



The Instrumentalization of Identity in the Lebanese Conflict

La Instrumentalización de la Identidad en el Conflicto Libanés

Raná Gharzeddine^{1*}, Liany Hernandez²

¹Doctorado en Sostenibilidad y Paz en la Era Pos-Global de la Unviersidad de Valencia, Directora TFMs en UNIR, rana.gharzeddine@gmail.com, Valencia – España.

²Magister en derechos humanos, paz y desarrollo sostenible, especialista en responsabilidad y daño, especialista en derechos de familia, abogada, lianyyetzirahg@ufps.edu.co, Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander, Cúcuta, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Key Words:

Lebanon,
Conflict,
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Peace,
Instrumentalization,
Globalization.

This research tries to shed light on the case of Lebanese conflict, an example of identitarian conflict that has been alive for centuries, and given its location in the Middle East, an area of international interests, the country has been exposed to many external interventions. Said interventions have taken advantage of the political inexperience of local communities to sow division as part of a master plan to redesign the area according to occidental interests.

The objective is to rethink a Peace Process based on the urgent need for a change of mentality among the human mosaic that integrates and defines Lebanese society. For this purpose, a qualitative methodology was used, through an analytical study of works by major authors who masterfully deal with the theme of identity and multiculturalism as well as an inclusive humanism, where people resemble rather than differ by sharing common basic values.

As a result, it is observed that the identity of the Lebanese people has been instrumentalized to guarantee the sustainability of the local conflict, dissecting it into small characteristics such as confession.

It concludes with a peace process based on a change of mentality on the perception of identity and specifically religious characteristic, in order to move forward with a better inclusive identity.

RESUMEN

Palabras Claves:

Líbano,
Conflicto,
Identidad,
Paz,
Instrumentalización,
Globalización

La presente investigación trata de arrojar la luz sobre el caso del conflicto libanés, un ejemplo del conflicto identitario que lleva vivo siglos, y dada su ubicación en Oriente Medio, zona de interés internacional, el país se ha visto expuesto a muchas intervenciones externas. Dichas intervenciones han aprovechado la inexperience política de las comunidades locales para sembrar la división como parte de un plan maestro para rediseñar la zona según intereses occidentales.

Como objetivo, se tiene en mente repensar una paz basada en la urgente necesidad de un cambio de mentalidad entre el mosaico humano que integra y define a la sociedad libanesa. Para este propósito se utilizó una metodología cualitativa, por medio de un método analítico de obras de autores clave que tratan de manera magistral el tema tanto de la identidad y el multiculturalismo como de un humanismo incluyente, donde las personas se asemejan más que se diferencian al compartir unos valores básicos comunes.

Como resultado se observa que la identidad de los libanes ha sido instrumentalizada para garantizar la sostenibilidad del conflicto, diseccionándola en pertenencias pequeñas como la confesión.

Se concluye con un proceso de paz basado en un cambio de mentalidad sobre la percepción identitaria y específicamente la pertenencia religiosa, para avanzar con una identidad bien inclusiva.

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: rana.gharzeddine@gmail.com (Raná Gharzeddine)



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Introduction

1- Lebanon

Lebanon is a Mediterranean country of western Asia, with an area of 10,452 km², sharing borders with Syria to the north and east, and with Palestine/Israel to the south. Lebanon's strategic location made it the nexus between the three continents Asia Africa and Europe, being the gateway for Asia to the Mediterranean. This made the country a melting pot of various civilizations from the beginning of time to the present day. In ancient history, Lebanon was always part of an extended entity - Greater Syria - and among the civilizations that alternated in dominating it were the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs and the Ottoman Empire until Lebanon was finally declared an independent state in 1920, after the First World War which put Lebanon under French mandate, given that upon winning the war, France and England divided the Middle East between them and began the execution of a tailor-made plan for the area (Gharzeddine, 2019).

Lebanon recognizes eighteen official confessions/communities, 11 Christian confessions, 5 Muslim, and 2 others (López, 1984). Throughout the history of the region, and being an area of interest for the West, there were several external interventions in the internal politics of the country and each confessional community of the country was sponsored by a Western power under the concept of "Minorities' Protection" in the East. Mainly, France was the protector of the Maronite Christians of Lebanon, a local Catholic confession of Lebanon named after a Saint of the area (Saint Maroun). The Maronites came to Mount Lebanon escaping from Syria after being persecuted by the Byzantines. On the other hand, England was the sponsor of the Druze, a minority community in the Middle East, whose beliefs are based on Islam as well as Christianity and Hinduism, originally the Druze came to Mount Lebanon fleeing from Egypt after being persecuted there by the Fatima Caliph. The Druze and the Maronites coexisted on

the Lebanese mountain where the uneasy terrain gave them safe refuge from their corresponding persecutors (García, 2006). While on the coast lived the Muslims who considered themselves part of Syria and administratively the coastal cities were provinces of Syria.

2- The Lebanese conflict

The Lebanese conflict cannot be analyzed separately without having to dissect through the "Middle East Issue", it all started at the end of the 18th century when Great Britain had dominated India, a land of great wealth. The relationship with France at that time carried a competitive air, and France wanted to recover against Britain, but ruled out a direct attack given the imbalance in military power in favor of the British. It was then when a plan emerged to weaken Great Britain by cutting off the road to India, in other words, to colonize Egypt and Syria, Lebanon being part of the latter. For this purpose, a military expedition was sent in 1798 led by Napoleon Bonaparte to conquer these lands, his troops managed with difficulty to occupy Egypt but did not reach Syria (Kruse, 2012).

In order to stop the French expansion in the Middle East, two phenomena were inaugurated that became a standard practice in Lebanese politics until today: 1) the Prince of Lebanon was appointed externally without any respect for the existing procedure of a local election of the Prince, in this case he was appointed by England and Istanbul. 2) The Ottoman Sultan sent a decree to the newly appointed prince to proceed with the election of the members of the government, specifying a distribution of the posts among the confessions of the mountain according to demographic presentation (3 Maronites, 3 Druze, 1 Turk, 1 Greek Orthodox, 1 Catholic and 1 Shiite) (Garcia, 2006), giving rise, and for the first time officially, to the confessional political system of Lebanon whose virtue remains in force until today. A confessionalism that still implies a basic disagreement among Lebanese communities

about not only the distribution of power, but also the material and social conditions that this distribution defined (Arroyo, 2004).

After the Second World War, the Muslim coasts were annexed to the state of Lebanon, thus adding more parties to the local distribution of power, bringing the current total to eighteen confessions. Since then, Lebanon has sought to create a sharing "formula" to maintain the communal "balance" in the country, a balance as fragile as it is feigned, a balance that feels threatened by any local, regional or global event, as was the arrival in Lebanon of the Palestinian refugees after their expulsion from their homeland among the forging of the state of Israel. Hundreds of thousands of refugees entering the country are perceived as a threat by some Christian communities as these refugees are mostly Muslims. Apart from the fact that these refugees have dragged their war against Israel into the Lebanese terrain bordering the enemy state, resulting in an escalation of events that led to a civil war that lasted fifteen years and an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, thus creating a perfect arena for massive external interventions. Suddenly arms were pouring into the country and everyone was fighting against everyone else (Corm, 2007) (García, 2006).

It was in 1989 that an agreement was signed to end the war, the Taif Agreement in Saudi Arabia, which established as an institutional rule that the presidential troika would be assigned according to confession. However, the agreement limited the powers of the President of the State (Maronite) in favor of the other two presidents of the government (Sunni) and the chamber (Shiite). Also the 6:5 deputy distribution formula in favor of Christians was changed to an equal formula between Christians and Muslims (Corm, 2007) (Gharzeddine, 2019).

Table I: the confessional distribution of seats in the Lebanese Parliament

Distribución confesional de los escaños		
Confesión	Antes de Taif	Después de Taif
Maronitas	30	34
Ortodoxos orientales	11	14
Católicos oriental	6	8
Ortodoxos armenios	4	5
Ortodoxos armenios	1	1
Protestantes	1	1
Otros cristianos	1	1
Total Cristianos	54	64
Sunitas	20	27
Chiitas	19	27
Drusos	6	8
Alawitas	0	2
Total Musulmanes	45	64
Total	99	128

Source: Rodríguez, N. (2010). Organización Política Simulación Líbano. Word Press. Recuperado de: Organización Política | Simulación Líbano (wordpress.com)

The hostilities in Lebanon do not end here, rather there have been several outbreaks of armed conflicts within the country, sometimes against the State of Israel (Sanchez, 2009), other times against militants hiding in the Palestinian and Syrian refugee camps (Abboud, 2009), and recently against ISIS and even between Lebanese communities (Jalabi, 2014), apart from attacks against Lebanese politicians and journalists, and lately the attack on the port of Beirut famous as the "Beirutshima" (Khayar, 2021). Today Lebanon is living a total economic collapse, its currency has devaluated more than 100 times its value, putting even more at risk the day to day survival of many (Blair, 2022).

This summary of the Lebanese conflict is intended to introduce the reader to how easy it is to bring down nations, states and countries by simply creating/faking a sense of threat between local groups, imagine how this works on a global level! In the case of Lebanon, it is the religious factor as belonging to the identity that was instrumentalized to keep the conflict alive. However, in other parts of the world it can be the linguistic factor, race, political orientation, nationality, color and a host of

other differences that can be instrumentalized for dishonest purposes.

3- What is Identity

Identity, this departure point that moves individuals and masses to fulfill political, existential and even human objectives. Sometimes to protect the identity, other times to defend it, whatever the reason is, it is obvious that the concept of identity as it has been inculcated has become more violent than ever.

Maalouf, in his book "In the name of Identity", aspires to define "identity", and describes it as a deceptive false friend. He finds out why so many people commit crimes in the name of their ethnic or religious identity (Maalouf, 1999). Let us reread his study on the Lebanese case and try to draw from it some vital solutions for an effective coexistence of this communal mixture.

Approaching the subject from the most basic, an identity document would cite all personal descriptions such as name, surname, sex, photograph and fingerprint, and would observe that there is no possibility for one person to be identical to another. Hence Maalouf explains that identity has two characteristics:

1) uniqueness, there is no possibility of two people being identical. One's identity is complex, unique and irreplaceable.

2) The commonality, at the same time, each person will have something in common that unites him/her with other people.

Now, if we contemplate the concept of identity from Habermas' analytics, he highlights several types of identities (Habermas, 1989):

i. The individual identity: The individual choice in which one assumes the responsibility for one's own identity.

ii The collective Identity or Nationalism: It is a type of modern collective identity that emerges after the fall of the Ancient Régime and the dissolution of the traditional hierarchies of the bourgeoisies. People are emancipated through abstract civic freedoms and the mass of liberated individuals becomes mobile in political, economic, military and cultural terms. Nationalism emerges as a response to the need for new identities in this context.

On nationalism and its contradictory role in the emergence of nations, Habermas makes a curious reflection when he notes that the only way to give birth to nationalism is to enclose nations in independent states, and this is one of the greatest deceptions in modern life, It is a fiction that has been used to organize peoples on the basis of collective history, but in reality what this fiction of nationalism was used for was division, conflict, racism and even extermination. Moreover, autonomist movements arising from oppressed national minorities are created by the national state, which, contradictorily, acts against the principles of self-determination by controlling these minorities under its central administration. This in turn creates a contradiction in the historical consciousness of the nation, since the narrative construction of a past that has relevance to the collective identity is necessary to establish a sensation of community.

iii. Political identity: This is the one that is built around the eminent danger, and makes the masses move in the name of Liberty. The political dimension does not lie in the obligatory nature of the decisions adopted by a governmental entity, but is manifested in the collective self-affirmation of a people that exists politically, fighting against both internal and external enemies. This confrontation is crucial to demonstrate the uniqueness of the people and their identity in the face of otherness, which

involves both external and internal warfare. In this sense, for a process to be characterized as political it is required to have at least some implicit relationship with this scenario of threat to the existence of the people, and the possibility of physical annihilation is what defines the truth of the political. Moreover, any politics is essentially an external affair, and even internal politics falls under the categories of the danger represented by an enemy threatening the survival of the people (Habermas, 1989).

There are also those who see identity as a changeable phenomenon influenced by the different circumstances of place and time in which this identity is constituted or developed. Corm affirms that the starting point of the construction of an identity itself is a negative beginning, given the fact that an identity is always based on distinguishing oneself from the other, in many cases this other is an enemy that we seek to distinguish ourselves from, or sometimes fight with. Thus, any set of principles and beliefs that shape an identity is also a fundamental element of the pattern of authority that governs within a society and has the ability to determine whether to wage war or maintain peace with a different society (Corm, 2007).

On the same negative identity perspective contributes Javier De Lucas, illustrating that due to globalization it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to locate ourselves as subjects in this world, and this has its repercussions on identity. This is why we resort to cultural identity, which is constructed in opposition to the other, is based on differences and may even demand the elimination of others. Another effect of globalization is the increased level of dependence, mobility and competitiveness in the global marketplace. This trend is exacerbated by the collapse of the bipolar order and the prospect of a unilateral order in which a single hegemonic power dictates the rules, making it even more urgent for collectives to find their place in the world. Cultural identity can help achieve this, but there is often recourse to differentiation and primary identities

to distinguish oneself from others. This coincides with the temptation to adopt Schmitt's friend-enemy model of politics, rather than the Hobbesian model. This is related to the dominant political vision imposed by the Bush administration after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (De Lucas, 2004).

4- The belongings of an Identity:

The theory of both Maalouf and Habermas states that a singular identity contains infinite affiliations as belongings within its overall as individual, it unwarps several sub-identities that all together make a whole personal identity. One belongs to a family, a neighborhood, a community, a province, a country, an ethnicity, a religion, a culture, a language, and so on. The sum of all these belongings forms the individual identity.

Likewise, these belongings have some characteristics such as:

- They are not all of equal importance.
- Several individuals are present in each belonging.
- Depending on the epoch, one or another belonging widens to the point of hiding the others, for example, in the case of a religious conflict, the belonging to a religion will be stronger than the belonging to a nationality.
- The hierarchy of belonging changes over time and modifies behaviors, for example, a European homosexual in the past behaved differently than a homosexual person would behave today.

For Maalouf, identity is not given to us once and for all, but is built and transformed throughout our existence, learning from the early years of childhood, through people and experiences that influence us, families shape us and make us adapt specific rituals and attitudes. Then, in a wider environment, such as the street, the school, etc., it is

where people, with their looks or comments, affect the deepest part of our identity, which is where and when the first hegemony of our identity is produced (Maalouf, 1999).

5- When religion involves Identity

The issue of religion has become the question of the 21st century successively to secularism and pluralistic modern humanism, both of which failed to achieve their goals in establishing the foundations of peace, security and universal humanity, a statement that Corm develops by relating that the new concept that has emerged is the "postmodern essentialism" favored by the United States and Europe at the same time, whose objective is to frame the living being in a germ of religious essence in order to appear to respect freedom of religion, while its double use will serve to cultivate the seed of conflict of a new world war, this time based on creating fear towards some religious groups in order to be able to manage the planet according to political and economic interests. For homo religious the fall of secular regimes will return to the human being his primordial essence, for homo economicus the fall of economic regimes - represented in globalization - will return to the human being his economic freedom. Together the two theories of religion and globalization will make a new version of universalism whose objective is to use the trilogy of morality, politics and religion in favor of domination, since the illusion offered by this union under the guise of universalism is the reconciliation between religion and freedom, pretending to create a supposed peace between conflicting identities, while in reality it hides under the cloak of universalism and globalization to justify hatred towards certain religions categorizing them as "terrorists" (Corm, 2007).

Needless to say that the religion to which this political plan was dedicated was Islam, since since the September 11 attacks in the United States, it has been singled out and considered as the origin of all the evils of the century.

Prejudices about Islam and Muslims in the West have been so pervasive that they have turned every Muslim and Arab into a terrorist or fundamentalist. This has created two types of reactions in the Arab and Muslim world, and again we state that not every Arab is a Muslim and not every Muslim is an Arab (Gomez, 2009). For some, the accusations of the West have made them feel ashamed of their belonging or even their identity, for others it has created more rage and anger towards the West and pushed them sometimes to commit hateful acts or speeches to take revenge for the Western accusations, thus widening the circle of violence directly and indirectly, the biggest loser always being the Eastern society as a whole (Maalouf, 1999).

a- Arab or Muslim?

It is difficult to distinguish or separate one from the other in the case of someone who belongs to both. The Arab ethnicity predates Islam, its history dates back to the time of the Bedouin tribes that resided in the Arabian Peninsula, worshipping different Gods and even speaking different languages. Islam refers to this era as the age of ignorance. When Islam appeared, it brought these tribes together and led them out of barbarism and towards coexistence and tolerance at the time (Goméz, 2009). Its laws, which are so much criticized nowadays - and are misused by their addressees - were the way out for those tribes towards the creation of a civilized nation, and centuries later a pluralistic nation when it expanded towards the Atlantic Ocean, El Andalus, the current Spain and Portugal (Menéndez Del Valle, 1997). It is at that moment when the doubt about identity arises, since when expanding outside the Arabian Peninsula, the religion embraced a multitude of ethnic groups and races with their identity and their cultures already established, that when converting to Islam - or not - this, without a doubt, added new values to them, but it is here when the question about the identity of these groups recently incorporated to Islam becomes valid, is their identity Muslim? Or are they still Canaanites, Phoenicians, Hittites, Kurds,

Assyrians, Babylonians, Turks, Africans, Berbers, etc.? (Corm, 2006)

Another equally valid question would be, is it Islam that created these nations in its image, or is it these nations that have shaped Islam according to their cultures and traditions?

The answer is provided by Maalouf, who believes that the influence of religions on peoples is exaggerated, for him it is not only a question of what a religion does to societies, but also what societies do for their religions. The case of Muslim society is that it has elaborated religion in its own image. And that image has not always been the same, it has changed with the historical epochs. When Islam was triumphing and expanding from India to the Atlantic, in those times they interpreted their religion with tolerance, and they opened up to other cultures and made exchanges in literature and science, translating Indian and Greek books in order to develop (Maalouf, 1999). An image that is nothing like the "caricatures of today" that categorize Islam as a violator, aggressor and repressor of freedoms. An image of an Islam that has become at the hands of its leaders immobile and retrograde.

However, what Islam brought and later worked in its disfavor was the plurality and multiculturalism within the community. In other words, the heterogeneity of the final society of the Islamic world. From the beginning, Islam was open to all regardless of ethnic or cultural background. However, the Arabs were overwhelmed by the universality that Islam achieved, which led them to lose power within their own empire. "Such was the price of the universality that Islam advocated. From time to time a clan of Turkmen warriors arrived in Baghdad, pronounced the formula of conversion, and no one could dispute that they belonged to Islam, and the next day they demanded their share of power. From the point of view of political stability, this attitude will sometimes prove disastrous, but from the cultural point of view, what an extraordinary enrichment" (Maalouf, 1999).

On the Arab-Muslim identity, and in the balance between religion and nationalism, the latter was absorbed by religion. The nationalist struggle in the Arab world always confronted Arab-Christian or Arab-Jewish adversaries, so the fight was always more in the name of the religious community than in the linguistic or ethnic community. However, during the First World War, when the Muslims were divided between Arabs and Turks (Ottoman Empire) both had to rethink their nationalism, the former replaced the word Muslim by Arab, thus creating - for the first time - the term "Arab Nation" and the latter, so disappointed with the betrayal of the former, set themselves up as a secular nation under the command of Atatürk, both disassociating themselves from Islam in an era where nationalism was incompatible with religion (Maalouf, 1999).

Now, in a comparison between the two main religions of the world today: Islam and Christianity, Maalouf (1999) contemplates the relationship between Europe and Christianity and indicates that this relationship has been established in two ways, in a way that Christianity shaped Europe, but Europe also shaped Christianity in another way, the way Europe needed Christianity to look like (secular ideas, sexual relations and children out of wedlock). What was once forbidden by the Church was later accepted and today is considered normal. The Church confronted many conceptions that are nowadays the most basic of daily life, it confronted republican and secular ideas, women's emancipation, contraception, etc. The Church was always firmly against these ideas, and then it had to compromise and adapt.

On Europe and religion De Lucas (2004) provides several views on this culture-religion correlation and its impact on European identity. He notes that for some, Europe would not be the same if it were not for Christianity, while for others, Europe would not be the same if it were not for the separation between State and Church. However, for him, Islam also has to do with the image of contemporary Europe and is even part of it, since

the basis of today's science that is responsible for the development in various fields of life and most of all in medicine, philosophy, mathematics and even technologies, has its origins in ancient Islamic science, for if it were not for it, Europe and the world today would not be the same "From the algorithms of Al-Khawarizmi to the optics system of Al-Hazem, from the philosophy of history of Ibn Khaldun to the distinction between faith and reason or the reception of Aristotle provided by Ibn-Rus (Averroes), to cite just a few examples of the highest excellence, of civilization" (De Lucas, 2004).

b- The instrumentalization of the religious factor

From the remotest part of history, human groupings have been based on the cult of the tribe or clan. This was the first way in which identity and power were founded in relation to religion. With the passage of time, the tradition of preserving the cult of ancestors was created and considered the basis of the existence of communities (Corm, 2007), although this has been a source of conflict, nations have not been able to free themselves from this belief, especially with monotheistic religions. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all religions that in their sacred texts have affirmed the notion of The People, in fact The Chosen People. Modern politics took advantage of this to use this tradition as an instrument of division, war and domination.

In the case of Lebanon, the European colonizing powers have used the pluralist fact of the country to create vocabulary such as "the Maronite nation", "the Druze nation", etc., which until then were terms alien to the local culture and thought. However, these nations were attributed the minority character by Europe, thus creating a motive for the intervention of the powers under the emblem of the duty to defend the oppressed minorities in the East. An emblem that concealed a dishonest plan to destroy the Ottoman Empire.

After the Second World War, the map of the East was for the first time divided into pieces of nation-states based on religious affiliation, it was then that Jewish nationalism appeared which would change the face and soul of the East forever, it was also then that Lebanon appeared as a Maronite state, at the same time Pakistan appeared as a Muslim state separated from India by religious difference, later Bangladesh appeared as a state separated from Pakistan by linguistic difference even though it was of the same Muslim cult (Corm, 2007).

These nationalisms, sometimes religious, other times ethnic, phenomena of the 20th century, have been the instrument to create a new phenomenon for the 21st century, that of fundamentalism.

c- Fundamentalism

The Western powers, by supporting the non-Muslim minorities against the Ottoman power, generated an alert for the Sultan, who made an effort to unite the Muslims against this Western plot, thus founding pan-Islamism, which until then had no violent or aggressive aims. But when the Arab states were created, and with the kind of leaders that governed, together with the historical humiliation of the Arabs in front of Israel, associated with the failure of Muslim secularism, made the Islamic movements grow, making their way towards what came to be called Islamism as a reference to violence (Corm, 2003).

According to Corm, the germ of fundamentalism is a Western product, because the powers, before devoting themselves to support non-Muslim religious minorities, used as an initial tactic to present themselves as friends of Islam, - first with Napoleon in his expedition in Egypt, and then with the United States in Afghanistan, which used Muslims to restrain the Russian enemy -. This instrumentalization of Islam is what created Islamic fundamentalism in its worst aspects, worse still, the West is today the greatest manipulator of this fundamentalism, which

still instrumentalizes it according to its political whims, the two great apostles of this fundamentalism - Saudi Arabia (Wahhabism) and Pakistan - being two stones on the American and Western chessboard, who not only use Islamism for their geopolitical purposes, but also Judaism is another instrument that has been used for various purposes, sometimes to aggravate the Middle East issues and other times to weaken Soviet communism.

Fundamentalism is a recent phenomenon to Islam. To begin with, this religion is considered a continuation of Christianity and Judaism, which is why it is essential in its creed to respect the people of these cults being “people of the Book”, that is, they are religions with sacred books that supposedly revealed the word of God just as the Quran does, from there we conclude that Jihad, according to Islamic law (Sharia) cannot be applied against people just for the mere fact of belonging to these two cults. On the other hand, because, as was demonstrated, Islam in its era of growth and evolution was more inclusive and pluralistic compared to other religions and communities at that time or in previous times, in fact Islamic universalism was exemplary. In times when Christianity – which today considers itself tolerant – exercised all types of annihilation, inquisition and exclusion in Europe (Corm, 2007).

So, what is the reason for this involution of Islam and this deviation from the laws of Sharia?

There are several reasons, among them is the closure of religious exegesis starting in the 10th century, causing Islam to become enclosed in traditionalism, although in modernity there have been some attempts at reform within Islam, but the absence of a central authority. – similar to a Vatican – means that the reforms are not validated at the level of the Muslim nation; the Umma (Maalouf, 1999).

Another reason is the literal reading of religious texts or sacred interpretations. Sacred texts will always be the subject of diverse and opposing

interpretations, depending on how we approach them, we can find arguments both for and against diverse practices. Throughout history, quotes that justified and condemned the same acts have always been found in these texts, while the texts do not change, the perspective of the interpreter does differ (Maalouf, 1999).

Regarding the interpretations and from a more positive perspective and a more studious view of the case of Islam, we learn that distinguished interpretations are allowed by Islamic dogma, contrary to what is believed and in contradiction to the closure of exegesis. Furthermore, the Quranic text itself states that the verses of the book are ambiguous and openly encourages interpretation to allow a margin of flexibility regarding the understanding of the word of God, thus leaving out the concept of the inalterability of the sacred text (Menéndez del Valle, 1997), and of course, allowing a great space for modernization and updating within this religion, an advantage that if used well, would allow Islam to be a contemporary religion capable of synchronizing with any time and place in which it exists. is found. And this brings us back to the point that Maalouf touched on, that the influence of societies on Islam has been more powerful than the influence of Islam on those societies.

The other side of the coin is the absence of a central authority in Islam, which has been a weakening factor of Islam in modernity, both Corm (2007) and Maalouf (1999) confirm. Islam, unlike Christianity, allows politics to intervene in religion, which is why religion spread throughout the social fabric. And on the other hand, it is a religion that does not allow intermediaries between the person and God, which is why an organization like The Church was not allowed in Islam.

It should be noted that religion has not been institutionalized within the Islamic world, contrary to what many believe, the caliph or sultan does not represent religious legitimacy, political power has

been in the hands of politicians, and religious power was limited to civil affairs (Corm, 2007), this opinion is vindicated in several works, the challenge of Muslim culture is that politics has always controlled the religious and not the other way around, and this may be due to “organizational” factors (Maalouf, 1999).

This position is also explained by Menéndez del Valle, who affirms that in the 10th century, Islam was divorced from politics, and ever since – with the exception of the Fatimids – the caliphs and rulers dedicated themselves to politics while the clerics of Islam were in charge only of social and civil affairs. The rulers legitimized their political power by pledging to protect the Umma. They supposedly ruled according to Sharia, but practically their government was more secular than religious, mercilessly violating the divine law of Islam when it seemed appropriate, increasingly seizing power by force of the sword (or more modern weapons recently). In the 19th century, Islam once again entered politics and with it the question of fundamentalism arose (Menéndez del Valle, 1997).

To this we must add the division within Islam, mainly between Sunnis and Shiites, which dates back to the initial years of this religion, and today this division is embodied in the state between the Shiite Iran of the Shah and the Sunni Saudi Arabia of Wahhabism, both oppressive and were used by the United States against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and for other issues in the oil gulf (Corm, 2007).

At the same time, among the Muslim masses there is a lot of anger towards the West due to the Western attitude towards the Arab world, from the false promises in the First and Second World Wars, the creation of the State of Israel and the global attitude towards the Israeli aggression continues, even the occupations of its sacred lands directly or indirectly, such as Jerusalem occupied by the Jews, the sacred lands of Iraq invaded by the US, and Mecca

full of American military bases. Added to this is the attitude of the Arab kings and rulers who are often agents for the West, giving rise to groups that are angry with their leaders, and who resort to Islam as legitimization of their revolution against their States and against the West that is manipulating Muslims and their natural wealth and even the strategic territories of the Muslim world, be it in the so-called Arab world, or beyond, in Bosnia, Chechnya... etc.

It should be stated that this type of fundamentalism, which is directed against Arab leaders and the West out of a feeling of injustice, is in reality a minority - since Islamic fundamentalism, which has become a universal fear in the 21st century, is a Western work that sought to create fear to legitimize an absurd and ongoing war against an impersonal enemy "terrorism" - this minority fundamentalism is expressed in three phenomena that Corm (2007) explains:

First, in reducing identity to religion, and at the same time reducing Islam to a few rules that govern the daily life of Muslims, such as wearing the veil for women, maintaining the five daily prayers, doing Ramadan, going on pilgrimage towards Mecca, comply with the food and drink prohibitions. These famous rules are called the “five pillars of Islam,” but reducing religion to them is an impoverishment of what Islam is in reality.

Second, the total rejection of political secularism, which is seen as a Western form that seeks to remove the soul of its religion and its lifestyle that would have to comply with Sharia, and for this reason there have been attacks against secular Muslim figures. in history, as were the cases of Nasser and Sadat (both presidents of Egypt).

Third, the fight against the corruption of Muslim politicians and leaders who have enriched themselves excessively at the expense of the people. To this phenomenon, several Arab leaders found the solution to silence the complaints against their

governments by Islamizing their institutions to satisfy the Islamic movements.

Finally, for fundamentalism, as Corm describes, “time is telescopic.” That is to say, historical events continue to have the same presence in the collective memory of fundamentalists even though several centuries and generations have passed; for them, revenge continues to have its validity today. As is the case today with the State of Israel and what they call the Jewish people, who claimed their right to inherit lands that already belonged to other peoples over the millennia (Corm, 2007).

To end with the fundamentalism, it must be pointed out that what is happening today in the name of Islam is nothing new in the history of religions and politics, since Christianity went through this cycle during the Middle Ages until it modernized and updated in recent centuries. Judaism, in turn, went through this cycle in the past as well, and today more than ever it exercises overwhelming fundamentalism with the support of many world powers, and at the same time prohibits any type of bad propaganda against the Jews or the State of Israel. Islam, for its part, coincides at this time in its cycle where it has been divided into closed communities that are increasingly conservative, thinking that this will protect the tradition of their religion, while at the same time world politics is using it for its regional objectives.

If we reread the case of Lebanon in this analysis, we will see that religion was sown in Lebanon before its creation as an independent State in 1920, first both communities, the Druze and the Maronite, were instrumentalized for reasons of rivalry between England and France regarding the road to India. Later, and once independent, politics was based on community, favoring some others and marginalizing some (Lopez, 1984), and this maneuver managed by France was not at all casual, but causal and with a long-term vision. During the first decade after independence, unequal treatment continued

between communities, fostering discrimination, along with a feeling of superiority on the part of the Christian community, accompanied by a feeling of victimization on the part of Muslim communities (Corm, 2006). All of this led to the civil war, whose fronts were divided along religious lines, a war that was managed regionally and internationally.

Up to this point, Corm's theory about the instrumentalization of religion for political reasons by the all-powerful West is proven. This theory is further substantiated if we look at today's Islamist fundamentalist movements in Lebanon.

Starting in the new millennium, Palestinian refugee camps were filled with foreign Islamist fundamentalists from the country, who have exercised various types of terror against the Lebanese army and Lebanese civilians mostly in Muslim areas.

Today, a new reality is added to the Lebanese conflict scenario, it is that of ISIS infiltrations into Lebanon from the Syrian borders, opening fire against the Lebanese army and civilians in the border villages (Jalabi, 2014). His attack in the Lebanese interior was in 2015. On the same night of the Paris attacks, two suicide attacks exploded in Beirut in a Shiite Muslim neighborhood. A direct attack by an organization that is supposedly against the West and whose job is to sow fear and terror in the West that is unfaithful to Allah. This organization carries out a masterpiece of terror against the same faithful and believing Muslims. Even having its great and greatest enemy, the state of Israel, at its side and quite within reach, ISIS proved more favorable to attacking and killing the Muslims of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon than attacking its adverse claims.

This in itself raises many doubts about the reality behind these movements, their activity and their true managers.

d- How to overcome the religious conspiracy?

The work that must be done to avoid falling into the religious trap is a responsibility of society, even more so when it comes to the case of Lebanon, since one cannot expect much from feudal politicians and community leaders, not even a minimum that can favor true coexistence, given that the perseverance of politicians is built on the confessional division, because if this segmentation disappeared the current political system would collapse, something that would not please those in charge in this tiny country.

So the task for the Lebanese to get the country out of this vicious circle of sectarianism, confessionalism and lately the fundamentalism that encompasses the country from the outside in, is not at all an easy task, and neither can they count on help from the superiors, it is a task that will have to come from the good will of the people, united or individually.

Our authors have contributed many ideas as solutions to the religious issue, some solutions are international but are also applicable to Lebanese pluralism.

i- Careful with the language

An urgent measure would be to change the geopolitical lexicon that is instrumentalizing religion for dominating objectives, everytime terrorism is mentioned, it is automatically perceived as Islamist terrorism, so much so that Islam and terrorism have become synonymous in Western language, promoting this negative perception of all Muslims in the world. The word Islam is also being used abusively to refer to a perverse evil or an eminent danger that must be eradicated. It is made to imagine that Islam represents a specific place or a race itself, in an attempt to personify the enemy. However, Islam is another religion that was used to legitimize wars, invasions and even raise a global protest against

societies and cultural practices in Muslim countries (Corm, 2007).

ii- What religions should do

The three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, must accept each other and stop allowing politics to interfere in their affairs and their interrelationships. At the same time, they must open themselves to theological debate.

Both Christianity and Judaism must accept Islam as a monotheistic religion that complements their history. Islam, as we have mentioned, already encompasses the two previous religions whose characters are also admired in Islam as prophets preceding Mohammed.

Muslims, from their side, must change their position regarding secularism as if it were a Western evil that wants to end the faith, and be more open to reforms, instead of remaining closed to the latest exegeses of the 10th century or to the only narratives of Islam that limit themselves to drawing Islamic history around the conflict with other civilizations, which generated in Islamic youth a collective memory of rejection and hatred. What must be done is to create a new vision of both the past and the present of Islam, and it is a task for the Arab and Islamic media.

The Jews here have their role to play in realizing this new peaceful intercultural vision, they must also separate Judaism and the State of Israel as if they were a single entity, and allow an internal pluralism where free expression is enjoyed that allows the internal criticism of the Jews against their own State.

The West, from its side, must abandon its conviction of identity, humanitarian and political superiority compared to the rest of the world, while in reality the West itself has been quite hypocritical when it comes to establishing its relations with the rest of the world.

And finally, academic research must also be fairer to Islam, to its history and to its real creed (Corm, 2007).

iii- separate religion from identity

This is a solution proposed by Maalouf. For him, religious tolerance is not enough, he insists that religious belonging should not be a factor of identity, whatever the religion of each person, or even if they do not belong to any religion, that does not make them better or worse. others, but we are all citizens with access to the same rights. We must overcome religious belonging without overcoming each person's faith. What Maalouf suggests is to overcome narrow belongings to a nation, race, ethnicity...etc., and transcend it to a broader property, to a complete and comprehensive human belonging.

This brings us to a topic that Martha Nussbaum discussed about human religion, or civil religion, theories proposed by Comte and Mill, studied and developed by Nussbaum (2014).

iv- The Religion of Humanity

Nussbaum discusses the possibility of creating a new religion where God as a figure of praised creator is not the basis of that faith, but rather the sympathy that founds it. She warns that it is not an easy task nor much less realistic, since humanity today lives in a quite individualistic and therefore selfish aspect, where human universalism seems to be an impossible mission, but she does not rule out some ways to achieve this global sympathy through creating healthy local patriotisms that function as intermediaries between individualism and human pluralism. Patriotisms that teach the value of love and sharing emotions within a nation and that motivate this love to increase until it includes all of humanity.

The key to this sympathy would be for people to learn to let go of spontaneous and selfish material happiness, considering themselves part of a global

species that shares common goals, and the fate of the whole of this humanity is what should be important for the happiness of all. the individuals.

To achieve this vision of the common good and implement it as an objective of the human race, it is necessary to invest in the human imagination so that individuals are able to imagine themselves in the shoes of others and live their experience as if it were their own. To achieve this vivid level of imagination, it will be necessary to reconsider the educational system from childhood, and by educational system, Mill, Comte and Nussbaum do not refer to schools only, but to education within the family and society, that is Families will have to change their way of raising children based on a new form of initial education developed by philosophers, with art being the omnipresent component throughout people's personal development as a stimulator of the imagination. Even going further, with this religion a Great Being is proposed to worship, in this case it would be the Earth, and a cult with daily rituals and annual festivals based on art in its entirety (Nussbaum, 2014).

And in order to uproot racism, Nussbaum suggests the same solution as Maalouf, separating ethnic belonging from the concept of identity, and cultivating anti-racism as an element, the conception of equality between individuals as an essential component of national identity leading towards identity human.

The same opinion is also shared by Corm: "For this change to be possible, it is absolutely essential to change the geopolitical paradigm, and therefore stop instrumentalizing religion and abandon the intensive manufacturing of nationalisms based on the concept of civilization, which is doing both Islam and Judaism and Christianity" (Corm, 2007).

Conclusions

Communitarianism: It is clear that Lebanese community system is the origin of all the evils that

the country has experienced. The supposed balance in the distribution of power, instead of creating stability for the Lebanese case, has created deep divisions among the Lebanese. These divisions allowed so many conflicts and disputes to break out in the country, sometimes leading to war and other times to anarchy. Once again, we see that communitarianism has made the Lebanese build their individual and group identity based on their confession as a determinant of who they are and what their political visions or life objectives will be.

The religious factor: Throughout history the conflict in the Middle East has been considered religious between Muslims, Christians and Jews. The truth is somewhat different, it is true that the Middle East is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions, and it is true that the fighting parties are classified according to confessions, but the conflict between them is not because of religious beliefs or dogmas, it is not even because one wants to destroy the other in the area, but the conflict between these communities is purely political. In the case of Lebanon, the country had adopted a political system based on religious belonging and the demographic weight of the communities in the country, for which the country's Catholics obtained absolute power as they were the majority. With the passage of time, the demographic distribution changed, but the distribution of power has not been co-responsibly updated, which – added to the factor of various external interventions at the regional and international level – caused the country to break out into a civil war that lasted 15 years (1975-1990) and made a perfect arena for international interventions to a point that it was denominated “a war for others” (Tueni, 1985).

Lebanon, The Refuge: Lebanon is currently the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, this includes millions of Syrians fleeing the current war in their country, and another hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have fled due to the Israeli occupation of their land and

continued aggression. The high number of refugees has had repercussions in the country. In 1975 the civil war broke out because the Lebanese were divided between those who supported the Palestinian resistance in its fight against Israel, and those who sought to contain the Palestinian guerrillas and their actions in Lebanese territory against the neighboring enemy. Currently, the millions of Syrians who are in Lebanon – in inhumane conditions in many cases – participate indirectly in generating an economic, labor and social crisis.

Islamism: it is the phenomenon of the 21st century and Lebanon is responsible for a good part of this phenomenon that broke out in the Palestinian refugee camps, being self-governed camps, where the Lebanese army and government have no control, and being the borders with Syria uncontrolled enough that terrorist cells could enter the country and hide in the said fields. With Islamism, doubts arise about who is behind this very relevant phenomenon and that world powers have so much to do with the rapid growth of these movements disguised as religious.

The Lebanese Identity: like all identities, the Lebanese identity also starts from a negative pole, that is, it is constructed from a comparative perspective with others, and these others are those that we do not want to be, nor for them to be like us, and sometimes We don't even want them close or allow them equality or equity with us. This is how the Lebanese identity is built, based on very defined belongings that distinguish us from others. It is not enough to consider yourself Lebanese, you have to identify yourself based on your religion, the branch within each religion, the area from which you come and the clan from which you descend. Each of the Lebanese is proud to be from the land of the cedars, but each one has a different vision of this country. For this reason, the Lebanese lack true national feeling towards a homeland; many feel more patriotism towards Mecca, Vatican or Tehran than towards their own country.

Peace: this long desired peace in Lebanon, but so difficult to achieve until the Lebanese themselves change their mentality, accept the pluralism of their society and turn it into human inclusion. It is no longer valid to classify ourselves into groups of us and them, majority and minority, Catholics and Orthodox, Sunnis and Shiites, coastal and mountainous...etc.

Human inclusion: this conception has to become the key element of Lebanese identification, assuming diversity as an enriching factor instead of using it as a dividing edge. Putting oneself in the other's shoe is the only way to accept and include everyone, as long as we remember that whoever we are, we all belong to the human race, we are all made of flesh, blood, and feelings. We ought to focus on what we do have in common rather than our differences.

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