical East, he disregarded the Arab counterpart and failed to account how in the Arab World the “West” is perceived³. Thus he paradoxically reproduced an Orientalist attitude that would stubbornly refuse to let “the subaltern speak”.

Academic studies in recent years have tried to address such a gap, so that a small literature has been compiled within the field of what is called “occidentalism”. However, the studies conducted so far are very few (reflecting a paradoxical and persistent orientalist attitude in the academic environment) and mostly present definitions of occidentalism that do not exactly mirror Said’s study on orientalism. For the scholars Xiaomei Chen and Aishka Meltern, the first focusing on China as a case study and the latter on Turkey, occidentalism serves as a theoretical framework that better helps to understand non-Western struggle to formulate and define the modern nation-state. According to Chen, Chinese identity as a modern nation-state would be the product

³ See for example Cornel West’s comments during a debate in honour of Edward Said in “Jusith Butler and Cornel West, Honoring Edward Said”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF5mYvjDp3U>, accessed on 7 May 2016. See also Fred Haliday, “ ‘Orientalism’ and Its Critics”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 20 (1993).

of a double occidentalist construction: how the West imagines the East and how China imagines the West. occidentalism becomes an oxymoron that includes both Westernism, understood as the drive to follow the Western model and anti-Westernism, understood as rejection and differentiation from the Western model in order to retain ones own original identity⁴.

Meltern has a similar point of view, as he defines Turkey's identification into a "Turkish nation" as the result of "the East reacting to the Western gaze". Also for Meltern, occidentalism combines non-Western Westernism and anti-Westernism in constant struggle. Non-western (Turkish) definition of a nation-state, hence, is seen as the result of both imitating Western modernity and opposing it. However, Meltern differently from Chen, includes Said's definition of occidentalism in *Orientalism*, namely the West's projection of its image to the "other"⁵. It is this last concept that the scholar Venn Couze pays his attention to. According to him, the concept of occidentalism ties itself to the "West"'s post-colonial hegemonic imposition throughout the world of its own narrative of history, of the self, and of how modernity and nation-state should "look like"⁶.

From the examples mentioned so far it appears evident that scholarly attention to occidentalism has mostly focused on non-Arab countries and has posited the "West" as the agent-subject. The "East" acts in so much as it re-acts to the West's imposition of its own construction of the self, but it never actively produces its own image of the "West". Therefore, Robert Woltering's relatively recent publication of *Occidentalism: Images of the 'West' in Egypt* constitutes an important departure from previous definitions of occidentalism, as it restores agency to the "other" as subject. In fact, his main concern is to describe and analyse how the Egyptian public discourse has shaped and produced different images of the "West". In other words, his endeavour truly tries to mirror Said's analysis, but this time taking the point of view of Egyptian discourse and narrative⁷.

4 See Chen Xiaomei, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

5 See Aishka Meltern, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

6 See Venn Couze, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2000).

7 See Robert Woltering, *Occidentalism in the Arab World: Ideology and Images of the West in the Egyptian Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

It is within this debate on orientalism and occidentalism that I collocate my study. It is the very critique of Said's *Orientalism* and Woltering's approach in his analysis that initially prompted my research question. However, it was above all the ethical imperative of counterbalancing a still pervasive tendency of disregarding the point of the "other" that stimulated me to eventually undertake the present research. It is in fact my firm belief that the current rise of racism and xenophobia in the "West" can only be opposed if more attention is given to the "other"'s epistemological view, than to its representation.

1.1 Addressing the Research Question

Therefore the present thesis will attempt to answer the following question: how do Lebanese political cartoons represent the "West"? Focusing on Lebanese cartoons constitutes a novel and original point of view, the study of which has not been addressed before and that can add to the insights on "occidentalism" as intended by Woltering's study.

In the specific, Arab and especially Lebanese cartoons are hardly present academic studies. Khalid Khistainy's *Arab Political Humour* constitutes certainly an interesting historical overview of Arabic literary forms of humour and satire, starting from the classical period. However, his account ceases before the advent of political cartoons and focuses mainly on Egypt and Iraq⁸.

Fatma Müge Göçek' *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, instead, presents a collection of essays, each one analysing political cartoons to investigate different themes, from the image of the woman in Ottoman political cartoons to political transformations in Iran during the 1979 revolution, to Turkish modern identity, to name some examples. The study presents interesting features, as it demonstrates how political cartoons provide for many different analytical points of view, revealing much of the surrounding social reality. Even more importantly, it is the only study where I found a brief historical explanation of how cartoons were adopted in the Middle East. The

8 See Khalid Kishtainy, *Arab Political Humour* (London etc.: Quartet Books, 1985).

book, though, is more focused on Turkish cartoons than Arab cartoons⁹.

Matthew Diamond's analysis of various political cartoons published on newspapers as well as on the internet, most resembles my type study. Taking into account the larger Muslim world, Diamond selects a wide array of cartoons coming from a wide range of different countries, including Lebanon. The analysis is not focused on the image of the "West", but it is in a way related to it, as the author analyses how cartoons in the Muslim world in general depicted events immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States¹⁰.

Šākīr al-Nāblusī, instead, focused on the Palestinian reality and conducted a biographical study on one of the most famous cartoonist in the Arab world, the Palestinian Naǧī al-'Alī, and his artistic/political production which specifically aimed at bringing major political concerns to the lower classes¹¹.

Quite a few studies, one of them being Jamila Hakam's "The 'cartoon controversy': a Critical Discourse Analysis of English-language Arab newspaper discourse", focus their attention on the events related to the Danish newspaper's publication of images of the prophet *Muḥammad* and the reaction it provoked in certain Arab countries. These studies want to understand how Arab newspapers interpreted the events through the analysis of political cartoons¹².

Last, Andreas Qassim and his research on "Arab Political Cartoons" focuses in particular on Lebanese cartoons about the 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon, in order to understand Arab humour. In particular, he seeks to understand whether Arab political cartoons, taking as a case study Lebanon, being largely a product of Western culture, developed more local stylistic forms of

9 See Fatma M. Göçek, *Political Cartoons in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1998).

10 See Matthew Diamond, "No Laughing Matter: Post-September 11 Political Cartoons in Arab/Muslim Newspapers", *Political Communication*, 19:2 (2002).

11 See Šākīr al-Nāblusī, *'akallahu al-ǧīb: al-sīra alfanniyya li-l-risām Naǧī al-'Alī* ("The Wolf Devoured Him! A Biography of Cartoonist Naǧī al-'Alī") (Omman: AIRP, 2007).

12 See Jamila Hakam, "The 'cartoons controversy': a Critical Discourse Analysis of English-language Arab newspaper discourse", *Discourse Society* 20:33 (2009).

representation rooted in Arab cultural heritage¹³.

My research also adds to the dearth of information about the Lebanese press and its historical development. Only one recent study, in fact, conducted by Dajani, dwells on the history of Lebanese journalism¹⁴. For the rest, only the Lebanese Ministry of Information itself provides an outline of the development of the Lebanese press in the course of the years, since its birth¹⁵. Other scholarly studies have focused on the current state of the Lebanese press and have provided the basis for the discussion on the effects of sectarianism on the media, present in the first chapter of this thesis¹⁶. However, I have not been able to find any study that brings together the Lebanese historical, cultural and social background in order to give a more complete and nuanced picture about the state of the Lebanese press, what factors bore on its development and the particular ideological stances that stand behind the singular newspapers, part of the discussion of the present thesis.

1.2 Methodology: a Brief Introduction to My Method and Theoretical Framework

From the above mentioned examples, it is evident that there is a tendency in the scholarly studies to focus on how (Arab) political cartoons represent certain events. My research, instead, wants to understand an ideological phenomenon. In particular, I am interested in what kind of discourse is imposed on the "West" in the Lebanese political cartoons. In other words, what kind of power relations are at work in the Lebanese society and how do they affect the portrayal of the "West" from the part of the Lebanese cartoonists? Said's reading of Foucault's opera constitutes, therefore, my starting point and subsequent guideline for the analysis of the cartoons, as I will explain in chapter three.

13 See Andreas Qassim, "Arab Political Cartoons: The 2006 Lebanon War", (MA thesis, Lunds Universiteit, 2007).

14 See Nabil Dajani, *Disoriented Media in a Fragmented Society: the Lebanese Experience* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992).

15 See Ministry of Information of the Republic of Lebanon, "Tārīḥ al-ṣaḥāfiyya al-lubnāniyya", <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/main/MediaMap/HistoryoftheLebanesepress.aspx>.

16 See for example Baha' Abu-Laban, "Factors in Social Control of the Press in Lebanon", *Journalism and Mass Communication* 43 (1966); Yasmine T. Dabbous, "Media With a Mission: Why Fairness and Balance Are Not Priorities in Lebanon's Journalistic Codes", *International Journal of Communication* 4 (2010) and Nabil Dajani, "Press for Rent", *Journal of Communication* 25 (1975).

I chose Lebanon as a case study because it turned out to have the most interesting press environment, that sets it apart from the rest of the Arab World, as the present research will show. Once termed as the “cradle of Arab journalism”¹⁷, Lebanon presents a unique cultural historical, political and social background. Since I will be using “framing theories” as a method of analysis Lebanon’s peculiar political environment permitted me to clearly identify different political ideologies, to then study their effect on the representation of the "West". As explained more in detail in chapter 3, I understand cartoons to be a specific type of “media discourse” and as such they are very much suited to reveal what ideological factors bear on the characterisation of the “West” in Lebanese cartoons.

However, my guiding theoretical reference, in general, is Rhonda Walker’s understanding of political cartoons¹⁸. Her view of the cartoons as a “means of political communication”¹⁹ very well fits the conception that stands behind my research question. Arriving to the conclusion that “political cartoons are another means whereby powerful interests reinforce their views on society”²⁰, she identifies three factors that have to be taken in consideration when analysing political cartoons in terms of their political message. The first one is the “type of political regimes”, the second is the “forms of media ownership”, and the third is “the rules that govern the production of cartoons”²¹.

Thus, my thesis starts with chapter one exploring the historical, social and political background of Lebanon, so to understand the type of political regime present in the country. In addition, it also presents a brief historical outline of the development of the Lebanese press, since its foundation sanctioned by the Ottoman *tanzimāt* reforms, till the present. Chapter two continues exploring Lebanon’s media landscape, defining what is the most prevalent form of media ownership in the country, but also detailing the method of choice that eventually lead me to select five Lebanese newspapers in the specific. The description of their political and

17 Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

18 See Walker Rhonda, “Political Cartoons: Now You See Them!”, *Canadian Parliamentary Review* (2003).

19 Ibid., 16

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

ideological stance will complete the second chapter. Chapter three, instead, constitutes the heart of my research, where I delineate the method and theoretical framework that will guide my analysis of the Lebanese cartoons, to then arrive to the conclusion and final answer of my research question.

Chapter 2: The Development of the Press in Lebanon

2.1 Introduction

Since the present research focuses on the analysis of political cartoons published exclusively in Lebanese newspapers, it is imperative to understand the Lebanese sociopolitical context.

In the specific, the following pages will be dedicated to an in-depth description of the social and cultural specificities of Lebanon itself and how they contribute to the making of the Lebanese press. A country with a very peculiar history, Lebanon was carved out of the Greater Syria because of France's colonial ambitions. Once obtained independence from the French mandate authority in 1943, Lebanon's government had to form the concept of a nation-state with a population that counted at least three spoken languages (English, French and Arabic), six and more different ethnic groups (among them Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Jews and Persians) and around eighteen different religious communities (of which the two Christian Maronite and Orthodox communities and the three Muslim Druze, Sunni and Shiite communities are the main ones).

The Lebanese society, following a process that was already triggered by the *tanzimāt* reforms imposed by the Ottoman Porte, began to divide alongside sectarian affiliations, whereby each community would have different and conflicting political visions. The struggle to find an inclusive form of political representation that would do justice to all Lebanese religious communities, eventually leading to the institutionalisation of sectarianism, had a fundamental impact on the formation of Lebanon as a modern nation-state. What influence it had on the development of the Lebanese press and what kind of issues it raises for the current Lebanese media environment will be part of discussion in this chapter.

2.2 A Brief History of Modern Lebanon

Since, Lebanon's modern history serves only to contextualise the main argument of this chapter, I will limit myself to outline those historical events that had also a critical impact on the development and shaping of today's Lebanese press.

Lebanon was part of the *bilād al-šām*, or “Greater Syria”, a former Ottoman province that, additionally, comprised more or less the same territories of modern-day Palestine, Israel, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. Except for the region of Mount Lebanon which enjoyed a certain degree of independency from Ottoman ruling when it came to internal matters, the rest of the territory was under Ottoman government¹.

Thus, when in 1839 the Ottoman Porte issued the *tanzimāt* reforms², it concerned also what is now called Lebanon. Such reforms had the purpose of modernising the Ottoman territories following the model of Western modes of progress and modernity. The Ottoman authorities were realising that the power of the empire was waning, as Europe was already establishing colonies in territories officially under the control of the Ottomans. As a way to stem Europe's growing power, the Porte thought that modernising its territories would be the best way to compete with the European rival. Historically, these reforms constituted a turning point in the Arab region as they marked the beginning of the modern era.

Nonetheless, while they had a lasting impact on the Arab territories, they could not save the Ottoman Empire from collapsing. As a consequence of the defeat in World War I, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered and its territories were divided among the victorious parties. Thus, France and the United Kingdom, following the Sykes-Picot agreement which they had signed secretly in 1916, established their respective areas of influence in what was the Greater Syria Ottoman province³. That is how France carved out Great Lebanon from Greater Syria and imposed

1 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 3-23.

2 Ibid., 14.

3 Ibid., 75.

a French mandatory rule over it, once the Great War ended.

Lebanon managed to attain its independence from France in 1943, but unlike in the rest of the Arab countries under colonial occupation, there was no popular movement capable of overthrowing the ruling power. Lebanon's independence was actually brokered by the United Kingdom and Egypt who pressured France till it reluctantly acknowledged the country's sovereignty over its own territory⁴. The intervention of foreign powers in order to settle internal Lebanese political affairs, would become a hallmark of Lebanon's foreign relations in the following years.

Lebanon's first years of independence were marked by disastrous governmental economic policies and by growing tensions among the sectarian communities⁵. The country's situation was furthermore complicated by Lebanon's sudden direct participation in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 1967 the third Arab war against Israel ended with a disastrous Arab defeat (the so-called *naksa*) and elements of the Palestinian resistance movement established themselves in the southern part of the Lebanese territory. The presence of the PLO in *al-biqā'* region not only made Lebanon a direct protagonist of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian war, whereas until then it occupied a marginal position in the conflict, but it also sanctioned the practice of using the Lebanese territory as an arena for proxy wars among the different regional warring parties. As the PLO started carrying out missile assaults on Israel from inside Lebanon, the latter's retaliatory responses made the southern Lebanese territories part of the battlefield between Palestinians and Israelis. It was this lack of security that prompted the Christian Phalangists to protest against the Palestinian armed presence, while the Muslim communities more or less sympathised with the Palestinian cause⁶.

Thus, an initial internal conflict over armed foreign presence on the national territory became a sectarian issue and was the sparkle that lead to the conflagration of the civil war among

4 Ibid., 104-108.

5 Ibid., 109-186.

6 Ibid., 152-155.

Lebanon's various religious communities and ethnic groups. Starting in 1975 and ending in 1990⁷, during the civil war the government lost its power over the country's territory. The different warring militias corresponding to the major Lebanese religious factions, established a series of mini-states throughout Lebanon, each under the control of a different warlord who at the same time acted as the leader of his religious community⁸.

Lebanese internal sectarian divisions and foreign interventions aimed at preserving the interests of the various neighbouring countries continued to intermingle during the course of the Lebanese internal conflict and beyond. On the one hand, there was neighbouring Syria whose interest in the lost Lebanese territory never faded. The outbreak of the war represented a good occasion for Syrian armed presence in the Lebanese territory, so that Syria could establish a foothold in the Lebanon's internal affairs. In 1976 Syria began to send troops to Lebanon, with the stated aim to control the PLO militias⁹. Syrian military involvement, though, extended much more than the span of the war. In fact, the Ṭā'if accords legitimised the presence of the Syrian army as an auxiliary help to the regular Lebanese military forces in order to support the Lebanese government in re-establishing control over the whole of Lebanon¹⁰.

On the other hand, Israel, suspiciously watching Syrian movements within the Lebanese territory, also decided that an armed intervention on the ground would serve better Israeli interests. Thus, the Israel Defense Forces entered Lebanon and managed to seize large parts of the Lebanese southern territories. Hence, Israel could establish permanent control over the border, with the official aim to create a “security belt” in order to protect the northern Israeli towns from military attacks by the PLO in Lebanon¹¹. Israeli military presence lasted until the year 2000.

After the civil war, the assassination of the then Lebanese prime minister *Rafīq al-Ḥarīrī*, in 2005, provoked another major political crisis. Suspicions regarding a Syrian involvement began to

7 John Felton, “The Taif Accord: Document in Context”, in *The Contemporary Middle East Historic Documents*, ed. John Felton, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press), 345.

8 Ibid., 187-220.

9 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 196-198.

10 Felton, “The Taif Accord: Document in Context”, 345.

11 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 205-206.

circulate, eventually escalating into an outright popular uprising against Syrian military presence. The so-called Cedar Revolution resulted in the eventual withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. Politically, the 2005 crisis led to a political radicalisation of already existing divisions between those parties favourable to a Syrian interventionist power and those against it¹² (see chapter 3 for more details).

2.3 The Origin of Sectarianism

Since the encroachment of sectarianism on the media (discussed in the following section) has a critical impact on the practice of journalism, it is important to discuss more in detail how it developed and became embedded in the Lebanese social and political fabric.

In the specific case of Lebanon, sectarianism manifested itself as affiliation to and social identification in a specific religious community. According to the scholar Usama Makdisi, the very concept of sectarianism is a modern phenomenon that initially manifested itself in the autonomous region of Mount Lebanon and was otherwise alien to the pre-modern Lebanese society. It was due to the *tanzimāt* reforms imposed by the Ottoman Porte, together with the colonialist and, later, interventionist policies of the European powers that the “culture of sectarianism” was cultivated and then fostered by Lebanon's post independence governments' nationalistic discourses¹³.

Sectarian-religious affiliations and identifications would extend during the French mandate period to the whole of “Greater Lebanon”. Thus, when nationalist sentiments started to rise as a reaction to the foreign colonial power, in Lebanon each religious community proposed different and competing definitions of Lebanon as a nation-state¹⁴.

12 Rula J. Abisaab et al., *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 140-141.

13 Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon* (London: University of California Press, 2000), 1-17.

14 *Ibid.*, 24-26.

Following independence, the new constitution, designed on the model of the previous French one, and the National Pact, the two foundational documents of Lebanon as a modern nation-state, officially institutionalised sectarianism, by assigning the top positions of the government according to the religious confession. The constitution also assigned specific quotas in parliament according to the main religious communities present in the country¹⁵. Giving political legitimation to the major religious sects in the country had the aim of devising a political system that would be representative of Lebanon's diverse religious and ethnic composition. In reality, it led to the eventual break-down of central power, divided Lebanese society and fostered an environment plagued by corruption and nepotism. The path was set that eventually led to a bloody fifteen-year long civil war. Needless to say, the latter further polarised Lebanese society alongside sectarian lines, as the central authority was no longer capable of unifying the country. The National Conciliation Pact, or *Ṭā'if* agreement, sanctioned not only the end of the civil war, but also the modification of the quota-system as envisaged by the National Pact. The agreements, implemented in 1990, reflected what was considered a more proportionate political representation of the major religious community.

Thus, sectarianism became embedded in Lebanon's social and political system, having an impact also on Lebanese media environment. To better explain the encroachment of sectarianism on the press, the following pages will outline the historical development of journalism in Lebanon.

2.4 A Brief History of the Lebanese Press

2.4.1 The Ottoman Period

The history of the modern Lebanese press starts after the *tanzimāt* reforms, in the year 1858 when the Lebanese *Ḥalīl al-Ḥūrī* founded the first truly Arab newspaper published in Arabic in Beirut. Being privately owned, *ḥadiqat al-aḥbār* ("The Garden of News"), was the first independent

¹⁵ Trablousi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 104-108.

Arab journal that was published in Lebanon and, indeed, in the entire Arab world¹⁶. Already before 1858, a number of presses were established by American missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the very first functioning printing press dating even more earlier, as far as 1610. However, the journals issued at these presses were not printed in Arabic and were mainly religious publications, often published intermittently¹⁷. Hence they were by nature propagandist tools, elaborated in order to create proselytes¹⁸.

After 1858, regular publications followed and numerous journals published in Arabic began to appear mainly in Beirut. In the mid nineteenth century, Beirut was witnessing a sudden increase in growth. The Ottoman Porte's decision to introduce free trade coupled with the reduction of custom duties, allowed for a penetration of foreign capital. This favoured particularly the Lebanese territory as the local Christian communities established themselves as the intermediaries between European traders and the local Arab market. Because of the city's economic boom, many from the mountainous region of Mount Lebanon, where already an educational infrastructure had been developed by the missionaries, emigrated to Beirut. The new urban reality fostered the formation of a new kind of intellectuals, protagonists of the “renaissance” of the Arab letters or, *naḥḍa*, a cultural, but also political, movement that swept across the Arab region at the end of the nineteenth century¹⁹.

In particular, the *naḥḍa* refers to that period when Arab intellectuals and men of letters started to imitate and import new Western modes of literary production. First, by sheer imitation, then by blending Western-style literature with more local and traditional Arab forms of literature, the *naḥḍa* has been considered to be a period of great flourishing of the Arab arts. Since at that time the Arab press was just beginning to develop, the figure of the journalist as a profession had yet to be defined. Therefore, most of the cultured men, who started to publish journals and magazines in Lebanon were not journalists in the strict sense, but those protagonists of the Arab cultural awakening. As most of the journals being issued were privately owned, these literate men had to

16 Ministry of Information of the Republic of Lebanon, “tārīḥ al-ṣaḥāfiyya al-lubnāniyya”, accessed on October 16, 2015, <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/main/MediaMap/HistoryoftheLebanesePress.aspx>.

17 Dajani, *Disoriented Media*, 21-23.

18 Ibid.

19 Trablousi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 52-63.

rely on patrons who would advertise in their newspapers and finance their books. Because at this time, identification with the respective religious communities was already ripening, those patrons were also influential figures in their communities. Furthermore, as Dajani has noted, these men had mainly political purposes and sought to act as a guidance for their respective communities, transforming journals into “social pamphleteers”²⁰.

As far as the legal framework is concerned, no official press law was issued until 1865. Prior to this date all matters concerning the newly developing media infrastructure were directly regulated by the Minister of Information and the Minister of Interiors in Istanbul, which would also make sure that no publication criticising the government's policies or influencing negatively foreign state relations would be allowed²¹. When in 1865 sultan Abdel Aziz issued the first press law, strict censorship was lifted to allow a certain degree of freedom to journalists, even though any information that would be regarded as a threat to the state's security was banned. The relative relaxation of the policies of the state authorities toward the press was another factor that contributed to the rapid proliferation of newspapers in Lebanon in the second half of the nineteenth century²².

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, nevertheless, Ottoman press censorship became stricter and stricter, culminating in the 1894-press law that imposed that newspapers' licenses were to be granted by the police, depending on the political views of the applicant²³. As a consequence, newspapers in Lebanon started to call for a pan-Arab national resistance, marking the beginning of the politicisation of the Lebanese press. Moreover, the gradual shift of the *nahḍa* cultural movement to a political manifesto of pan-Arab nationalism in opposition to the occupation of the Ottoman Empire and the more and more aggressive interventions of the European powers in local internal policies, were certainly two factors that contributed to the introduction of politics into Lebanese newspapers. Nonetheless, a short period of more liberal policies towards the press was marked by the 1908 Revolution of the Young Turks that overthrew

20 Dajani, *Disoriented Media*, 23-24.

21 “Tārīḥ al-ṣaḥāfiyya al-lubnāniyya”, accessed on October 16, 2015,
<http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/main/MediaMap/HistoryoftheLebanesepress.aspx>.

22 Dajani, *Disoriented Media*, 24-25.

23 *Ibid.*, 27.

the sultanate. A year later, the newly installed government in Istanbul issued another law that lifted some of the previous restrictions and granted new facilities to the press. The relative freedom, though, was brief, as once again restrictions on press freedom were imposed. As the first World War approached, the printing press in Lebanon stopped altogether²⁴.

2.4.2 The French Mandate

During the mandate, the French not only reinstated the Ottoman press censorship law, but also augmented it by establishing a special office that had the power to decide on all newspapers' publications. Under this stifling climate of increased restriction and repression, journalists became more and more nationalistic, advocating the independence of Lebanon from foreign powers²⁵. By this time, each religious community was identifying itself with different ideas of how the Lebanese nation should be defined. Furthermore, French favouritism towards the Christian community certainly helped escalating sectarian tensions. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising at all that exactly in this period, sectarian divisions among the media became more pronounced. While on the one hand, many Lebanese journalists were imprisoned because of expressing their opposition to the foreign ruling power, others asserted their support in exchange for profit²⁶. Two consequences followed: first, media outlets became tools to express a certain political view, and secondly corruption was spread²⁷. Two factors that would become hallmarks of the Lebanese press and remain so up to today.

The mandate saw also the publication of the first two newspapers in French and the modernisation of the press thanks to French investments, mainly directed at the press managed by Catholic missionaries. These would play a fundamental role in the media development in Lebanon, till the 1950s²⁸.

24 Ibid., 26-31.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 31-33.

27 Ibid.

28 "Tārīḥ al-ṣaḥāfiyya al-lubnāniyya", accessed on October 16, 2015, <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/main/MediaMap/HistoryoftheLebanesepress.aspx>.

2.4.3 Lebanon's Independence

In the first years after the independence, the same restrictions on the press which had been imposed beforehand were applied even more stringently and many newspapers were closed down. In these years, corruption escalated. Officials started to systematically pay journalists so that they would depict them in a sympathetic light in their news reporting and journals were run more as business corporations than as factual news outlets²⁹.

However, the fifties and sixties saw Lebanon establishing itself as leader of the Arab press. A 1952-press law even though maintaining state censorship, defined the limits of freedom of expression in more vague terms. Ten years later, the government issued another major press law, that clearly defined, for the first time, the profession of journalism and instituted two syndicates that united the editors, on the one hand, and the publishers, on the other. Thus, more liberal and enlightened governmental policies towards freedom of expression, a more precise legal framework that defined and protected the profession, together with a push in technological modernisation concerning the press, lead to the flourishing of the Lebanese media outlets during this period. At the same time, Lebanon was witnessing a particularly favourable economic situation, as the government found a way to exploit the soaring oil market of the region by starting to invest in the refineries sector³⁰.

Despite the above mentioned favourable press legislations, one particular legislative decree contributed to fostering sectarian divisions among the press. In fact, this decree, issued in 1953, set the limit of new licenses to 25, thus curbing the possibility to establish new more independent media outlets³¹ and forcing existing newspapers to rely on a patronage system, even if it meant gaining subsidies from foreign parties. Coupled with the inability of autonomous financial support, the 1953 decree actually exacerbated the encroachment of sectarianism on the media³². Two consequences ensued: by allowing foreign and business interests to use media outlets, the

29 Dajani, “*Disoriented Media*”, 33-34.

30 *Ibid.*, 34.

31 “*Tārīḥ al-ṣaḥāfiyya al-lubnāniyya*”, accessed on October 16, 2015, <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/main/MediaMap/HistoryoftheLebanesepress.aspx>.

32 Abu-Laban, “Factors in Social Control of the Press in Lebanon”, 515.

press gave space to foreign actors to exert their influence in Lebanese internal politics. This also meant that corruption became an ordinary way to get specific information published³³.

The outbreak of the civil war seriously hampered the publication of newspapers and furthermore exacerbated the media's sectarian divisions. Only newspapers that supported the warlord's political ideology were allowed to circulate within the limits of the territory that he governed. Moreover, newspapers that had no affiliation with the militias or with some specific patron stopped being issued altogether. Thus, though news coverage never ceased, it was nevertheless biased in favour of one warring party or the other, so that newspapers became actual political players in the war³⁴.

Since the end of the civil war, the leading role that the Lebanese press enjoyed during the fifties and sixties in the Arab region waned and media outlets became more and more entangled in the country's political and social problems³⁵.

2.5 The Effects of Sectarianism on the Press in Lebanon

So far we have followed the unfolding of the encroachment of sectarianism on the printed media. This has produced multiple effects on the Lebanese press. The sectarian divisions inside the Lebanese society have weakened Lebanon's central authority. This has resulted in a so-called “soft state”, namely a state which is incapable of implementing the law it issues. Coupled with a government that has traditionally been more involved in private economic interests than in the public good, the soft power of the state explains the relative lax attitude of the government in implementing the law.

In fact, the legislation envisages censorship, as article 36 of the 1952 press law states that:

33 Ibid.

34 Dabbous, “Media With a Mission”, 731.

35 Dajani, *Disoriented Media*, 38-43.

“[...]Whenever a false information is published that endangers national security, the punishment will be of a day up to a month of prison”, in addition to the payment of a fine. Moreover, article 37 establishes the same punishment to “whoever publishes information” that is considered to be a threat to “the security of the state, or its unity, or its sovereignty or the sovereignty of its borders [...]”. An amendment to both articles appeared in the 1962 press law, which constitutes the legal framework of the press today. This amendment, present in art. 62, further limited the freedom of the press since it establishes the temporary closure of those newspapers that would publish any information considered to be “insulting one of the religions known to be present in the country”, “inciting sectarian or ethnic conflicts” as well as “insulting the head of state of a foreign country”³⁶. However, the government hardly ever applies the law³⁷. Moreover, ownership and financial support from the part of important political figures certainly safeguard journalists from potential censorship.

Thus, each newspaper, being mostly privately owned, expresses its own views and opinions even if it means openly criticising governmental policies. In fact, more than once Lebanese dailies gave voice to campaigns, protesting against the state authorities' political decisions. For example, the president of the first national government, *Bišāra al-Ḥūrī*, resigned in 1952 after continuous popular resistance fuelled by the activity of the journalists³⁸. Later, *al-nahār* newspaper started an ideological campaign at the end of the 60s against president *Fu'ād Šihāb*'s (1958–1970) policies³⁹. In 1996, the daily *al-safīr* managed to revert a judiciary sentence by mobilising popular support. The Lebanese tribunal had sentenced the temporary closure of the newspaper under the accusation that “it published acts containing information that should have been kept secret for the sake of the State’s safety”⁴⁰. The daily started a campaign which raised the support of the population and various key political figures, that eventually caused the tribunal to drop all accusations. In general, journals can be and are quite outspoken without having to expect some sort of retaliation from the state's part.

36 Ministry of Information of the Republic of Lebanon, “al-nuṣūṣ al-kāmila li-qawānīn al-maṭbū‘āt mundhu al-qānūn al-‘uthmānī ‘ilā al-marsūm al-‘ištirā‘ī raqam 121 sana 1983-1995”, accessed on October 16, 2015, <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/Main/main.aspx>.

37 Nabil Dajani, “The Myth of Media Freedom in Lebanon”, *Arab Media and Society* 18 (2013): 2.

38 Dajani, *Disoriented Media*, 34.

39 Trablousi, *a History of Modern Lebanon*, 142.

40 *Al-safīr*, “*ḥawla al-safīr*”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://assafir.com/Static/About.aspx>.

This has supported a popular idea, also amongst scholars, that Lebanon enjoys an exceptionally free press environment, where each outlet is allowed to express its own views and opinions. The “myth”⁴¹ has been upheld of a variegated, plural and free Lebanese press, especially if confronted to the realities of neighbouring Arab countries, under the stifling grip of state censorship. In reality, sectarianism has caused, on the contrary, a limitation on freedom of expression. Most journalists have to publish news that agrees with the political view of the patron/owner or that supports a particular policy of the subsidiser. Since the financier or owner is often an important figure in Lebanese society, either because detaining a key political position or because possessing a strong economic power, these patrons or owners are also representatives of major religious communities⁴². Consequently, outlets became propagandist tools that support either a political faction or a specific sect.

As the scholar Dajani noted, in Lebanon, only “viewpapers” exist⁴³: news is modified or left out in order to benefit a certain sectarian political party against their different political and confessional rivals⁴⁴. However, the way the media is organised is not only one-directional, in the sense that if it is true that political figures and specific newspapers are closely tight together, also the wider public reinforces sectarian divisions among the press. Readers knowingly seek out newspapers that convey news in accordance with their political opinions and views. Dabbous-Sensing describes this situation as a “double-social contract” between the press and the political leaders on the one hand, and the press and the public, on the other hand. Thus, media outlets become a means of communications between the favourite political figure and his followers among the public⁴⁵.

Hence, Lebanese newspapers begun to be viewed in terms of upholding or supporting certain policies, and, as such, attracted the interested of foreign players, who saw the opportunity

41 Dajani, “The Myth of Media Freedom”, 1.

42 See for example Abu-Laban, “Factors in Social Control of the Press in Lebanon”, or Dajani, “Disoriented Media” or Dajani, “Press for Rent”, *Journal of Communication* 25:2 (1975).

43 Dajani, “Disoriented Media”, 11.

44 Ibid., 49.

45 Dabbous, “Media With a Mission”, 724-725.

of influencing Lebanese internal affairs. In fact, given the situation of the Lebanese press, owning or financing a certain newspaper would also mean giving support to a specific Lebanese political party or exercise political pressure through the exposure of certain policies on the financed outlet. Thus, also outsiders could establish a foothold in Lebanon's internal politics⁴⁶.

Another effect of sectarianism has been to push newspaper to rely on a patronisation system that fosters a widespread and rampant corruption⁴⁷. Lacking governmental subsidies and constrained by the press law, outlets cannot obtain sufficient financial means from publicity revenues or circulation alone. Therefore, most journalists are more than willing to accept bribes in order to modify information, resulting in news-reporting often being extremely biased and unbalanced⁴⁸. Such a judgement, though, needs further explanation. After all, whether objectiveness can be a value applied to journalism has been a long debated question as journalists unavoidably depict the reality they see coloured by certain personal assumptions.

In fact, objectiveness in journalism is not a scientific and absolute value, rather a relative one. In journalistic terms, objectiveness is considered more as a practice, whereby news is considered objective when following a certain set of rules established by the professional community. In this sense "objectivity means that a person's statement about the world can be trusted if they are submitted to established rules deemed legitimate by a professional community. Facts [...] are not aspects of the world, but consensually validated statements about it"⁴⁹. These decided-upon set of rules should provide a framework whereby one can validate the extent of truthfulness of a statement or an event and eventually report an objective statement or event⁵⁰.

According to this definition of objectivity, the critique against the Lebanese press is founded, as the majority of journalists do not act following agreed upon precepts of ethically correct journalistic practice, but deliberately and systematically modify news behind payment of a sum.

46 Dajani, "Disoriented Media", 44.

47 Ibid., 46-52.

48 Ibid., 49-52.

49 Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic books, Inc., Publishers, 1978), 7

50 Ibid., 3-11.

Moreover, if we consider Dabbous-Sensing's definition of balance as “equal reference to the different sides of a dispute”⁵¹, then most of the news-reporting in Lebanon cannot be considered as balanced since it exclusively relates the point of view of the political figure or other patrons that finance that outlet.

51 Dabbous, “Media With a Mission”, 721.

Chapter 3: The Lebanese Newspapers

3.1 Introduction

Lebanon has a rather complicated history, resulting in an even more complicated social and political environment, as the previous chapter has illustrated. These three intertwined factors contributed to the development of the Lebanese press and were in turn reproduced by the latter. Much like the Lebanese territory that became the ground on which multiple regional powers fought their battles either through proxy wars or by directly interfering, also the media tends to lend itself to foreign actors, whose control over Lebanese dailies guarantees them a part in the Lebanese internal affairs. Furthermore, when in 2005 *al-Ḥarīri*'s assassination led to a polarisation of the political forces, the same radicalisation can be found in the slant of reports in the dailies and, as we shall see in the next chapter, in the political cartoons published on these outlets.

Thus, the present chapter will be dedicated to a brief overview of the current Lebanese media landscape. Additionally, I will present the five newspapers I have decided to focus my attention upon, specifically addressing what kind of position they occupy in the Lebanese socio-political arena and what ideological stance they uphold (for an overview regarding ownership, data of foundation, circulation numbers, ect., for all the five newspapers the reader is invited to see Appendix I).

3.2 The March 14 Alliance and the March 8 Alliance

Most of the political outlets in circulation in Lebanon reproduce and support the Lebanese political divisions, following the agenda of the political alliance of their favour. Therefore, it is important, first, to remind the reader about the two alliances that emerged after the political crisis ensured by the assassination of the then Lebanese prime minister *al-Ḥarīri* in 2005. These

are the *taḥāluf 14 aḍar*, or “the March 14 alliance” and the *taḥāluf 8 aḍar*, or “the March 8 alliance”, two opposing political factions which bring together various Lebanese political parties. These are in turn supported by two different regional powers. The March 14 Alliance comprises the *tayār al-mustaqbal* (“the Future Movement”) party, led by the son of the deceased *Rafiq al-Ḥarīri*, *Sa’ad al-Ḥarīri*¹ and representing the Lebanese Sunni Muslims; the *al-quwāt al-lubnaniyya* (“the Lebanese Forces”) party, originally born as an organisation to coordinate the military operations of the Christian militias during the civil war², now representing the Lebanese right-wing Christians; and the *liqā’ qurnat šihwān* (“the Qornet Shehwan Gathering”), a coalition that brings together different members: political figures already affiliated to other parties, representatives of civic organisations and individualists³. The March 14 Alliance opposed the Syrian presence in the country and called for an international investigation led by the UN in order to shed light on the assassination of the Prime Minister, suspecting a Syrian involvement⁴. Backed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the alliance has a pro-Western stance.

Born as a reaction to and, therefore, opposed to the March 14 alliance is the March 8 coalition, spearheaded by Hezbollah, who found a strong ally in Syria's Shi’ite government and has thus a pro-Syrian stance. Hezbollah's hast calling for this new alliance reflected its fear that the United States might use the international tribunal in order to accuse the Islamists of the assassination of *al-Ḥarīri*. With the additional support of Iran, the March 8 alliance also brought together AMAL (or ‘amal, an acronym of *’afwāḡ al-muqāma al-lubnaniyya*, or “the Lebanese Resistance Regiments”), a militia organisation born at the eve of the civil war and that like Hezbollah represented the Shi’a Lebanese community; the Syrian Nationalists or more precisely *al-ḥizb al-sūrī al-qawmī al-iḡtimā’ī* (“the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party”), a transnational party founded in the first half of the nineteenth century, whose political program advocates the establishment of a Syrian nation that would include nowadays Syria, part of Saudi Arabia and parts of Iranian and Turkish territories⁵;

1 *tayār al-mustaqbal* (the “Future Movement”), “al-ra’īs” (“the president”), accessed on 3 March 2016, <http://almustaqbal.org/president-view>.

2 The Lebanese Forces, “About the Lebanese Forces”, accessed on 3 March 2016, <http://lebaneseforces.com/about.asp>.

3 U.S. Department of State: Diplomacy in Action, “Political Conditions”, accessed on 3 March, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/lebanon/191951.htm>.

4 Abisaab et al., *The Shi’ites of Lebanon*, 140-141.

5 SSNP, “*haḍā al-mawqa’*” (“[About] the website”), accessed on 3 March 2016, http://www.ssnp.com/new/about_ar.htm. In the specific, the SSNP’s website specifies the extent of the Syrian nation as follows: “We consider Syria to be that magnificent nation which extends from the Taurus mountains in the

and the Free Patriotic Movement (*al-tayār al-waṭanī al-ḥurr*), representing a largely Christian base⁶. Contrary to the March 14 alliance, the March 8 Alliance displays a strong anti-Western position⁷.

3.3 The Lebanese Media Landscape: a Brief Outline

To better contextualise the newspapers I have selected, and whose description will follow next, I present here a brief overview of the Lebanese media landscape. Due to a lack of official sources⁸, only an estimate of the number of the political outlets and their reach can be made. As of 2008, some 60 licensed political publications, including around ten dailies and other weekly, monthly and some instances of bi-monthly outlets, were circulating in Lebanon⁹. Later in the years 2010/2011, IREX, an international non-profit organisation, issued a report on the Lebanese printed media landscape which identified 16 dailies¹⁰. Moreover, in 2011 when 'Ilyās al-Murr relaunched *al-ḡumhūriyya*, the Lebanese outlet *The Daily Star* stated that it was “adding to more than a dozen other dailies published in Lebanon”¹¹. Thus, it is fair to imply that the number of dailies in circulation in Lebanon ranges between 12 and 16, at least four of which are foreign-language newspapers: the English *The Daily Star*; the French *L'Orient-Le Jour* and *Le Soir*, and another Armenian paper¹². Moreover, a database found on the internet, which lists all the Lebanese publications, counts as well 14 weeklies, and around 7 Arabic monthly outlets¹³.

All of the outlets are locally distributed, except three, *al-anwār*, *al-liwā'* and *al-ḥayāt*, that are

North, to the borders of the Arabian desert in the South; and from the Mediterranean Sea in the West to the Zagros mountains in the East”.

6 Abisaab et al., *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*, 140.

7 Dabbous, “Media With a Mission”, 719-720.

8 The Ministry of Information's website does provide a list of newspapers in circulation within the Lebanese territory. The list, though, a part from being incomplete and therefore unreliable, does not provide data on the number of copies averagely issued by the mentioned newspapers.

9 Lorenzo Trombetta, “Media Landscapes: Lebanon”, *European Journalism Center*, accessed on 4 March 2016, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/lebanon.

10 IREX, “Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Lebanon”, *Media Sustainability Index 2010/2011* (2012): 2.

11 The Daily Star, “First edition of Elias Murr's Al-Joumhouria newspaper hits Lebanon's newsstands”, accessed on 4 March 2016, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2011/Mar-01/121675-first-edition-of-elias-murrs-al-joumhouria-newspaper-hits-lebanons-newsstands.ashx>.

12 IREX, “Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Lebanon”, 2.

13 Mafhoum-Concept, “The Database for the Arab World News and Media”, accessed on 13 March 2016, <http://www.mafhoum.com/phpmedia/mediaFrameSet.php?selPrefix=NM &selLangueT=2&selDbChoose=false>.

distributed also in other countries of the Arab region, as well as Europe and the United States¹⁴. Because official data is not available, it is not possible to gauge the total circulation number of the newspapers. It is anyhow expected that, because of the relative large amount of licensed outlets circulating relative to such a small territory, no single newspaper can claim a high number of readers. Among the ones that are reported to be the most read in the country (namely, *al-balad*, *al-nahār*, and *al-safīr*, which I will describe more in detail soon, in addition to *al-diyār*, *al-aḥbār* and *al-mustaqbal*)¹⁵, self-proclaimed circulation numbers range between 20,000 and 50,000 copies.

Given the scant information and the difficulties I met in searching for the newspaper owners' religious confession, but more than enough details about their political stance, it seems that the political view of the outlet is more important than the religious affiliation. Such consideration is furthermore underpinned if we look at the religious confession of the papers that have the wider circulation. Among the most read outlets, none of them is owned by a Maronite Christian, Maronites being allegedly the most populous Lebanese religious group. Nevertheless, one of the dailies, namely *al-nahār*, is owned by a Christian family of Greek Orthodox confession. The majority of the other outlets are owned by Muslims, either of the Sunni or the *Shi'a* rite. *Al-diyār* and *al-safīr* are owned by prominent Lebanese figures whose religious confession is unknown. *Al-diyār* is the property of Charles Ayoub, a retired general, whose political stance is quite controversial, but that can be summarised as pro-March 8, but in opposition to *Miṣāl 'Awn*, the leader of the largest Christian party that supports the Hezbollah party¹⁶. It is, therefore probable, that Charles Ayoub together with *Ṭalāl Salmān*, owner of *al-safīr* are of *Shi'a* confession. On the other hand, the only surely Muslim Sunni outlet is *al-mustaqbal*, owned by the son of the assassinated prime minister *al-Harīri*, both of whom represent indeed the Muslim Sunni Lebanese religious community. Two of the outlets, namely *al-balad* and *al-aḥbār* are foreign-owned and therefore do not represent any religious sect.

14 See al-anwār, “2013 Media Data Advertising Rates”, accessed on 6 March 2016, <http://www.alanwar.com/alanwar2013/files/anwar%202013.pdf>, and al-liwā, “*kaifa tuwazzi‘u al-liwā*” (“How is al-liwā distributed”), accessed on 6 March 2016, <http://www.aliwaa.com/about-us.aspx>, and al-Monitor, “*al-ḥayāt*”, accessed on 6 March 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sources/alhayat>.

15 Trombetta, “Media Landscapes: Lebanon”, accessed on 6 March 2016, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/lebanon.

16 Wikileaks, “Lebanon: Print Media – Newspapers”, 25 March 2008, accessed on 6 December 2015, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html.

Always taking in consideration the outlets' ownership, the privatisation of the media, coupled with the effects of sectarianism, seems to have resulted in a quasi nepotistic system, whereby quite numerous publishing houses are owned by big business tycoons, or prominent political figures who tend to pass on the activity to other family members. In fact, frequently these media enterprises are run as family businesses. The daily *al-anwār*, for instance, is being issued by the Dar Assayad publishing house, owned by *Bassām Sa'īd Frayiha*, son of *Sa'īd Frayiha*, the founder of Dar Assayad¹⁷. Another example is the newspaper *al-mustaqbal*, originally launched by prime Minister *Rafīq al-Ḥarīri* and now owned by his son *Sa'ad al-Ḥarīri*¹⁸, in addition to the daily *al-ḡumhūriyya*. In other occasions, the founder of the outlet also acts as editor-in-chief, a position that is then inherited by other family members. In some instances more than one generation occupies the same position in the newspaper. One of the outlets I have selected, *al-nahār*, exemplifies such a practice.

Politically, since the polarisation of the Lebanese political arena after the assassination of prime minister *al-Ḥarīri* in 2005, broadly speaking, all of the daily outlets support either one of the two political coalitions. I was able to identify at least 8 dailies that support the March 14 alliance, namely *al-'amal*, *al-anwār*, *al-liwā'*, *al-mustaqbal*, *al-šarq*, *al-ḡumhūriyya* and *al-nahār*, while *al-aḥbār*, *al-diyār* and the weekly *al-'ahd* support the March 8 alliance. It is interesting to note that the only two newspapers that have a neutral stance and do not support either of the coalitions are the foreign-owned *al-balad* and *al-ḥayāt*. The latter, originally founded in the early 40s in Lebanon, ceased publication during the civil war and was subsequently bought by the Saudi prince *Ḥālid bin Sulṭān*¹⁹. On the other hand, the daily *al-aḥbār*, which indeed supports the March 8 coalition, is also completely foreign-owned, since it is of property of a group of businessmen from the Gulf. Thus, foreign ownership does not necessarily result in the newspapers' neutral stance vis-à-vis the Lebanese political scene, demonstrating that foreign actors can actually participate in Lebanese internal affairs through the publication of outlets in the Lebanese territory. Ownership, though, is not the only way according to which foreign actors are able to bear some influence on Lebanese politics. Patronisation is also an important element. In fact, at least two other outlets are

17 IREX, "Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Lebanon", 2.

18 Open Society Foundations, "Mapping Digital Media: Lebanon", a report by Open Society Foundations (15 March 2012), accessed on 6 March 2016, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/mapping-digital-media-lebanon>.

19 al-Monitor, "al-ḥayāt", accessed on 6 March 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sources/alhayat>.

financially supported by regional powers. *Al-safir* is one example, but also *al-anwār*, an outlet which is financially supported by the Gulf countries²⁰.

3.4 Method of Choice

Even though this study is based exclusively on non-digital newspapers, I accessed the media outlets via the internet. However, the journals that provide on-line access, present the exact same content as their paper counterparts. I focused on the printed media rather than exclusively on digital media because Internet penetration in Lebanon is still quite low and readers prefer the television or alternatively, indeed, paper outlets in order to inform themselves about the latest news²¹.

Since not all the newspapers that circulate in Lebanon are also present on the web, the primary condition I based my choice upon was that the outlets had to be fully accessible via the Internet. Moreover, I focused exclusively on Arabic-language newspapers as that is my area of interest. Two additional conditions for inclusion were that the newspaper had to present political cartoons in its editorial pages and had to feature an archive of past political cartoons published on the outlet. Furthermore, my other criteria was to sort out the newspapers according to their political stance. Thus, I decided to choose two newspapers that would support the March 8 Alliance; two newspapers that would support the March 14 Alliance; and one newspaper representing the neutral stance. In this way I can understand to what extent and how political affiliations influence the representation of the "West" in the cartoons. Additionally, my final condition was to choose newspapers that had a wider readership, in as much as it was easier to find information about these outlets. It is, therefore, not to be considered as a binding condition. In fact, two of the five newspapers that I eventually selected, namely *al-ǧumhūriyya* and *al-‘ahd* do not abide to the set criteria.

20 Wikileaks, "Lebanon: Print Media – Newspapers", 5 March 2008, accessed on 6 December 2015, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html.

21 Open Society Foundations, "Mapping Digital Media: Lebanon", accessed on 6 December 2015, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/mapping-digital-media-lebanon..>

One last remark concerns the type of newspapers I selected. In fact, I focused primarily on dailies, but I decided to include also one weekly, *al-‘ahd*, as it presents features of particular interest for the present research. First, it acts as a mouthpiece of the Hezbollah party and, therefore, exemplifies at best the effect of the encroachment of sectarianism on the Lebanese press. Second, differently than other newspapers, it betrays a specific ideological propaganda, that a part from asserting specific religious values, also produces a certain discourse on the "West". Since, furthermore, the use of the media constitutes a pivotal element in order to propagate Hezbollah’s beliefs, I chose to include its outlet in my study. Thus, using the above discussed criteria, I eventually gathered my collection of cartoons from five dailies: *al-balad*, *al-ḡumhūriyya*, *al-nahār*, *al-‘ahd* and *al-safīr*.

3.5 The Neutral Stance: *Al-balad*

Among the above mentioned dailies, *al-balad* is the only newspaper that does not have any clear political stance, or at least it is not officially affiliated to any specific political alliance²². Its relative neutral stance towards the Lebanese political battlefield has a twofold reason: on the one hand, it is a very recent addition to the Lebanese media environment (see Appendix I). Since its publication started after the civil war of 1975-1990, it has managed to disentangle itself from the sectarian divisions within the Lebanese society. Thus, it also could keep itself at a distance from the political polarisation that followed *al-Ḥarīri*'s assassination. On the other hand, being foreign-owned the daily consequently operates, to a certain extent, outside the Lebanese political arena. In general, the daily's focus is oriented on local, Lebanese news rather than on international or world events. *Al-balad*, constitutes therefore a perfect example of how the Lebanese press entangled in a system of patronisation and suffocated by financial constraints, cedes its "sovereignty" to foreign business corporations. While, generally speaking, foreign ownership of media outlets is not an issue in other countries, in the Lebanese case it gives ample possibility to foreign powers to influence local readership and thus have a foothold on Lebanese internal matters.

22 Wikileaks, "Lebanon: Print Media – Newspapers", 5 March 2008, accessed on 6 December 2015, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html.

Because it has a semi-tabloid form, it has attracted a large number of readers. Nevertheless, in recent years, especially after the political crisis that followed the assassination of prime minister *Rafiq al-Ḥarīrī*, its number of readers dropped²³. Since the political crisis determined a further encroachment of political affiliation on the media outlets, not choosing a clear political stance has eventually damaged the image of the newspaper. This confirms the double social contract theory exposed in the previous chapter, whereby the readers themselves protract the sectarian affiliation of the newspaper by seeking those dailies that display the same political ideology of the reader himself.

The four remaining newspapers do indeed support one of the two factions, representing their internal and geo-political concerns.

3.6 The Nationalist/Secular Stance: *Al-ḡumhūriyya*

Al-ḡumhūriyya was relaunched in 2011²⁴, with the stated aim to “defend Lebanon and the cause of freedom, justice and the state-building process”²⁵. The newspaper ideological view is quite interesting as it exemplifies the tension created by the divisions fostered by the institutionalisation of sectarianism and, at the same time, the constant search for an inclusive ideology that would provide a common ground for uniting all of the different ethnicities and religious communities.

Al-ḡumhūriyya tries to appeal to pan-arabism, rather than local nationalism as the ideological framework to break down the barriers of division. I here use the English term “pan-arabism”, but it constitutes an imprecise translation of the Arabic *qawmiyya*²⁶, which I would render more

23 Ibid.

24 Al Joumhouria News Corp, “al Joumhouria Newspaper”, accessed on 3 March 2016, <http://www.elias-murr.com/media.pdf>.

25 TreeAd, “Al Joumhouria”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://www.tread.com/tread/index/4/9/10#Al-Joumhouria>.

26 Actually the Arabic uses two terms to refer to nationalism, *qawmiyya* explained in the text, and *waṭaniyya* which

properly with “popular nationalism”. *Qawmiyya* refers in the specific to Arab nationalism, which posed the existence of an Arab nation uniting the whole of the Arab world into one political system. *Qawmiyya* claimed the existence of an Arab population that would share the same language, culture and historical traits. It is exactly through the concept of *qawmiyya* that *al-ğumhūriyya* tries to appeal to a wider audience than the Lebanese one. In fact, it states that “it hopes to serve as a platform, for all political trends, Arab and Lebanese, and tries to establish a dialogue between conflicting views”²⁷. By mentioning also the adjective “Arab”, it appeals to a transnational audience that identifies itself in a common “Arab Brotherhood”.

3.7 The Liberal Stance: *Al-nahār*

Sharing the same political affiliation of *al-ğumhūriyya*, but at the same time differing remarkably in ideological terms is the daily *al-nahār*. In fact, *al-nahār* does not display a nationalistic ideology, but on the contrary portrays marked sectarian inclinations, claiming to represent only the Greek Orthodox community²⁸. It lacks, therefore, that Arab nationalist appeal that *al-ğumhūriyya* displayed. *Al-nahār*, consequently, is more susceptible to Western influence²⁹. It seems to have a more active political role, as well, positioning itself as defender of public rights. It headed an ideological campaign against the then Lebanese president *Šihāb*, as I mentioned in chapter 1, and it was banned in Syria for its strong anti-Syrian position³⁰. Nonetheless, in general, it is considered to be a moderate liberal daily with quite a wide readership³¹.

3.8 *Al-safīr*'s Nationalist Anticolonial Ideology

Opposed to *al-ğumhūriyya* and *al-nahār* which back the March 14 Alliance are the other two

reflects nation-state bound nationalism.

27 Ibid.

28 Nada Ghannam, “Newspaper Ideology: a Critical Discourse Analysis of an Event published in Six Lebanese Newspapers,” a research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation, University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa, 2011), 16.

29 Al-Monitor, “*al-nahār*”, accessed on 3 March 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sources/annahar>.

30 Ibid.

31 Wikileaks, “Lebanon: Print Media – Newspapers”, 5 March 2008, accessed on 6 December 2015, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html.

outlets I chose: *al-safīr* and *al-‘ahd*, both sustaining the March 8 Alliance³². These newspapers have clear nationalistic undertones, both displaying on their website their stated “mission” in defence of the Arab Nation against the colonial ambitions of the "West". As the daily *al-ḡumhūriyya*, they also ideologically identify with Arab nationalism, but in a different way. *Al-ḡumhūriyya* makes an appeal to Arab and local nationalism in order to posit a common ideological ground on which to build a society that can overcome its internal conflicts. *Al-safīr* and *al-‘ahd*, instead, pose conflict as the uniting factor. Arab nationalism is in this sense understood as the common fight of the “oppressed” against the “oppressor”. Differently than *al-ḡumhūriyya*, their ideology is clearly rooted in the discourse of the resistance movements born during the period of the colonial mandates. These posited the independence of all Arab states against the occupation of Western powers in order to establish a unified Arab nation. According to this world view, Western interventionist policies nowadays, a reminder of the colonialist aims of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, are to be rejected completely as a form of neo-colonialism. It is this rejection and the fight it entails that constitutes the unifying element. However, *al-‘ahd*, being an outlet issued by the Islamist party Hezbollah, legitimises nationalism and the fight against the "West" through a religious discourse, while *al-safīr*'s stance is secular. I will discuss more in detail *al-‘ahd*'s ideology in the following pages. Now, I focus on *al-safīr*'s ideological position.

The pan-arab ideological traits of *al-safīr* are clearly visible in some of the statements present on its website. For instance, the newspaper affirms that it acts as “a voice for those who do not have a voice” (*ṣawt alladī-na lā ṣawt lahum*), representing once again the dichotomy between the voiceless Arab subaltern and the oppressor, identified with the “West”. Furthermore, the outlet states that “[...] (*al-safīr*)'s articles cover news concerning the Arab nation and therefore they are necessarily interested in reporting political, economic, social and cultural issues from an Arab perspective”³³. Moreover, an al-Monitor article described the daily's strength as being “political analysis with an Arab nationalist slant, including frequent criticism of Western governments for their perceived neo-colonialist attitudes towards the countries and people of the Middle East”³⁴.

32 Open Society Foundations, “Mapping Digital Media: Lebanon”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/mapping-digital-media-lebanon>.

33 *Al-safīr*, “*ḥawla al-safīr*”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://assafir.com/Static/About.aspx>

34 Al-Monitor, “*al-safīr*”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sources/assafir>.

At the same time, *al-safīr* displays a more local and contextualised nationalism. The same motto that appeared in its first publication is visible on the outlet's webpage, namely that it is “a Lebanese newspaper for the Arab nation and an Arab newspaper for the Lebanese” (*ġarīdat lubnān fī al-waṭan al-‘arabī wa ġarīdat al-waṭan al-‘arabī fī lubnān*). The term Arab is accompanied by “Lebanese”. Hence, it undermines the universality implied in the pan-arab nationalist ideology. In other words, *al-safīr* appeals to the “arabicity” of the Lebanese people. The legitimisation of Lebanon as a united nation-state, devoid of internal social and religious divisions, is ultimately acquired by identifying with the common Arab element. The ultimate goal of pan-arabism, hence, becomes the establishment not so much of a pan-arab nation, but of a legitimate Lebanese nation-state. In fact, the outlet also sees itself as part of a “national program” that wants to “shape public opinion according to what best serves the interest of the nation and its future”³⁵. The stress on the pan-arab ideology, implying a more universalist appeal that overcomes the sectarian nature of the Lebanese society, might account for the popularity of the newspaper. According to al-Monitor, it is considered to be “one of the leading Arabic language daily newspapers in Lebanon”³⁶.

3.9 The Nationalist Islamist Ideology of *Al-‘ahd*

Al-safīr shares and supports the political ideology of the weekly *al-‘ahd*, the first number of which was published in conjunction with the official establishment of the party of Hezbollah. It was therefore designed as the party's media outlet, through which Hezbollah could inform its followers about its activity, both from a political and a religious perspective³⁷.

Hence, *al-‘ahd*'s ideology cannot be understood without briefly explaining Hezbollah's role in the Lebanese society and its ideological stance. The organisation was founded in the 1980s by *Ḥasan Naṣrallah*, whose vocation was to follow religious studies. Therefore, he entered the Shi‘ite seminar of *Naṣraf*, in Iraq. *Naṣrallah* was born in a Shi‘ite Lebanese family and as such, since he was young, he deeply felt the discrimination and poverty that the Shi‘ite community was

35 *Al-safīr*, “*ḥawla al-safīr*”.

36 Al-Monitor, “*al-safīr*”.

37 Olfa Lamloum, “Hezbollah's Media: Political History in outline”, *Global Media and Communication*, 5 (2009): 356.

experiencing. In fact, the Shi'ites most suffered from the establishment of an independent Lebanese nation, separated from Syria, since it resulted in the marginalisation and consequent social alienation of the Shi'ite population. *Naṣrallah* understood the Shi'ites' plight and offered Islamism as a solution. In fact, at the time he was a pupil at *Naḡaf*, the Iraqi seminary was already incubating Islamist ideas. Some of the scholars, worried about the rise of nationalist and communist ideas, started to define political *Islām* as an alternative. They explicitly defied the secular stance proposed by ideologies imported from the foreign “West” and thus incapable of understanding the indigenous Muslim culture. Instead, they counter-proposed an Islamist political theory that posited a Muslim nation state as an alternative to Western secular nation states³⁸.

From *Naḡaf*, *Naṣrallah* brought Islamism to the Lebanese territories and reinterpreted it according to the Lebanese context, so that he could alleviate the Shi'ites' dire condition. Thus, he claimed that social justice could only be attained by living a pious life in conformity with the prescriptions of *Islām*. He also looked at Iran's supreme religious guide as a model to imitate, whose political and religious advice was always to be followed. However, *Nasrallah* never aimed at the establishment of a Muslim nation state as in Iran's case. Whereas Lebanon's population is multi-ethnic and multi-religious, Hezbollah's leader was aware that a Muslim government would not have been legitimised³⁹.

Another element that is central to *Naṣrallah*'s Islamist ideology is the fight against Israel, arisen as a consequence of Israel's occupation of Lebanon during the civil war. This also explains Hezbollah's anti-american position. The United States, in fact, publicly approved Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and were therefore considered as the enemy, supporting Israel's disruptive war on the Southern Lebanese territories. Hezbollah sees itself as leader of a Resistance Movement that leads the uprising of the displaced Shi'ite population under the banner of *Shi'a Islām*⁴⁰.

38 Abisaab et al., *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*, 76-154.

39 Lamloum, “Hezbollah's Media”, 126-154.

40 *Ibid.*, 126-154.

Thus, differently from *al-safīr*, *al-‘ahd* not only has a specific political view, but it also portrays a clear religious undertone, trying to educate the public opinion about its religious ideology. In fact, the scholar Lamoum describes *al-‘ahd* as “a tool of control, demarcation and mobilization”⁴¹ that was carefully constructed and organised by the “media branch” of Hezbollah, a specific unit of the party's organisational structure, that would take care of shaping the party's image amongst the wider public. The title of the newspaper itself refers to the pact made between God, the prophets and the Muslim *‘umma*, or “community”, a term that appears often in the newspaper's outline. Moreover, it openly affirms “that it is concerned with the cause of the Resistance (movement) and the interest of the oppressed”, with the specific aim of confronting “the Zionist occupation and the foreign enemy”. The newspaper appears, therefore, as a manifesto through which the discourse of the “oppressed” that has to resist the “hegemonic” tendencies of the “foreign enemy” is unfolded and carefully constructed⁴².

Now that I have described the data that constitutes the core subject of the present research, I will proceed in the next chapter with the analysis of the political cartoons themselves.

41 Ibid., 356.

42 *Al-‘ahd*, “*man naḥnu*”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://www.alahednews.com.lb/67631/148#.VmR1mlT2Oko>.

Chapter 4: Lebanese Political Cartoons and the Image of the “West”

4.1 Introduction

As chapter one and chapter two illustrated, the mass media is an arena contributing to the contestation and construction of the meaning of social reality. The mass media being an institutional part of the same society that it describes, it not only actively contributes to the signification of reality, but also “borrows” pre-existing “frames” from the surrounding dominant social and political systems sometimes presenting a reality that reflects official political discourses. The political cartoon being a rather fundamental tool utilised by the media in order to represent reality, also contributes to the reproduction or subversion of a certain predominant ideology.

In the particular context of Lebanon, plagued by sectarianism, but also featuring a vibrant and plural journalistic environment compared to other Arab countries, cartoons might reveal a spectrum of various representations, in the case of the present research, of the “West”. The analysis of a sample of Lebanese political cartoons has indeed the eventual aim to uncover what kind of discourses (political certainly, but also non-political) ultimately shape the image of the “West”.

Hence the present chapter will present an outline of my methodology of analysis followed by analysis itself, which will focus in particular on how the political cartoons I selected represent the “West”. However, first, one fundamental question has to be answered and which constitutes the starting point of this chapter: what is a political cartoon?

4.2 A Definition of the Political Cartoon

The political cartoon has European origins, as it developed from its more ancient predecessor, the caricature. The latter began to appear as an art in Italy during the Renaissance and comes from the Italian word “caricare”, namely “exaggerating”. In fact, the caricaturist would exaggerate the physical features of the face of a person in order to ridicule that person. From Italy, the newly discovered graphic art form spread to France and then the United Kingdom, developing with the passing of time into a “cartoon”¹ (a term that began to appear in nineteenth-century England) soon to be distinguished from caricature². This differentiation happened at the same time that the cartoon landed in the Ottoman Empire, where the Ottoman journal *Istanbul* published the first cartoon. In 1887, the cartoon appeared for the first time in Arabic newspapers thanks to the publications of the Egyptian *Ya‘qūb Şannū*³.

By the time the political cartoon was spreading in the Arab region, the theoretical distinction between the caricature and the cartoon was finalised. Such a differentiation is of course useful and I will come back to it in a moment. Nevertheless, we must not fall into the misconception that the one excludes the other. In fact, cartoonists frequently use caricatures to depict the protagonists of their cartoons.

That being said, it is nonetheless important to distinguish between the two. Being mainly concerned with “faces”, the caricature was individual in nature, but the cartoon would depict far more complicated scenes. As the primary aim of the cartoon is the representation of an event, it follows that, generally, multiple actors are being involved in a single scene, sometimes engaging in multiple actions. Moreover, the cartoonist frequently depicts more than one subsequent event or an entire story, so that the cartoon becomes more of a “group” representation, losing the

1 It is, perhaps, of interest to note that the Arabic term for “cartoon”, namely *karikatīr*, is a borrowing from the Italian “caricatura”. There is no specifically Arabic word for cartoon.

2 Ames Winslow, “Caricature and Cartoon”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 30 January, 2016, <http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/Ebchecked/topic/1347521/caricature-and-cartoon>.

3 Göçek, *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, 6-8.

individualistic aspect of the caricature.

Thus, a cartoon is defined as a “pictorial parody, almost invariably a multiply reproduced drawing, which by the devices of caricature, analogy, and ludicrous juxtaposition [...] sharpens the public view of a contemporary event, folkway, or political or social trend.”⁴ Contrary to a widely held conviction, moreover, cartoons are not always humorous, but might also be “positively savage”⁵. A feature that will often appear in the Lebanese cartoons, where, more often than not, the humorous side is hard to grasp.

The present research, however, is interested in a specific typology of cartoons, namely that of political cartoons. These are different from “plain” cartoons in two ways: the first and more obvious one is that political cartoons depict strictly political events and subjects, while cartoons in general display a variety of themes. The second and more important distinction is that a political cartoon while representing a political event, figure, ect., at the same time it comments on it, much in the same way as an opinion article or editorial article does. The comment of the political cartoon on a certain event may be the result of the cartoonist's own personal views and opinions on the subject he/she represents. However, political cartoons, just like the other elements of a newspaper, also reflect the opinion and political line of the editorial board. In this sense, a political cartoon is an “opinion” drawing, also called in the journalistic environment, “editorial cartoon”⁶.

In summary, the political cartoon can ultimately be described as “a drawing (often including caricature) made for the purpose of conveying editorial commentary on politics, politicians, and current events. [...] They are a primarily opinion-oriented medium and can generally be found on the editorial pages of newspapers and other journalistic outlets, whether in print or electronic form”⁷.

4 Winslow, “Caricature and Cartoon”.

5 Ibid.

6 Thomas Knieper, “Political cartoon”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 30 January, 2016, <http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/Ebchecked/topic/467582/political-cartoon>.

7 Ibid.

4.3 Theoretical Framework

The above characterisation of the political cartoon as a “commentary”, already points at an important consideration for the purpose of my research question. By executing the function of opinion-giving on a certain political issue, a cartoon can be interpreted as a type of media discourse. The consideration is furthermore underpinned by the recurrent practice of combining text and images when drawing a cartoon. The text, that can be placed within or outside the frame of the cartoon, has a triple function: it acts as a “commentary”, an “explanation” and a “revelation” of the image itself⁸. Of these, the explanatory function is particularly interesting. By explaining what is going on in the image, the text actively attributes a specific order of relations to the figures represented in the cartoon, defining a range of meaning from which the reader can interpret the cartoon itself⁹. In the case of this study, I interpret this function of the text as revelatory of a particular kind of relations, namely that of power. Thus, the cartoon, as any other type of literature, reveals how the dominant ideological structure defines the “other”, and in the case of the present research, how the Lebanese dominant ideological structure identifies the “West”.

Furthermore, the political cartoon being a political symbolic representation it “contribute[s] to the creation and contestation of meaning within a given context of power relations”¹⁰. Namely it can reproduce the prevailing power order, or it can counter it, as much as any other type of discourse¹¹. Being part of the media seen as “a site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality”¹², Lebanese cartoons become yet another tool through which local and regional social reality is defined and constructed.

Moreover, more than one research has defined editorial cartoons as “a form of non-oratorical

8 Martin J. Medhurst and Michael A. Desousa, “Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: a taxonomy of graphic discourse”, *Communication Monographs* 48 (1981), 217.

9 Ibid.

10 Diamond, “No Laughing Matter”, 252.

11 Ibid.

12 William A. Gamson and David Stuart, “Media Discourse as a Symbolic Contest: The Bomb in Political Cartoons” *Sociological Forum*, 7:1 (1992), 55.

discourse” aimed at persuading the audience of a certain message¹³. In this sense, images are understood to be a type of “visual rhetoric”, whereby visual art is seen much the same as language¹⁴. The way in which the cartoon is framed, what and how is depicted inside, in combination with the text written underneath or inside the image itself, all point at considering the discursive aspect of the cartoon. The cartoon should indeed be seen as a way to deliver a certain (political) message. Gamson and Stuart, for example, have pointed out how it is possible to understand the “discourse strategies” employed by the political authority by analysing cartoons¹⁵. Thus, once again, it is confirmed that through the analysis of the Lebanese cartoons, it would be possible to identify the dominant Lebanese discourses on the “West”.

So far, I have discussed the cartoon as image, symbolic representation and type of visual discourse. The final emphasis that I made on the discursive aspect of the cartoon, as vehicle of a specific political message, places the political cartoon also within the context of the so-called “framing” theories. In general, it seems that there is no unanimous definition of what “framing” means and different scholars have given rather diverse definitions. Nonetheless, there have been some efforts in recent scholarship to collect the various ideas that have been formulated on the matter, to arrive at a more precise conclusion of what framing means¹⁶.

Generally speaking, “frame” is a term used in communication and mass media studies to indicate how journalists, when reporting a news or an event in an article, organise the information according to a determined scheme. This scheme or “frame”, serves both to the journalist as a way to rapidly organise and systematise large amounts of information, and to the audience/reader as a way to make better sense of reality. In other words a frame is the structure that the author imposes on the article, so that the reader can interpret news in a meaningful way. Academic studies focused both on what factors contribute to the construction of a frame and on the effects of framing, namely how much media frames influence the way the reader perceives

13 See for example, Medhurst and Desousa, “Political Cartoons as a Rhetorical Form”, and Ray Morris, “Visual Rhetoric in Political Cartoons: A Structuralist Approach”, *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 8:3 (1993).

14 Morris, “Visual Rhetoric in Political Cartoons”, 196.

15 Gamson and Stuart, “Media Discourse as a Symbolic Contest”, 56.

16 James N. Druckman, “The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence”, *Political Behaviour*, 23:3 (2001), 225-230.

the news and, thus, to what extent it can manipulate the audience¹⁷.

Even though framing theories have been almost exclusively concerned with the composition of newspaper articles, their application in the context of the cartoons appears more than logical¹⁸. After all, by nature cartoons have to frame images of events, according to the point of view of the cartoonist. It is indeed the nature of the frames themselves and what (social, cultural, political, ideological) factors influenced these frames that I am interested in. In this sense, Gitlin's definition of media frames as a way "to 'naturalize' the social world apropos certain discursive conventions"¹⁹ and Pan and Kosicki identification of the function of these frames as "the center or core of a larger unit of public discourse"²⁰ seems to be the most pertinent in order to address the question of this research.

4.4 Method of Analysis

It is within this context that I have chosen to read the cartoons I have collected from the perspective of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis, as it was employed by Edward Said in particular. Foucault's approach determined a new way of analysing critical moments in history by describing primary textual resources, with the final aim of unmasking the order of power that stands behind the way discourse is used²¹. Even though academic research so far has tended to regard discourse mostly as a textual or spoken expression, with little regard to other forms of non-textual or non-rhetorical discourse, Foucault himself has also dealt with images. In fact, the scholar Cornelia Renggli highlighted how the visual element is often present in Foucault's works. According to her reading of Foucault's critical discourse analysis, "language and painting are strictly related to each other"²². Therefore, it would be fitting to apply this methodology on the

17 Ibid., 106-107.

18 For an example of the use of framing theories in the field of cartoon analysis see Josh Greenberg, "Framing and Temporality in Political Cartoons: A Critical Analysis of Visual News Discourse", *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 39:2 (2002).

19 Greenberg, "Framing and Temporality in Political Cartoons", 183.

20 Ibid.

21 See for example Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

22 Cornelia Renggli., "Selbstverständlichkeiten zum Ereignis machen: Eine Analyse von Sag- und Sichtbarkeitsverhältnissen nach Foucault", *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 8:2 (2007), accessed on 6

analysis of political cartoons, seen as a form both of visual and textual discourse.

On the other hand, Said's own insight was to apply Foucault's methodology, if indeed we can talk of methodology, to Western literature about the "mythical East" in order to expose a Western hegemonic discourse that functioned as an apology to European colonial ambitions, as discussed in the introduction. Since I am also dealing with a form of literature, Said's approach seems particularly fitting.

4.5 Analysis of the Lebanese Political Cartoons

One of the fundamental features of the cartoons is that they portray a specific event or series of events "at a single glance"²³. From this stems what Medhurst and Desousa describe as the enthymematic character of the cartoons: since the cartoonist has to condense an event or multiple events in a single framework, it is but unavoidable that different interpretative layers are hidden in the cartoon itself²⁴. The following analysis is an attempt to include most of the possible interpretations.

4.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Because cartoons refer to specific events or characters, it is easier to understand them if the reader is contemporary to the events depicted. That is why I have chosen to focus my attention on cartoons which refer to the period between September 2014 and March 2015. From a merely quantitative point of view, it appears evident that the representation of images linked to Europe or the US is not the main focus of the editorial cartoons. Of the total number of cartoons checked in all of five newspapers, namely 1,060, only about 80 cartoons displayed figures that could be linked in one way or the other to the "West". It can be inferred, therefore, that the Lebanese

December 2015, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/245>.

23 Medhurst and Desousa, "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form", 205.

24 Ibid., 220.

dailies are more concerned with local issues than with international ones in this period.

Before proceeding with a more in-depth analysis of a sample of cartoons I chose, I now provide a general overview of the cartoons I have been selecting during the course of my research (the reader is invited to see appendix II, III, IV, V, VI for a complete overview of the cartoons). In this way the reader will acquire a complete picture of what kind of topics or events, as well as what kind of symbolism the Lebanese cartoons considered for this thesis prefer to use when representing the “West”.

Al-balad's more commercial style might account for the great variety of topics displayed, compared to the other four newspapers. Of the thirty-seven cartoons on the “West”, most of them, namely twelve are dedicated to the fight against terrorism, three deal with the Syrian conflict (another common theme among the dailies), and four cartoons with Israel's war on Gaza and the UN's as well as the international community's tacit complicity facing it.

Of the five newspapers, *al-balad* is the only one that portrays events that do not focus on the US as the sole protagonist. For example, it is the only outlet that highlights the entrance of the United Kingdom and France in the international coalition, set up to carry out targeted air bombings on Islamic State's (IS)²⁵ facilities. Moreover, rather than emphasising the invasive military efforts in the region against the IS, the cartoons are more concerned with the international community's frustration and impossibility to act in front of the terrorist group's violence. Furthermore, it also depicts such an event as the willingness of Germany to dispose of the chemical weapons seized in Syria, whereas the rest of the dailies' cartoons that display events connected to the Syrian conflict, exclusively focus on the UN's or the US' diplomatic failures.

²⁵ In Arabic it is common to refer to the terrorist group with term *da'īš*, an acronym that stands for *al-dawla al-'islamiyya fī al-'irāq wa al-šām* or “the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”. That is why in English the group is sometimes referred to as ISIL. Another common acronym used in English is ISIS, or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or simply IS, the Islamic State. The latter is the preferred choice for the present research.

Al-balad distinguishes itself also because it demonstrates more awareness of the surrounding local and regional events. In fact, six cartoons portray the Lebanese political and humanitarian crisis, criticising US “helping” efforts to solve it. For example, one of the cartoons depicts American aid, supposedly of humanitarian nature, as constituted by weapon supplies. Focus on Western relations with other countries of the Arab region, such as Kerry's visit to Egypt, but also the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's alliance with the US, is also unique to this outlet. What is more notable in *al-balad*, though, is that it displays five cartoons that are not concerned directly with the Arab region's situation, showing a certain awareness of political events that take place outside of the Arab countries. Two comment on the outbreak of American and Russian hostilities, after the Russian government decided to militarily seize the formerly Ukrainian territory of Crimea. As for the other three cartoons, one is truly exceptional as it shows a European political event, namely the abdication of the king of Spain in favour of his son. The other two are more related to the Arab world, but are staged on a Western scenario. One displays Ban Ki Moon's efforts to solve the Syrian refugee crisis, while the other highlights the scandal of the CIA's use of torture as a method of interrogation against detainees between late 2001 and early 2009, as a way to fight the “war against terrorism”.

On the other hand, *al-‘ahd* displays a total of nine cartoons, where the only figure connected to the “West” is the United States and no other Western country is ever represented. Of these, two deal with the Syrian conflict, a theme that was also displayed in *al-balad*, but this time the focus is solely on the US, represented as having sabotaged the second round of the so-called Geneva talks. These were held indeed in Geneva as part of a peace process mediated by the United Nations and aimed at finding a solution to the civil conflict in Syria, started in 2011. One of the two cartoons, in fact, displays a huge knife, on which English characters formulate the word “USA”, trespassing a building on the front of which Arabic letters compose the word “Geneva 2”.

As *al-balad*, also *al-‘ahd*'s cartoonist depicted the “Ukrainian question” but framed it in an entirely different way, namely as a burning cigarette, carrying the name of *al-ġarb*, (“the ‘West’”), on an ashtray labelled as *’ūkrāynā*, “Ukraine”. Thus, it is the only outlet that explicitly uses the term of the “West”, and, by doing so, betrays Hezbollah's strong anti-imperialist ideology. Hence,

the frame used to portray the “West” also points at the ideology that produces such a frame. A second cartoon on the same topic, displays the American eagle and the Russian bear menacingly confronting each other. The other three cartoons display America's contradictory and ultimately failing policy in order to confront the IS.

Al-safir follows in *al-‘ahd*’s footsteps, regarding the choice of themes and the exclusive focus on the US, but has a wider range of cartoons. Nineteen cartoons display either a caricature of Barack Obama, or “US” helicopters and bombs, or the Statue of the Liberty. The choice of the themes does not differ much from the above mentioned newspapers: America's military interventions against IS appears in five cartoons, one of which hints also at the Russian participation in the airstrikes, an event that does not appear in the other outlets. Common themes that the other outlets also display are the Syrian conflict (topic of one cartoon) and Russian-American relations (also subject of one cartoon). Additionally the paper published two cartoons on America's targeting of the “security square”, a term indicating Hezbollah's neighbourhood in Lebanon; two cartoons focusing on Obama's red line policy and two referring to the Palestinian question, one of which explicitly criticises American acquiescence to Israeli illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories.

The only newspaper with a more humorous slant, focusing on topics that are not necessarily related to the Arab region, is *al-ǧumhuriyya*. Even though the cartoons with Western images are not many, only nine, the topics touched upon are more varied than the rest of the outlets. Four cartoons focus on terrorism, but with a more original slant. No drawing about bombings on the Arab region are shown, but irony is put on IS’ menace of conquering Rome (symbolised as an IS' tank “eating“ a plate of spaghetti), while Ban Ki Moon is portrayed bowling against a pin-shaped IS. Another more local theme involves one cartoon ironically commenting on the American call to stop sectarianism in Lebanon. The other two cartoons portray events that are not exclusively political and that took place in Europe: one centres on Obama's visit to the Pope in Rome and the other displays Germany's victory in the World Cup during the 2014 world football competition.

Last, the newspaper *al-nahār* published five cartoons whose characters symbolise the “West”: three deal with the fight against IS, two of which focus on the international community’s fear of the extremist group. As for the other two cartoons: one deals with the Palestinian question, criticising the world's indifference to the Palestinian suffering, while giving more than enough attention to Israel's problems; the other focuses on the French supply of weapons to the Lebanese government, differing from *al-balad* which accused, instead, the United States of selling weaponry in Lebanon.

4.5.2 Detailed Analysis of a Sample of Cartoons

To understand the frames and thereby the ideological, political and religious outlook of the five newspapers, I have selected five cartoons, one for each newspaper, displaying the same topic. The theme that I dubbed as “the fight against the IS”, turned out to be the most suitable one. Below follows a presentation and in-depth analysis of these five cartoons, starting with the daily *al-balad*.



Al-balad is the newspaper that portrays most cartoons on the theme of the fight against terrorism, probably due to the fact that the outlet displays more cartoons on the “West” than the other newspapers. In the cartoon displayed in figure 1, published on 11 September 2014, the figure of Obama, occupying most of the cartoon's frame is evidently recognisable. His right hand is stretched and his index finger, covered by a missile, is pointed upward. Black hooded vultures carrying the name of IS are flying in the sky towards the globe, symbolically represented in the act of spinning. Nevertheless, what the reader actually sees is a still picture of the Middle East and North Africa region, together with Russia and Europe. On the right top of the cartoon, the cartoonist has placed an explanatory text that helps the reader to understand what event is being represented: “From the inspirational speech of President Obama at the Congress”. Hence, the cartoonist refers to the address made by Obama to the Congress, calling for a more decisive strategy against the threat posed by the terrorist organisation of the IS. The strategy envisaged a more intense and targeted military intervention.

In this cartoon, hence, the “West” is clearly identified as the US in the figure of president Barak Obama. Both the symbol of the globe spinning on his finger and the size of the globe compared to the one of Obama (the small globe vs. the huge Barack Obama), evidently attribute to the US the power of controlling most of the world. At the same time, the cartoonist also criticises the superpower's policies towards defeating the IS: the vultures rushing to the globe indicate that the bombing policies of the US (symbolised by the missile) serve nothing but to spread the threat of terror in the world. Nonetheless, the United States are represented through the caricature of Obama, rather than the stylised symbols of Uncle Sam or the Eagle. Moreover, Barack Obama is depicted with a huge dazzling smile and dreamy eyes, attracting the sympathy of the reader. The cartoonist is, hence, criticising the United States' policies towards the Arab region, but still maintains a satirical tone and manages to portray the President's intentions in such a light that the reader is not brought to condemn it, but rather to laugh at it.

In general, *al-balad*'s cartoons tend to identify the “West” as the United States, preferring the use of caricatures, such as the one of Barack Obama (as seen in the above described cartoon), or the one of the Foreign Secretary of State John Kerry. International organisations as the NATO and

the UN are also frequently present, but their presence appears in text form, even though sometimes the caricature of the General Secretary of the United Nations is preferred. Another subject frequently present is the international community symbolised by a human figure, with a globe instead of the head. *Al-balad*'s representation of the “West” is usually quite critical of the interventionist policies of the US in the region, often portraying violent bombings. On the other hand, the international community is portrayed as a helpless and frustrated watcher, unable to take decisive action while terrorist organisations, mostly centred on the IS, continue to carry on their violent actions in the region.

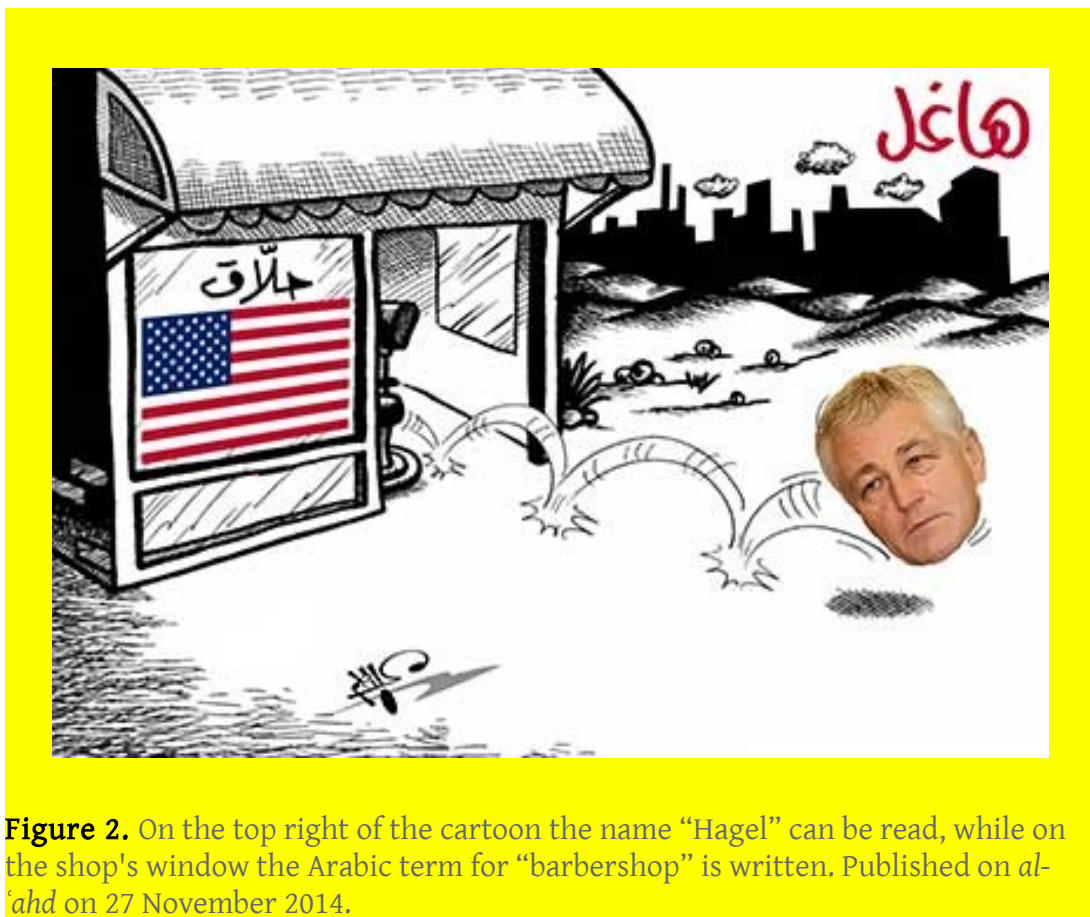


Figure 2. On the top right of the cartoon the name “Hagel” can be read, while on the shop's window the Arabic term for “barbershop” is written. Published on *al-'ahd* on 27 November 2014.

In the second cartoon (see figure 2 above) that I am going to discuss now, published by *al-'ahd*, the scene changes completely, although the core theme remains the same. Again, the US

represents the “West”. This time, however, it is not the face of the smiling Barack Obama, but the jumping head of the Secretary of Defense, Timothy Hagel, that occupies the centre of the scene. The latter is immediately recognisable both because his name figures in Arabic letters on the top right corner of the cartoon framework and because his head is not a drawn caricature, but a photo of his head, probably cut off from another magazine. This curious feature of preferring a photo to the use of a caricature, is perhaps explained by the intention of the cartoonist to be less humorous and more realistic. More precisely, Timothy Hagel's face is portrayed jumping from a shop that displays an America flag on its window, upon which the Arabic word *ḥallāq*, “barbershop”, can be read. The scene symbolically represents the voluntary resignation of Timothy Hagel as Secretary of Defense, because unable to deal with the pressure posed by finding the right policy in order to defeat the IS terrorist organisation.

It is interesting to note how the cartoonist of *al-‘ahd* frames the core theme, namely the fight against IS, in a completely different way than the cartoonist of *al-balad*. Both do represent the same actors: on the one side, the “West” symbolised by the US, and on the other side the IS. However, while *al-balad* maintains a satirical tone and portrays a powerful American state, *al-‘ahd* belittles the United States both through the event it chose to portray and through the stylistic choice. By depicting the resignation of Timothy Hagel and not the “inspirational speech” of a smiling Barack Obama, the cartoonist, in fact, chooses to show the weakness of the American policies towards the terrorist threat in the region. Another possible interpretation would be that the weakness of the US is highlighted by showing the American government from a simple barber, whose only dangerous weapon can be a razor. Certainly he can pose a certain threat, but he is harmless when confronted to the American weaponry capability.

The image of the US does not occupy much space of the cartoon's framework, as it is symbolised by the little head of a Hagel with a grim expression. The representation of the bouncing head, both symbolises the strength of terrorism and the impotence of American interventionist policies. Terrorism, whose presence in the scene can only be inferred, metaphorically managed to “decapitate” the Secretary of Defense, “beheaded” by an Arab force (notably represented by the use of the Arabic term of “barbershop”). Moreover, while the first

cartoon here described still maintained a satirical tone, in this second cartoon the funny element is lost as the reader is looking at a decapitation, even if only metaphorical. The cartoon does not call the amused judgement of the reader as in the first case, but it quite aggressively states an affirmation of a country's failure. In fact, in the first instance the final conclusion about the event displayed in the cartoon, is left to the reader. This can decide whether to take it as a criticism or as a joke. In the second case, a truth is affirmed: the weakness of the US when confronted with the threat of the IS.

In general *al-'ahd*'s cartoons portray the United States only through the symbols of Uncle Sam, the Eagle or the Statue of Liberty. The two instances in which a human figure does appear, once in the cartoon I just described above and another one where John Kerry appears, are used to highlight the weaknesses and the failing policies of the United States, clearly depicted as the enemy. Thus, while *al-balad* humanises the American character by choosing to represent human figures such as the president of the country or the Foreign Secretary of State, *al-'ahd* prefers to stylise the US using symbols, rather than caricatures. Most importantly, *al-'ahd* is the only newspaper that actually uses the term *al-ġarb*, the “West” in one of its cartoons, clearly following its stance as anti-imperialist newspaper.



Figure 3. “The United States fights against terrorism”, published on *al-safir* on 18 September 2014.

The third cartoon (see figure 3) that I am going to describe was published on the pages of *al-safir*. Similar to the cartoon from the daily *al-ahd*, it only represents one protagonist, namely the US. That the cartoon refers also to the IS may only be inferred by the textual inscription in the bottom right of the cartoon that recites: *al-wilāyāt al-muttaḥida tuḥāribu al-'irhāb*, namely “The United States fights against terrorism”. As in the previous cartoon, the focus is solely concentrated on the American actor, which is the sole character represented in the scene. While

its counterpart, the enemy that the United States is supposedly fighting, is not represented at all. The cartoon depicts the world-renown Uncle Sam pointing the finger towards the reader. This image was first used as a propaganda for military recruitment in the United States during the Second World War. It then became one of the national symbols of America, with obvious patriotic and nationalist undertones. Hence, differently from the cartoons I have analysed so far, the cartoonist of *al-safir* did not represent the United States through a human and familiar face, but through a symbol, de facto reducing the American discourse of the war against terror to the discourse of the fifties of the previous century on the war against the USSR and communism. The critique here again targets the United States, accused of constantly reproducing a war situation whether against communism and the USSR in the fifties and sixties or against terrorism in the two-thousands.

The cartoonist has faithfully reproduced the same image used during WWII: the same outfit, the same severe expression upon Uncle Sam's face and the same almost accusatory finger pointed at the reader. Except the notorious script "I Want You", the image resembles in every detail the recruitment propaganda spot used in the fifties. Only one significant change has been made by the cartoonist: Uncle Sam wears a black hood with holes for his eyes and mouth. Since I have noticed that concepts such as "terrorism" in cartoons are usually symbolised by a black hooded figure, one interpretation of this cartoon could be that the United States is criticised as being the reason behind the rise of IS in Iraq. According to this view, America's interventionist policies, exemplified for instance by the 2003 invasion of Iraq in order to topple Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and the subsequent chaos that left the national political authority unable to assert its legitimacy over the country, would have created a favourable situation for the birth of the IS. Thus, the United States would have only helped fostering terrorism, rather than destroying it, becoming a complicit to the growing encroachment of terrorism on the region. Moreover, by waging war against the IS, the US also becomes responsible of killing innocent civilians and taints itself of the same crimes the extremist group commits.

Thus, *al-safir* cartoon shares the same style of the one published in *al-'ahd*. Both decided to represent the US as the sole protagonist and both have a decisively critical position of America's

policies towards the region. The critical element has been made even more strident by eliminating the humorous element from the cartoons. By looking at them the reader is not made to smile, but in the first instance to acknowledge the US' failure in dealing with terrorism and in the second to accuse America of helping the growth of terrorism through its military activities in the region while being complicit to the same atrocities the terrorist organisation commits.

Generally speaking *al-safir*'s cartoons also identify the “West” as the United States, symbolised mostly as Uncle Sam or the Statue of Liberty. The newspaper's political stance, namely supporting Hezbollah's policies, is clearly evident as it often depicts the American encroachment on the “Security Square”, a term frequently used in reference to Hezbollah's main headquarters in Lebanon. Moreover, the same heavily critical tones that *al-‘ahd* displayed, transpire from the cartoons, frequently referring to the American double-standard policy of justifying military intervention with the excuse of bringing freedom.



On the other hand, the cartoonist of the daily *al-ǧumhuriyya* offers a completely different frame for the topic of the war on terrorism. Except *al-balad*, whose cartoon could be interpreted as having a humorous undertone, the other cartoons so far described were decisively serious. In the case of *al-ǧumhuriyya* though, the cartoonist has decided to give a more humorous point of view on the matter of the war on terrorism (see figure 4). Again the protagonist is solely the US, no other character has been drawn, but this time it is not being represented by the rolling head of the Minister of Defense, nor by the severe look of a black masked Uncle Sam. More in line with *al-balad*'s style, this cartoon portrays Barack Obama and his naive smile. Differently from *al-balad* though, the comedy is further displayed, on the one hand because the IS is not represented, thus leaving the reader only with Obama's smile. On the other hand, the president of the United States is drawn with a cowboy "costume", riding a horse while waving a lasso in his right hand. Thus Obama's declaration of intensifying the war on the terrorist organisation of the IS, underlined by the text written on the top right of the cartoon: "‘*ubāmā: sanuqaḏī ‘ala dā’iš*" (Obama: "we will extinguish IS"), is metaphorically represented by choosing a typically American cultural figure, the one of the cowboy. Irony is therefore created by juxtaposing American past history and culture on modern warfare, as well as by implying that since the war has been declared by the president, he himself would lead the attack and catch the enemy with his lasso. Moreover, the use of the "cowboy"'s cultural stereotype suggests also the impulsiveness of the United States' actions and its lack of a strategic plan when it comes to defeating the IS. Hence, Obama's response to the IS menace is to blindly hop on a horse and run towards the enemy, with the only weapon of the lasso in his hands. Thus, the cartoon highlights the backwardness of the US, convinced that it is possible to fight the IS as it were the local indigenous American population.

In fact, *al-ǧumhuriyya* is the only newspaper that aims at being humorous with its cartoons and that not only portrays the US, always represented by a smiling Obama (and not, for instance, as the severe Uncle Sam) but also Germany and Italy.



Figure 5: On the eagle “America”, on the top of the forefront door: “Entrance”, on the building: “Iraq” and on the top of rear door “exit”. Published on *al-nahār* on 11 September 2014.

The newspaper *al-nahār* instead, following the rest of the newspapers' lead, does not invite the reader to laugh. Again the funny element is lost and again the main and sole protagonist is the United States. In this cartoon though (see figure 5), neither Uncle Sam nor Barack Obama, nor Tom Hagel give their faces to symbolise the stars-and-stripes country, but an eagle. Like Uncle Sam, the eagle is a frequent symbol used in cartoons to represent America or the American constitution as it constitutes one of the United States' national symbols. Here the eagle, with a decisively evil-looking face, is seen rushing into a battered and still fuming building, evidently recently hit by a bomb. Even though the animal possesses the shape of an eagle, its movements closely resemble the attitude of a bull charging its target. The destroyed building carries the name of *al-irāq*, “Iraq”, symbolising the war-torn country. On the forefront wall, the open door has the

Arabic term for “entrance” written on it and the rear-wall door also stands open with the term “exit” upon it. From the rear door toward the forefront door, the footprints of the animal are visible on the ground. Thus, the cartoon wants to represent how as soon as the United States' government decided to withdraw its ground-troops from Iraq, after the military intervention that caused the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, it started to send its war aviation to carry on bomb strikes on the country in order to defeat the IS.

The point of view shown by this cartoon, hence, is more in line with the cartoons portrayed in *al-‘ahd* and *al-safīr*. Differently from the latter, though, in this case the cartoonist does not actually criticise American interventionist policies, but he makes simply an observation about what is happening. He states a “truism”, a fact as it merely is. The reader is not invited to judge or criticise, rather he or she is confronted with a reality.

4.6 Conclusion

Now that I have described in detail five cartoons, one for each newspaper I selected, I can draw my conclusion on the basis of the analysis I have made. My observations will also take into account the other cartoons I have collected.

Earlier in this chapter, during my theoretical considerations I stated that the cartoons, being one of the devices at disposition of the media, also help to shape and construct the surrounding social reality. This leads to considering the art of the cartoon as another type of discourse, the analysis of which would help identifying the dominant Lebanese discourses on the “West”. In fact, my analysis does reveal that the dominant Lebanese political discourse almost exclusively identifies the “West” with the United States and their invasive policies in the Arab region. The scarcity of representation of actors other than the United States and the underlying criticism of America’s policies toward the region, are two elements that are always present in the cartoons (with the exception of *al-ǧumhuriyya*). Moreover, the recurring themes that the cartoonists decide to depict in connection to the United States, be it the Syrian civil conflict, the war in Iraq, Israel’s

military aggression on Palestine and the lack of comparable attention also on other Western forces, e.g. France or the United Kingdom or Spain, that also participated in the airstrikes, points at a narrative constrained in a frame that gives to the US a disproportionate power in the region, becoming the only responsible of the spiral of violence engulfing the Arab countries. The reason behind such a framing of the “West”, certainly depends on the reality of frequent military interventions, often led by the United States. Focus on the Arab region torn by numerous wars is also understandable, given the reality on the ground. Nevertheless, the fact that the outlet *al-ğumhuriyya* gives space also to other Western realities, demonstrates that the cartoonists in fact choose to represent only one side of the medal.

Nonetheless, the degree of responsibility attributed to the United States and the perceived negative influence that such a perception of America produces depends in turn on the newspapers’ political stance. Thus, *al-balad* which politically does not align itself neither with the pro-Western March 14 alliance nor with the anti-Western March 8 coalition, maintains a certain degree of criticism against the American superpower. In particular it criticises the hypocritical attitude of the US, publicly claiming to represent a positive force that helps to solve the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon and throughout the region, while performing actions, such as the selling of weapons, that in reality worsen the crisis. However, *al-balad* distances itself from the other newspapers, because it gives equal responsibility also to political actors other than the American one. For example, it ridicules Saudi Arabia’s political alliance with the United States, thus balancing the critique against the “West” by showing awareness of hypocritical attitudes also within the Arab political scene. It also represents France’s and the United Kingdom’s military interventions in the Arab region and points at the international communities’ inability to act in front of the human tragedies, thus avoiding to exclusively blame the US for fostering violence. In other words, *al-balad* rather shapes the image of the “West” as an inactive “international community”, that generally symbolises Europe, sleeping in front of the tragedies happening in the Arab region. Thus, the “West” appears as an inert spectator rather than an enemy.

The pro-Western stance of *al-ğumhuriyya* and *al-nahār* is noticeable by the fewer cartoons produced on the “West” compared to the other newspapers. Thus, it seems that the topic is

almost avoided. On the other hand, the two newspapers differ in the representation of the “West”. *Al-ǧumhuriyya* produces a positive image of the US, in the sense that the American military interventions are not criticised, but ridiculed. Moreover, the outlet displays themes that are not connected with the on-going wars in the Arab region, but also relate to other events, such as Obama’s visit to the Pope or Germany’s victory in the world football competition. The outlet is the only one that appeals to cultural stereotypes in order to ridicule its target, an element that is generally absent in the cartoons of the other outlets. On the other hand, *al-nahār*’s cartoons represent the “West” in a similar way to *al-balad*. A certain criticism against America’s weakness when confronted with the threat of terrorism is palpable, but the US is not represented as the sole actor involved in the violence ranging in the Arab region. Blame on the international community’s passive attitude is also visible and other political actors, such as France, are also portrayed.

The anti-Western stance of *al-’ahd* and *al-safīr* results in the cartoons being used as propagandist tools that systematically portray only the US as an enemy. *Al-’ahd*’s cartoons aim to vilify America’s alleged power by showing its weakness and the disruptiveness of its military interventions. *Al-safīr* also exclusively represents the United States, accused of carrying on airstrikes on the Arab region under the pretext of bringing freedom. It appears clear, hence, that there is a differentiation in the representation of the “West” from the part of the cartoons depending on the political views of the newspapers themselves.

Another striking element is the lack of humour in the cartoons (with the notable exception of *al-ǧumhuriyya*). Being a satirical device, the cartoon can either be sharp and to the point or funny. In the Lebanese case, sharp criticism is often preferred to humour. This feature of the Lebanese cartoons might be due to many reasons. On the one hand, the choice of topics displayed, often connected to war scenes, probably does not encourage to see the humorous aspect of life. Nevertheless, the classical Arab cultural tradition points to the rich culture of Arab humour in the form of puns, humorous poems, funny anecdotes and vulgar jokes, often praised by the caliph himself²⁶. Why some aspects of this tradition did not surface in the Lebanese cartoons? One

26 Qassim, “Arab Political Cartoons”, 10-18.

possible answer lies in the modernist wave that hit the art of the cartoon in Turkey during the fifties and the sixties. At that time, cartoonists in Istanbul started to imitate the modern style of Steinberg, a cartoonist of the *New Yorker Style*, who revolutionised the world of the cartoons by eliminating words from the image as well as humour. At the same time the new generation of Turkish cartoonists was looking for a way to limit the contingent nature of the cartoons so that they could convey more universal values and ideals such as social justice²⁷. In other words, they began to see the cartoons as “politically conceived and motivated”²⁸. As a consequence they imitated Steinberg’s new style and stripped the cartoons of humour. In other words, “humour began to be seen as a problematic diversion (an auxiliary element of the cartoons, at best) incompatible with the demands of a politically motivated art”²⁹. Such a conception of the use of the cartoon might have influenced the Lebanese cartoonists who incorporated the new trend in their cartoons.

Last, an observation needs to be made on the usage of symbols within the cartoons. In fact, it is quite peculiar that the symbols deployed are the one Western, in particular American, culture devised. Figures as Uncle Sam and the Eagle representing the US, or the bear symbolising Russia, or again the humanoid world standing for the international communities, are all Western symbols which especially consolidated during the Cold War period. Rather than devising local symbols, the Lebanese newspapers have imported not only the graphic art of the cartoon, but also the symbolism that was used in European and American culture. The complete incorporation of Western symbols seems to betray a sort of “auto-orientalism”, as if local culture could not devise any alternative imaginary or discourse beyond what the “West” was offering, since the cartoon is an art that did not develop in an Arab context. This also means that the audience has unquestionably incorporated such symbols, since the cartoonist would not draw symbols to which the wider audience would not find a cultural resonance.

The explanation lies in historical facts. While cartoons were spreading in the Arab region as an indirect consequence of the Ottoman modernisation attempts, the term “cartoon” had just begun

27 Göçek, *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, 103-114.

28 *Ibid.*, 107

29 *Ibid.*, 113.

to be utilised in the United States and Europe. It is therefore probable that Arab cartoons completely imitated the development of Western symbols, as the end of the nineteenth century also marked a slightly more interconnected era. When, afterwards the cartoon's symbolism consolidated in the imagery that is familiar to everyone, it was during the fifties and sixties when the term globalisation was already being used to describe an impressive easiness of communication between the different countries of the world. By that time, the Lebanese population was already very familiar with European or American newspapers and there was, hence, no need to devise new symbols, where the average reader was already exposed to the Western ones.

Nonetheless, it is quite remarkable that the Lebanese cartoons did not follow the same stages as the development of Arab literary production during the *nahḍa* period, contemporary to the spread of the cartoon art in the Arab region. The peculiarity is even more striking considering that Beirut was considered as one of the cultural centres during the *nahḍa* period. The latter almost invariably involved three stages: after the Arab-European colonial encounter, Arab countries started to translate previously unknown types of literary production, such as the roman, into Arabic. Arab litterati, then, wrote their own opera, but heavily imitating Western models, until some of them started to rebel. According to these enlightened men the indiscriminate imitation of Western literature hid an inferiority complex toward the “West”, whereby Arab authors considered themselves incapable of producing their own original works. On the contrary, they called for more Arab cultural awareness and started to blend local centuries-long literary Arab tradition with the Western models of literature. The fact that the symbolism of the Lebanese cartoons did not follow the same process, but remained at the stage of almost blind incorporation of Western culture, seems to point to a reversal of the concept of orientalism, whereby the same ideological framework the “West” imposes on the Arab region, is in turn internalised by the “Orient” itself. This suspicion becomes even stronger if we consider, that *al-balad* in one of its cartoon uses the Western term of “Middle East” to refer to the Arab region.

5. Conclusion

In my introduction I have stated that the purpose of this research is to understand how the political cartoons present in the Lebanese newspapers represent the “West”. In particular, my aim was to find out whether there is a Lebanese political ideology that formulates a specific image of the “West” and, in case of an affirmative answer, what (political, social, cultural) factors influence such an ideology.

Because the media constitutes an integral part of modern societies, it has become a space where social reality is defined and constructed. At the same time, the press has been shaped and influenced by the social reality that surrounds it. Understanding Lebanon’s historical, social and political background served to have a comprehensive view of what elements shaped the Lebanese journalistic environment as it is today and therefore also the cartoons that are published in the newspapers. To such historical and social considerations followed a description of the historical development of the Lebanese press and the effect that the encroachment of sectarianism has on the press. My description of the Lebanese media landscape was then completed by chapter two, where I focus on the current Lebanese press environment.

Finally in chapter three, I laid down my methodological considerations and my eventual analysis of the cartoons published on the outlets of my choice. Borrowing the framing theory from communication and media studies unravelled how the Lebanese cartoons I analysed frame reality in such a way that the United States are undoubtedly seen as the main actor in the Arab region, responsible for most of the violence, terrorism and on-going war situations. The choice of topics displayed in the cartoons when representing the United States, in fact, almost exclusively relate to the tragic horror of the loss of human lives under the bombs of the Americans (in turn represented by Obama and by the symbols of Uncle Sam and the Eagle). Moreover, the abundant focus that is put on the surrounding conflicts in the region and their link to American policies, at times seen as invasive and at other times seen as hypocrite, coupled with a somehow lessened attention to local Lebanese events, betray an underlying pan-Arab ideology that crosses all the

outlets. Themes that recur again and again in the cartoons, such as the civil war in Syria, the targeted bombings on Iraq and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, point at a general concern for the Arab “brothers” suffering because of the actions of the foreign super-power. In this sense, Lebanese cartoons have shown to reflect a larger discourse conducted by the Arab elites, that ascribes the deplorable state of the so called Middle East in terms of “human development” (e.g. resiliency of autocracy and consequent lack of democracy, illiteracy and gender inequality) to the disruptiveness its colonial past and contemporary American aggressive policies in the region, which on more than once occasion even supported those very authoritarian regimes. In other words, the image of the “West” in the cartoons seems to support a more general view, common in Arab intellectual circles that explains the problems faced by the Arab region (in the case of the Lebanese cartoons, war, terrorism and violence in general) by posing “exclusive attention to the evils of colonialism and external intrigues”, fostering a “prevailing dependency paradigm in the Arab region” that resulted in nationalist and populist ideas “in which a critique of self, of patriarchy, of authoritarian polity and reaching out to the world have been lost to defensiveness, political self-indulgence and conspiracy theory”¹.

The Lebanese case, however, presents additional interesting features, thanks to its historical, political and social intricacies. The institutionalisation of sectarianism has in the long-run disrupted the central power, incapable or too weak to assert its control over the secessionist pushes from the part of the various sects, which also have political power. The situation escalated during the course of the civil war, when the central authority eventually fell apart. The breakdown of the government had a great impact on the Lebanese society, which reflected itself in the lack of an agreement on the successive president since the year 2014.

The fracture of the central authority and the division of power between different sects means that in the Lebanese case there is no longer any central political ideology. So, each nucleus of power that carved itself a space of influence in the Lebanese political arena produced different political ideologies. Such a multiplicity of ideologies ensured by the sectarian nature of the Lebanese society would explain the differences in the imagery of the “West” from the part of the

1 Asef Bayat, “Transforming the Arab World: The *Arab Human Development Report* and the Politics of Change”, *Development and Change FORUM* 2005, 36:6 (2005), 1230.

newspapers. In fact, my analysis has also revealed that the different political ideologies have produced different images of the “West”, bearing an influence on the extent of identification of the “West” with the American actor and the degree of responsibility that is assigned to it vis-à-vis the rising violence in the Arab region.

Thus, the politically neutral stance vis-à-vis the “West”, has resulted in a shift of attention from the US to other Western countries in the cartoons, while at the same time emphasising the accountability of the international community at large when it comes to the raging conflicts in the Arab region. The pro-Western stance either follows the imagery of the cartoons published in neutral outlets or show an openly and unique humorous twist, removing the focus from war scenes and violence, and displaying more peaceful topics. Cartoons displayed in pro-Western outlets are the only that represent events that happen outside the Arab region. On the other hand, the anti-Western stance uses heavily critical tones, accusing the US, the only Western figure that appears in these cartoons, either of supporting freedom by airstrikes and consequent loss of innocent lives or of supporting terrorism through the same violent actions just described. According to this view, America is the enemy that has to be demeaned when represented in the cartoons. Moreover, one of the anti-Western newspapers shows the use of a terminology and an imagery that poses a clear dichotomy between the “West” and the oppressed Arab people.

The political and social factors just described are not the only ones that influence the representation of the “West” in the cartoons. Cultural influences have to be taken into account as well. In particular, the lack of a symbolism in the Lebanese cartoons that reflects a more local cultural tradition and, conversely, the exclusive use of symbols identical to the ones used in Western political cartoons reflect a sort of reversed orientalism.

The lack of humour, as well, can be traced back to the younger generation of Turkish cartoonists of the fifties and sixties, in search of a way to use cartoons in order to leave less contingent and more universal political ideas. The Lebanese cartoons’ sharp critical attitude, thus, could have come from the imitation of the Turkish cartoonist. On the other hand, this

dominant feature of the Lebanese cartoons might also suggest another route, namely that of the Soviet cultural influence, as hinted in my conclusive remarks in chapter three. The Soviet Union, in fact, used the cartoons specifically as propaganda to eulogise Russia's ideological and military power and systematically denigrate its enemies². Of course, during the Cold War, the United States were a favourite target of Soviet cartoonists. The way these framed the US presents some points in common with the cartoons I analysed, e.g. the critique of America's hypocritical attitude and the exposure of its weaknesses.

Such a comparison is, furthermore, substantiated when considering that, historically, the Soviet Union had a strong impact on Arab states, especially during the 50s and 60s when Arab socialist regimes had close ties with the U.S.S.R.. Moreover, communist ideas took rapidly hold in many Arab countries and, in particular, found fertile ground in the alienated Lebanese Shiite population. It was also in order to counteract the lure of this Western, therefore foreign, ideology that *Shi'a* political *Islām* aroused from the *Nağaf* seminary in Iraq and landed in Lebanese territory. In fact, the birth of Islamist organisations, such as that of Hezbollah, in part resulted as a reaction to the fast spread of secular communism among the *Shi'ia* youth that, sometimes, also took root among previous religious scholars.

At the same time, *Naşrallah*, the founder of Hezbollah, co-opted some aspects of the discourses of the leftist Shiites. Arab Communism and Islamism, therefore, even though opposing each other, shared the same political ideas: eventually, both recognised the importance of Arab nationalism as armed struggle against colonial powers, emphasised the resistance against Israel, and stressed the need of structural reforms that would finally actualise social justice³. The ideological intersections between the Lebanese Shiites ideology, communism and Islamism, as well as the ties that Lebanese communist parties once formed with the Soviet Union, sometimes resulting also in cultural exchanges, all point at a possible Soviet channel of influence, traceable in the ways Lebanese cartoons frame the United States. Due to the limited space of the present research, a full comparison between Soviet and Lebanese cartoons could not be executed. However, it is

2 See Stephen N. Morris, "The Sharp Weapon of Soviet Laughter: Boris Efimov and Visual Humour", *Russian Literature*, 74:1/2 (2013), 31-35.

3 See Abisaab et al., *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*.

suggested that further academic research should be carried on. A deeper investigation in the Soviet influence on Lebanese cartoons, could give more useful insights in what factors influenced the frames used by the Lebanese cartoonists to portray the “West”.

Appendix I: A Factsheet of the Five Lebanese Newspapers



<i>Title of the Newspaper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Al-balad</i> (“The Nation”), officially <i>ṣada al-balad</i> (“Echo of the Nation”)
<i>Address of the Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.albaladonline.com
<i>Type</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily
<i>Date of Foundation¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 December 2003
<i>Ownership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The publishing house Al-Wataniyya Group², property of al-Waset International, a Kuwaiti oil brokering company³
<i>Languages Featured on the Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arabic
<i>Circulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 52,000 copies in 2003⁴, subsequently decreased
<i>Political Affiliation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neutral

1 Open Society Foundations, “Mapping Digital Media: Lebanon”.

2 Middle East Publishers' Association, “Profile of MEPA member: al-Wataniya Group of Companies for Publishing and Media Development”, 14 (2007), accessed on 6 December 2015, http://www.mepa.cc/Pdf/en/mb_may2007.pdf.

3 Wikileaks, “Lebanon: Print Media”, accessed on 6 December 2015, [https://www.wikileakAl-ġumhūriyya \(“The Republic”\) and al-nahār ks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html](https://www.wikileakAl-ġumhūriyya (“The Republic”) and al-nahār ks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html).

4 Ibid.



<i>Title of the Newspaper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Al-nahār</i> (“The Day”)
<i>Address of the Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.annahar.com
<i>Type</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily
<i>Date of Foundation</i> ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 August 1933
<i>Ownership</i> ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founded by <i>Ġibrān Tuwayni</i>, owner and editor-in-chief• After his death, his position was inherited by his son <i>Ġassān Tuwayni</i>, followed by his homonymous grandson, <i>Ġibrān Tuwayni</i>• The administrative council of the newspaper is now presided by <i>Nayla Tuwayni</i>• The <i>Tuwayni</i> family is of Greek Orthodox confession
<i>Languages featured on the website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arabic, English, French
<i>Circulation</i> ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 40,000 copies per day
<i>Political Affiliation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro-March 14

5 *Al-nahār*, “*man naḥnu*”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://www.annahar.com/about>.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

الجمهورية

Title of the Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A-ḡumhūriyya (“The Republic”)
Address of the Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.aljournhouria.com
Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily
Date of Foundation ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1924• Publication ceases during the civil war (1976-1991)• Relaunch in 2011
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2011 the then Lebanese Defence Minister 'Ilyās al-Murr bought and relaunched the newspaper• Now published by the Lebanese media group TreeAd, property of the al-Murr family⁹• the al-Murr family is of Greek Orthodox confession¹⁰
Languages Featured on the Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arabic
Circulation ¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7,000/8,000 as of 2011
Political Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro-March 14

8 Al Journhouria News Corp, “Al Journhouria Newspaper”, accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://www.elias-murr.com/media.pdf>.

9 TreeAd, “Al Journhouria”.

10 Ziad K. Abdelnour, “Dossier: Michel and Elias Murr”, *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 5:2, (2003), accessed on 7 December 2015, http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0306_ld.htm.

11 Le Commerce du Levant, “al-Journhouria: un nouveau quotidien libanais”, accessed on 13 March 2016, <http://www.lecommercedulevant.com/affaires/m%C3%A9dias-et-pub/none-liban/al-journhouria-un-nouveau-quotidien-libanais/18502>.



Title of the Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al-safir (“The Ambassador”)
Address of the Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.assafir.com
Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily
Date of foundation ¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 March 1974
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded by prominent Lebanese journalist and, since 2002, member of the Lebanese Press Syndicate, Ṭalāl Salmān, owner and nowadays editor-in-chief¹³. • Ṭalāl Salmān is probably of Muslim Shiite confession, since he was born and raised in a village in <i>al-Biqā’a</i> region¹⁴ • Ṭalāl Salmān was funded initially by Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organisation • After 1985, Libya ceased the financial aid. Subsequently the paper was funded by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar • Rafīq al-Ḥarīri took over the patronisation of the newspaper¹⁵ • Now owned by the Dar al-Safir publishing house¹⁶
Languages featured on the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabic, English, French
Circulation ¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45,000 copies per day as of 2012
Political affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-March 8

12 *al-safir*, “ḥawla al-safir”.

13 Ibid. and Al Arabiya, “Ṭalāl Salmān,” accessed on 12 March 2016, <http://www.alarabiya.net/authors/%D8%B7%D8%B7%D9%84/%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86.html>.

14 The majority of the Lebanese Shiite population resides in the South of Lebanon and in *al-Biqā’a* region. Al Arabiya, “Ṭalāl Salmān,” accessed on 12 March 2016, <http://www.alarabiya.net/authors/%D8%B7%D8%B7%D9%84/%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86.html>.

15 Wikileaks, “Lebanon: Print Media – Newspapers,” 5 March 2008, accessed on 6 December 2015, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BEIRUT334_a.html.

16 Menassat, “Media landscape: Written press (newspapers),” accessed on 12 March 2016, <http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/media-landscape/media-landscape-8>.

17 Open Society Foundation, “Mapping Digital Media: Lebanon”, 20.



<i>Title of the Newspaper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Al-'ahd</i> (“the Oath”) • In 2001 the newspaper changed the name to <i>al-'intiḳād</i> (“Criticism”)¹⁸, but the online version still features its original name
<i>Address of the Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.alahednews.com.lb
<i>Type</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly
<i>Date of Foundation</i> ¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 March 1984
<i>Ownership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded and owned by the Hezbollah party, which claims to represent the Lebanese <i>Shi'a</i> community²⁰
<i>Languages Featured on the Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabic, English (www.english.alahednews.com.lb)
<i>Circulation</i> ²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32,000 as of the early 2000s
<i>Political Affiliation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-March 8

18 Joseph Alagha, *Hezbollah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications – Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 193.

19 *al-safir*, “*ḥawla al-safir*,” accessed on 6 December 2015, <http://assafir.com/Static/About.aspx>.

20 Lamloum, “Hezbollah’s Media”, 356.

21 Press Reference, “Lebanon Press, Media, TV, Radio, Newspapers”, <http://www.pressreference.com/Ky-Ma/Lebanon.html>, accessed on 13 March 2016.

Appendix II: Al-balad's Cartoons



On the newspaper: “Germany agrees to destroy Syrian chemical weapons in its territory”; the heading reads: “Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons”. In the bubble: “May God save Merkel from another mistake!”. Published on *al-balad* on 10 January 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “The Syrian coalition grants Bank Ki Moon some time to withdraw the invitation of Iran to Geneva 2”. On the burning document: “Iran’s invitation”. Published on *al-balad* on 21 January 2014.



On the top right of the cartoon: “Syrian negotiations enter in a quagmire on sixth day”. On the document: “Discussion of the Geneva 1 statement: paragraph paragraph”. On the right missile: “The opposition”, on the left missile: “The regime”. Published on *al-balad* on 30 January 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Russia suggests to join efforts between American and Russian diplomats to support the two Syrian factions.” In the bubble: “Check...”. On the chess figures from right to left: “Russia”, “The opposition”, “The regime” and “America”. Published on *al-balad* on 11 February 2014

Note: the cartoonist plays with the Arabic term *kuš* (written in the bubbles) which carries both the meaning of “check” as in “checkmate” and “step back”.



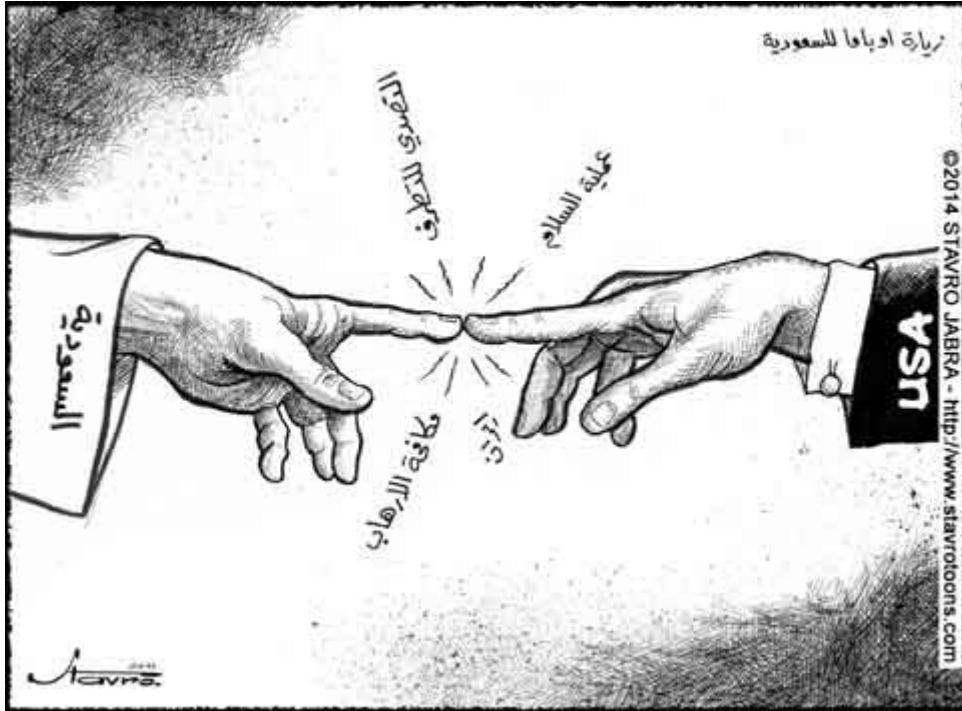
The “International Community” chases “Terrorism” with a portable Tour Eiffel, on which “Liban” is written. On the bottom of the cartoon the phrase recites: “The International Support Group for Lebanon meets in Paris”.
Published on *al-balad* 5 March 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “The International Support Group for Lebanon: it is necessary that everybody commits to the *Ba’abdā* declaration”. The document held by the right hand of the character carries the header: “The *Ba’abdā* declaration”. Published on *al-balad* on 6 March 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Russia and the USA did not reach an agreement on Ukraine.” Published on *al-balad* on 7 March 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “The visit of Obama to Saudi Arabia.” On the left hand: “Saudi Arabia”, on the right hand the “USA”. The words: “Iran” and “Peace process” respectively underneath and above the line formed by the two fingers touching each other are written close to the “USA hand”; “Standing up against terrorism” and “Fight against terrorism” are the words written close to the “Saudi hand”. Published on *al-balad* on 29 March 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: "Russia categorically opposes Ukraina joining the NATO". On the right arm: "Russia". Published on *al-balad* on 15 May 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “the King of Spain, Carlos, abdicates in favour of Philip”. On the crown: “Spain”; on the arm on the right: “Philip”. Published on *al-balad* on 3 June 2014.



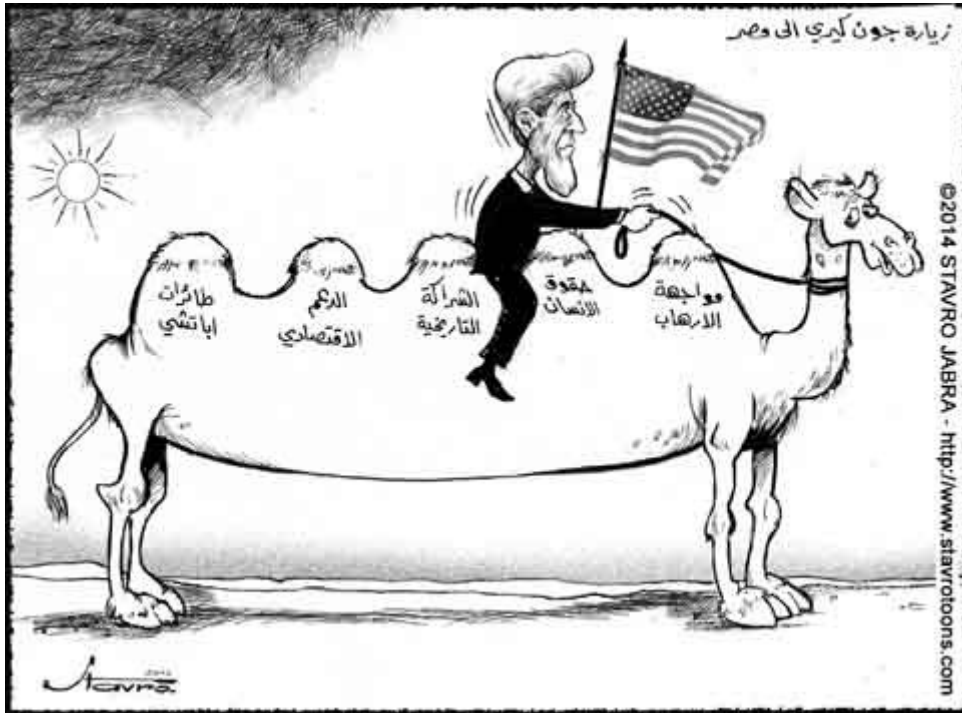
On the top of the cartoon: “The Foreign Minister, John Kerry, arrived today in Beirut”. On the bottle: “The presidency” and underneath: “The Republic of Lebanon”. Tammām Salām warns Kerry: “pull, but be careful not to harm her”. Published on *al-balad* on 4 June 2014.



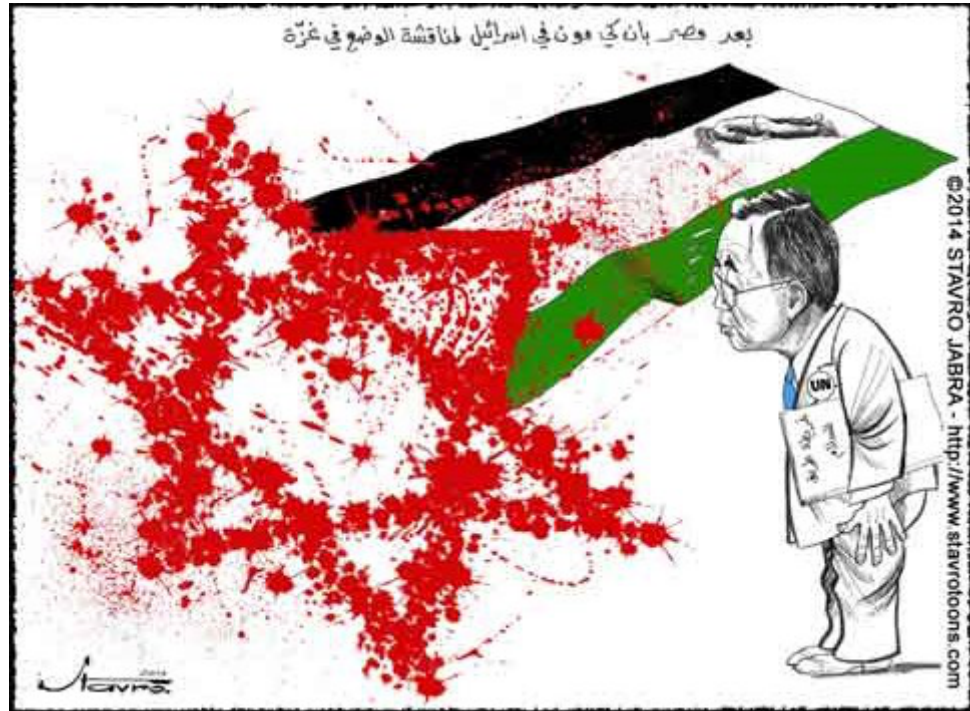
On the top of the cartoon: “The president of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, in Beirut”. On the shield: “the president of the World Bank”. On the paper pinned to the spear: “a plan to face (the problem) of Syrian refugees”. On the bottom of the cartoon: “Don Chisciotte”. Published on *al-balad* on 5 June 2014.



“Help...”. Published on *al-balad* on 18 June 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “John Kerry visits Egypt”. On the humps of the camel, from right to left respectively: “The fight against terrorism”, “Human rights”, “Historic partnership”, “Economic support”, “Apache helicopters”. Published on *al-balad* on 23 June 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “After Egypt, Ban Ki Moon (visits) Israel to discuss the situation in Gaza”. On the paper: “The roadmap for peace”. Published on *al-balad* on 23 July 2014.



On the jacket of the character: “The world’s conscience”. On the map in the character’s hands: “The roadmap”. Published on *al-balad* on 24 July 2014.



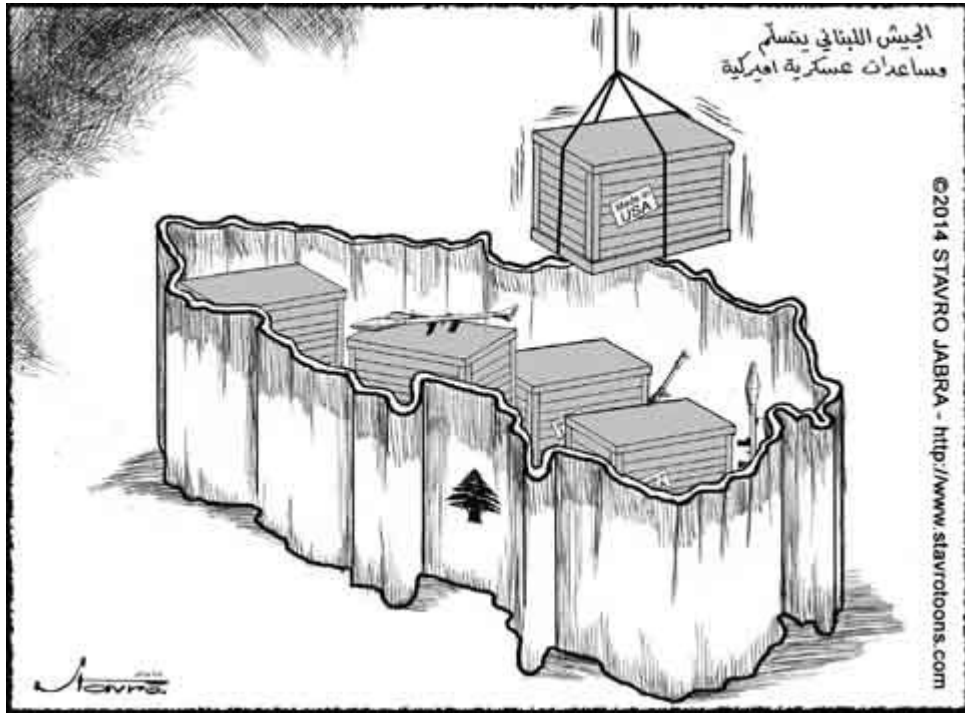
On the jacket of the character: “The world’s conscience”. On the shield on the left: “Gaza”. Published on *al-balad* on 1 August 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “American air forces execute localised attacks on the IS in Iraq”. On the sign: “Mosul” and on the tent: “IS”. Published on *al-balad* on 19 August 2014.



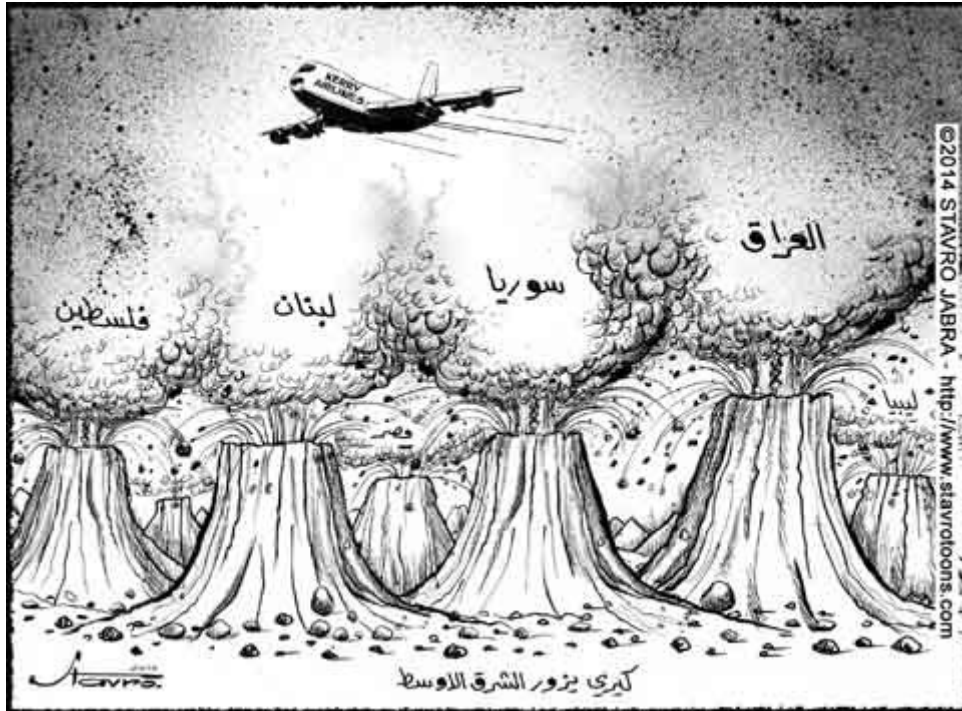
On the top of the cartoon: “Video of the assassination of the American journalist, James Foley”. On the character: “The international community”. Published on *al-balad* on 21 August 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “The Lebanese army welcomes aid sent from the American army”. On the box: “Made in USA”. Published on *al-balad* on 30 August 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: "Nato unanimously condemns the crimes committed by IS". On the bomb: "terrorism". Published on *al-balad* on 06 September 2014.



On the bottom: "Kerry visits the Middle East"; on the volcanoes from right to left: "Iraq", "Syria", "Lebanon", "Palestine". Published on *al-balad* on 10 September 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Obama sends a letter to the Congress requesting to arm the Syrian opposition”. On the paper: “Arming the Syrian opposition”. Published on *al-balad* on 11 September 2014.



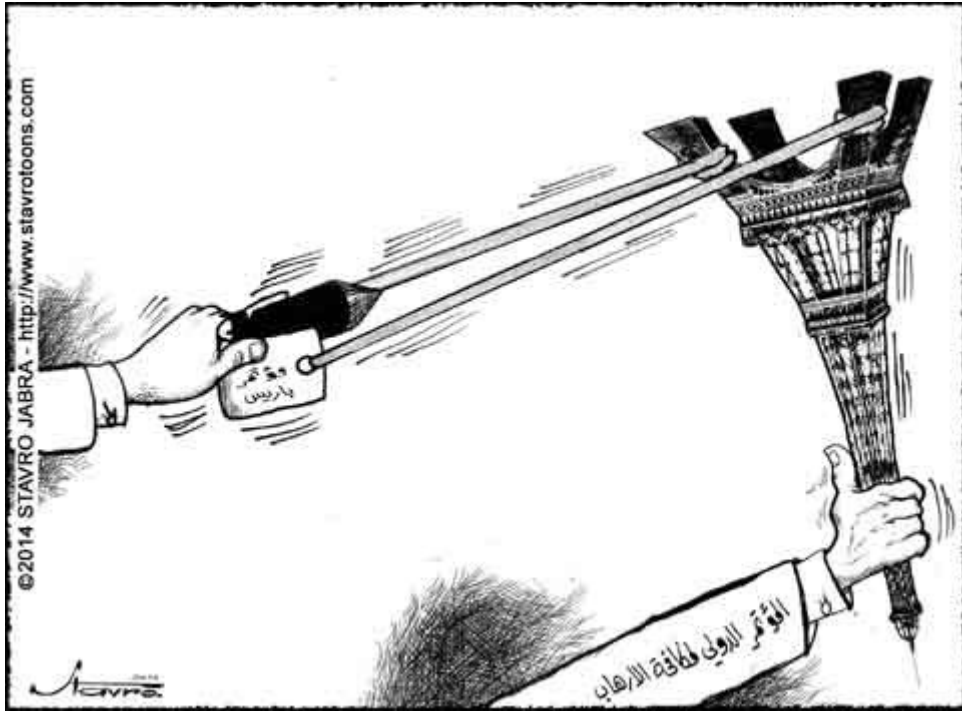
On the top of the cartoon: “The Jeddah congress on terrorism”. Published on *al-balad* on 12 September 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Hollande in Iraq”, followed by the comment: “Don Chisciotte joins the war against IS”. On the shield: “The Republic of France”. On the windmill: “The Islamic State”. Published on *al-balad* on 13 September 2014.



Published on *al-balad* on 14 September 2014.



On the right arm: “International conference on the fight against terrorism”.
On the left arm: “the Paris Conference”. Published on *al-balad* 16 September 2014.



In the bubble: “Fighting ISIS”. The character hanging from the bubble represents terrorism. Published on *al-balad* on 25 September 2014.

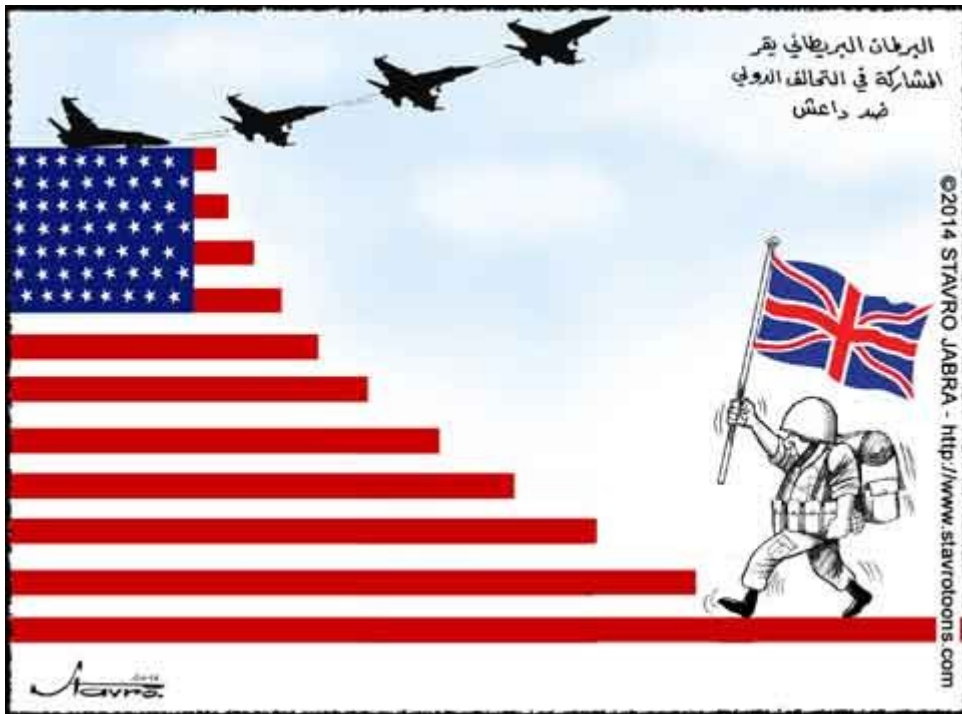


“The ‘infedelisers’”. Published on *al-balad* on 26 September 2014.



On the top right of the cartoon: “*Salām* meets Kerry and *Bāsīl* meets *al-Mu'allim* in New York”. *Salām* says: Welcome my master” and *Bāsīl* say: “Welcome to *al-Mu'allim*”. Published on *al-balad* on 27 September 2014.

Note: the cartoonist makes a pun on Syrian Foreign Minister’s surname, *al-Mu'allim*, which in Arabic literally means “master, teacher”.



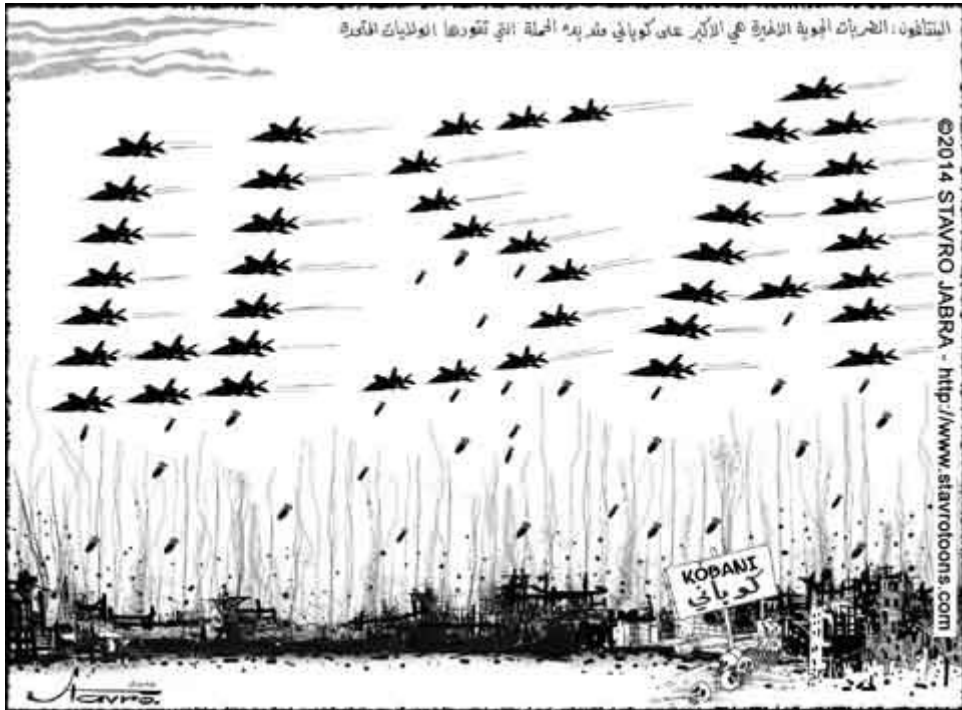
On the top of the cartoon: "The British parliament decides to join the international coalition against IS". Published on *al-balad* on 28 September 2014.



On the black figure on the left, “Terrorism”. “Terrorism” says: “Greet me the International Alliance”. Published on *al-balad* on 11 October 2014.



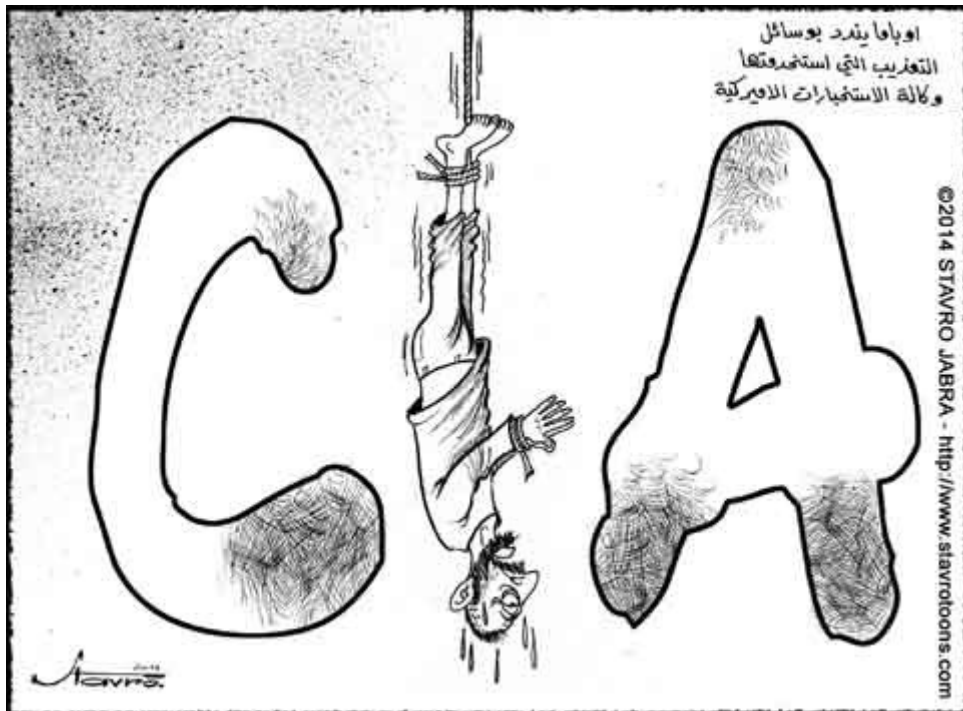
On the top of the cartoon: “Ban Ki Moon affirms that the Gaza Strip is still a power keg.” In the bubble: “Gaza”. On the document: “Conference for the reconstruction of Gaza in Cairo”. Published on *al-balad* on 13 October 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “The Pentagon: the latest American airstrikes on Kobani were the largest since the US-lead coalition started to bomb Syria”.
Published on *al-balad* on 15 October 2014



On the right of the cartoon: “The international alliance’s airplanes bomb IS’ locations in Kobani”. Published on *al-balad* on 22 October 2014.

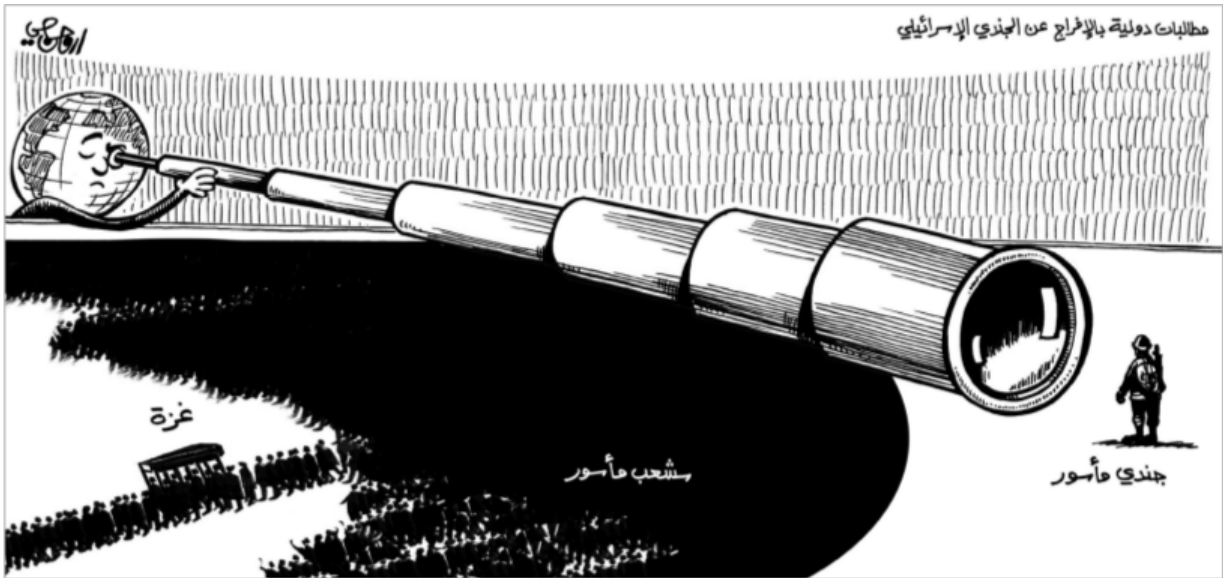


On the top of the cartoon: “Obama condemns the means of torture used by the American secret service agency”. Published on *al-balad* on 10 December 2014.

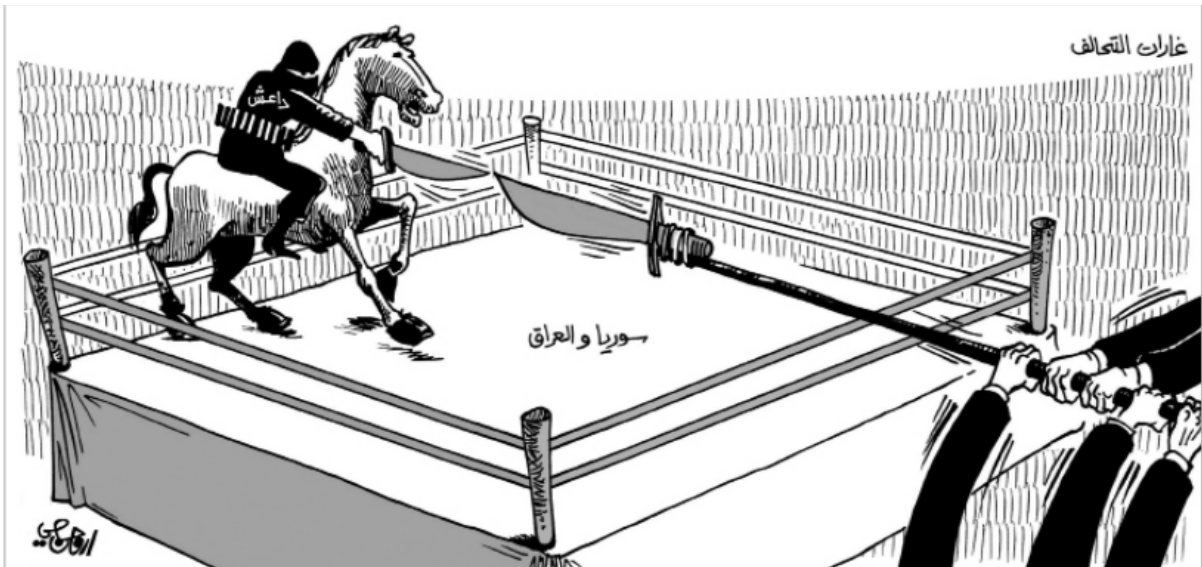
Appendix III: *Al-nahār*'s Cartoons



On the screen of the television: “Sarkozy arrested on charges of corruption and financial exploitation”. On the jacket of the character: The politicians”. In the bubble: “What does ‘arrested’ mean?”. Published on *al-nahār* on 3 July 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “International requests to release the Israeli soldier”. From right to left respectively: “The captive soldier”, “The captive population” and “Gaza”. Published on *al-nahār* on 2 September 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Raids of the coalition”. In the centre of the cartoon: “Syria and Iraq”. On the black rider “IS”. Published on *al-nahār* on 24 September 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “*Salām* in front of the General Assembly of the United Nations”. On the hand-cart: “The Lebanese files”. Published on *al-nahār* on 27 September 2014.

Appendix IV: Al-jumhūriyya’s Cartoons



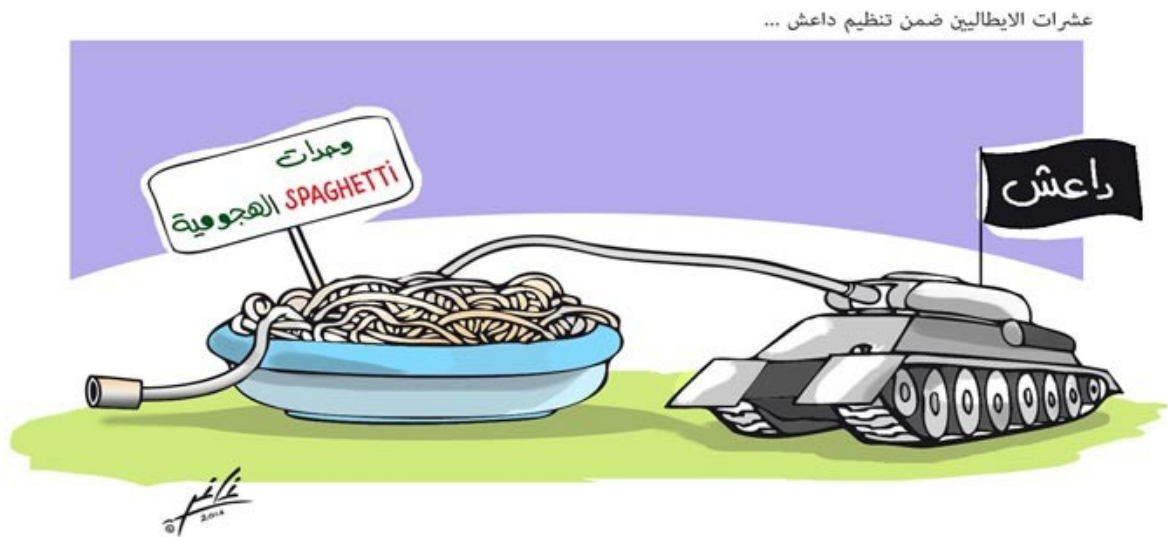
On the top of the cartoon: “American tips to stop sectarianism”. On the bus: “Sectarian freight”.
Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 14 January 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Barack Obama visits the Pope for the first time”. In the bubble “Bārak Obama”. The cartoon makes a pun on Obama’s first name, which in Arabic means “blessed”.
Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 17 January 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Germany’s victory in the 2014 World Cup”. Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 14 July 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Dozens of Italians join IS”. On the sign: “The Spaghetti Offensive Units”. On the the black flag: “IS.” Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 25 August 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “Obama agrees with [carrying on] airstrikes on the besieged Iraqi region of “Amerli”. On the shield: “Iraq”. In the bubble: “al-Amerli”. Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 2 September 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “After the meeting with Lavrov, Kerry: ‘we need to deepen our cooperation’.” Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 7 October 2014.

الأمم المتحدة تطالب بتحرك دولي للدفاع عن كوباني



On the top of the cartoon: “The United Nations demand international action for defending Kobani”. On the pins: “IS”. Published on *al-jumhūriyya* on 8 October 2014.

Appendix V: *Al-‘ahd*' s Cartoons



On the building: “Geneva 2”. Published on *al-‘ahd* on 1 February 2014.



On the cigarette: “The West”. On the ashtray: “Ukraine”. Published on *al-‘ahd* on 21 February 2014.



On the bear: “Russia”. On the sign: “Ukraine”. Published on *al-‘ahd* on 11 March 2014.



On the top right of the cartoon: “The free Kerry”. On the newspaper: “Assad was re-elected”. Published on *al-‘ahd* on 7 June 2014.



On the top of the cartoon: “American politics toward the IS”. Published on *al-‘ahd* on 23 August 2014.



Published on *al-ahd* on 1 October 2014.



Published on *al-ahd* on 3 November 2014.



Published on *al-ahd* on 9 November 2014.



On the table cloth: “The caliphs”. Published on *al-ahd* on 20 December 2014.

Appendix VI: *Al-safir*'s Cartoons



Published on *al-safir* on 22 January 2014.



“Syria”. Published on *al-safir* on 23 January 2014.

انظر الشكل



Published on *al-safir* on 25 January 2014.

مع فائق الكاريكاتور



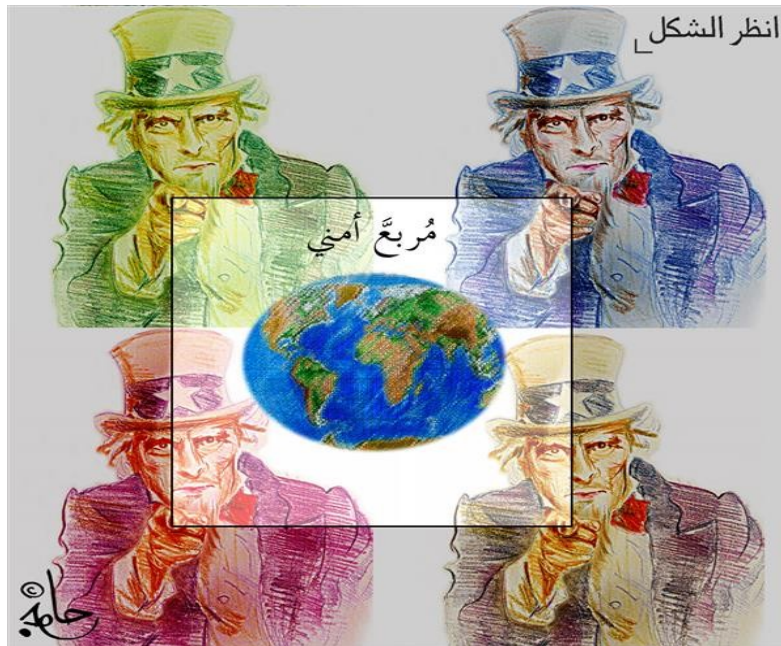
“The supremacy of irony”. Published on *al-safir* on 11 February 2014.

انظر الشكل



Putin affirms: "I have a **nightmare**." Published on *al-safir* on 5 March 2014.

انظر الشكل



On the centre of the cartoon: "The security square". Published on *al-safir* on 18 March 2014.

انظر الشكل



On the red line: "Urgent." Published on *al-safir* on 3 April 2014.

انظر الشكل



In the two bubbles: "Obama's red line". Published on *al-safir* on 4 April 2014.



On the head of the statue of the liberty:
“Palestine.” Published on *al-safir* on 5 April 2014.



On the centre of the cartoon: “The security square”. Published on *al-safir* on 16 June 2014.

انظر الشكل



...ومكافحة الإرهاب

حاجه

“US... and the fight against terrorism.” Published on *al-safir* on 2 September 2014.

يو إس، و *إس أو إس، وداعش!

انظر الشكل

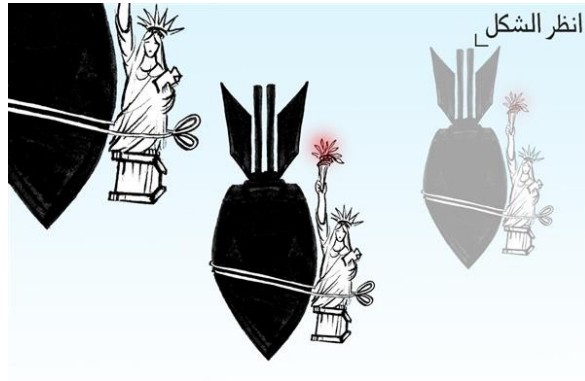


SOS SOS



حاجه

On the top of the cartoon: “U.S., S.O.S., and I.S..”
Published on *al-safir* on 3 September 2014.



حاجه

Published on *al-safir* on 20 September 2014.



حاجه

“IS.” Published on *al-safir* on 3 October 2014.



“Fire... and blood!” Published on *al-safir* on 4 October 2014.



Published on *al-safir* on 10 November 2014.



Published on *al-safir* on 17 December 2014.



In the bubble: “I end therefore I am”; on the bottom: “Military operation in Afghanistan”. Published on *al-safir* on 30 December 2014.



On the right of the cartoon: “Netanyahu asks to implement the veto against the program to end the occupation”; on the left: “Kerry answer complacently: “Of course!”. Published on *al-safir* on 18 December 2014.

Note: the answer that the cartoonist assigns to Kerry in the cartoon literally means “on my head!”, an Arabic locution that is often used to answer a request and that implies a strong promise to fulfil that request.

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