The Dialectics of Resistance: Lebanese National Identity Formation Through the Prism of Anti-Occupation Struggle, 1978-2000

Dialektika Perlawanan: Pembentukan Identitas Nasional Lebanon Melalui Prisma Perjuangan Anti-Pendudukan, 1978-2000

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Abstract

This study explores the formation of Lebanese national identity through anti-occupation resistance from 1978 to 2000, employing historical methodology with a multidisciplinary approach. It examines how resistance shaped Lebanon's collective consciousness, challenged sectarian divisions, and redefined its role regionally and globally. Using a combination of collective memory (Halbwachs), nationalism (Anderson), critical geopolitics (Toal), cultural trauma (Alexander), postcolonial theory (Said and Bhabha), and social movement theory (Tarrow and McAdam), the research analyzes the transformation of fear into resilience and the impact of the 2000 Israeli withdrawal on identity formation. The study highlights the dual nature of resistance culture, both unifying and challenging, and critically examines how shared trauma influences national identity. It addresses generational shifts in perceptions of resistance and focuses on long-term identity implications, offering a forward-looking perspective on Lebanon's ongoing development. By integrating historical methods with insights from nationalism, social movements, and cultural studies, the research situates Lebanon's resistance within broader regional and global dynamics, providing insights into asymmetric warfare and the role of non-state actors in international relations.

Keywords: National Identity, Anti-Occupation ,Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory, Social Geopolitics,

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi pembentukan identitas nasional Lebanon melalui perlawanan anti-pendudukan dari tahun 1978 hingga 2000, menggunakan metodologi historis dengan pendekatan multidisiplin. Ini meneliti bagaimana perlawanan membentuk kesadaran kolektif Lebanon, menantang perpecahan sektarian, dan mendefinisikan ulang perannya secara regional dan global. Menggunakan kombinasi memori kolektif (Halbwachs), nasionalisme (Anderson), geopolitik kritis (Toal), trauma budaya (Alexander), teori pascakolonial (Said dan Bhabha), dan teori gerakan sosial (Tarrow dan McAdam), penelitian ini menganalisis transformasi ketakutan menjadi ketahanan dan dampak penarikan Israel tahun 2000 pada pembentukan identitas. Studi ini menyoroti sifat ganda budaya perlawanan, baik yang menyatukan maupun menantang, dan secara kritis memeriksa bagaimana trauma bersama memengaruhi identitas nasional. Ini membahas pergeseran generasi dalam persepsi perlawanan dan berfokus pada implikasi identitas jangka panjang, menawarkan perspektif berwawasan ke depan tentang pembangunan Lebanon yang sedang berlangsung. Dengan mengintegrasikan metode sejarah dengan wawasan dari nasionalisme, gerakan sosial, dan studi budaya, penelitian ini menempatkan perlawanan Lebanon dalam dinamika regional dan global yang lebih luas, memberikan wawasan tentang perang asimetris dan peran aktor non-negara dalam hubungan internasional.

Kata kunci: Identitas Nasional, Perlawanan Anti-Pendudukan, Trauma Budaya, Memori Kolektif, Geopolitik Sosial,

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Lebanese conflict has been a defining feature of the Middle East's geopolitical landscape for decades, shaping not only the relationship between these two nations but also the broader dynamics of the region. At the heart of this conflict lies a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and political factors that have given rise to a unique phenomenon: the culture of resistance in Lebanon. This culture, born out of necessity and nurtured by decades of occupation and conflict, has profoundly influenced Lebanon's national identity and its approach to sovereignty and self-determination.

The emergence of a culture of resistance in Lebanon is deeply rooted in the country's complex history and its position within the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. As Khalidi (1997) argues, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 had immediate and far-reaching consequences for Lebanon, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom sought refuge in Lebanon. This influx of refugees not only altered Lebanon's demographic makeup but also introduced new political and social dynamics that would shape the country's future trajectory.

The seizure of Lebanese lands and property by Israel, particularly in the south, created a volatile situation that would eventually erupt into open conflict. Firro (2003) notes that Israel's expansionist policies led to the occupation of significant portions of Lebanese territory, including entire villages and large swathes of agricultural land. This occupation, coupled with the broader Palestinian refugee crisis, created a complex and volatile situation in Lebanon that gave rise to various resistance movements, both Lebanese and Palestinian.

The culture of resistance that emerged from this context was not merely a reaction to external aggression but a profound reshaping of Lebanese national consciousness. It challenged long-standing sectarian divisions, redefined the relationship between citizen and state, and positioned Lebanon as a key player in the broader Arab struggle against Israeli occupation. As Makdisi (2000) argues, this resistance culture offered a new narrative of Lebanese identity that transcended traditional confessional boundaries, presenting a united front against a common enemy. However, the development of this resistance culture was not without its complexities and contradictions. It emerged against the backdrop of Lebanon's own civil war (1975-1990), which had exacerbated sectarian tensions and weakened state institutions. The resistance movement, particularly as embodied by Hezbollah, had to navigate this complex internal landscape while simultaneously confronting external occupation. This dual challenge shaped the unique character of Lebanese resistance, distinguishing it from other liberation movements in the region. Moreover, the culture of resistance in Lebanon was not monolithic. It encompassed a range of ideologies, strategies, and visions for the future of the country. From secular nationalist movements to Islamist groups, from armed struggle to civil disobedience, the Lebanese resistance was characterized by its diversity. This plurality of approaches reflected the country's own complex social fabric and contributed to the richness and dynamism of the resistance culture.

The impact of this culture of resistance extended far beyond the immediate context of the Israeli-Lebanese conflict. It influenced regional dynamics, challenging prevailing paradigms of conflict resolution and military strategy. The success of Lebanese resistance tactics, particularly those employed by Hezbollah, forced a reevaluation of conventional military doctrines, and highlighted the potential of asymmetric warfare in confronting superior military powers.

On a global scale, the Lebanese resistance experience contributed to broader discussions about the legitimacy of armed struggle against occupation, the limits of state power, and the role of non-state actors in international relations. It raised important questions about the nature of sovereignty in an interconnected world and the balance between national security and human rights.

As we delve deeper into the analysis of Lebanon's culture of resistance, it is crucial to approach this topic with nuance and critical reflection. While acknowledging the profound impact of resistance on Lebanese national identity, we must also grapple with its complexities,

contradictions, and long-term implications. This study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of how the experience of resistance against Israeli occupation shaped Lebanese national identity, transformed collective consciousness, and continues to influence the country's trajectory in the 21st century.

METODE

Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan sejarah yang terdiri atas empat tahapan utama. Tahap pertama adalah heuristik, yaitu pengumpulan data dengan melakukan kajian terhadap sumber tertulis seperti buku dan jurnal yang relevan, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan tokoh Muhammad Natsir. Penulis memanfaatkan sumber primer, seperti buku Capita Selecta I dan Capita Selecta II karya M. Natsir, yang berisi kumpulan pidato yang direkam dalam bentuk tulisan. Sebagai pendukung, digunakan pula sumber-sumber tambahan berupa buku lain, artikel dari internet, dan e-book, sehingga penelitian ini berbasis pustaka (*library research*). Tahap kedua adalah verifikasi atau kritik sumber, yang melibatkan proses kritik eksternal dan internal untuk menguji keabsahan serta kredibilitas sumber yang telah dikumpulkan. Tahap ketiga adalah interpretasi, di mana peneliti menganalisis dan memahami data yang telah diverifikasi, termasuk informasi mengenai biografi Muhammad Natsir, kehidupannya di tanah Minang hingga Bandung, serta peran aktifnya dalam sidang konstituante. Data-data tersebut disusun dan ditafsirkan secara kronologis. Tahap terakhir adalah hitoriografi yaitu penulisan sejarah berdasarkan fakta-fakta yang telah diperoleh melalui analisis kritis. Menurut Helius Sjamsuddin (2007), metode sejarah adalah proses penelitian yang mencakup pengkajian, penjelasan, dan analisis kritis terhadap peristiwa masa lampau, yang kemudian diakhiri dengan penulisan sejarah. Kuntowijoyo (2003) juga menegaskan bahwa tahapan-tahapan dalam metode sejarah ini penting untuk memastikan hasil penelitian yang sistematis dan valid.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Rise of the Lebanese Resistance

The Lebanese resistance movement emerged as a response to the increasing Israeli incursions and occupations of Lebanese territory. Initially, this resistance took various forms, including civil disobedience, political activism, and armed struggle. The involvement of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon, formalized through the 1969 Cairo Agreement, added another layer of complexity to the resistance landscape (Traboulsi, 2012).

As Israeli invasions and occupations intensified, particularly with the 1978 "Operation Litani" and the 1982 invasion that reached Beirut, the Lebanese resistance evolved into a more organized and diverse movement. Various factions, representing different political and ideological perspectives, united under the banner of national liberation (Avon & Khatchadourian, 2012).

The 1982 Israeli invasion marked a turning point in the development of the Lebanese resistance. The scale and intensity of this invasion, which resulted in the occupation of Beirut and the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, galvanized Lebanese society and led to the emergence of new resistance groups. Among these was Hezbollah, which would go on to play a significant role in the resistance movement and in shaping Lebanese politics more broadly (Norton, 2014).

Hezbollah's emergence and rapid rise to prominence is a testament to the complex dynamics at play in Lebanon during this period. Founded with Iranian support in the wake of the 1982 invasion, Hezbollah initially positioned itself as an Islamic resistance movement dedicated to liberating Lebanese territory from Israeli occupation. However, its role quickly expanded beyond mere military resistance. As Saad-Ghorayeb (2002) argues, Hezbollah's success lay in its ability to combine armed struggle with social services and political engagement, creating a comprehensive model of resistance that addressed both immediate security concerns and long-term social needs.

The resistance movement's growth was not without its challenges. The complex sectarian dynamics of Lebanese society, exacerbated by the long-running civil war (1975-1990), often threatened to undermine the unity of the resistance effort. However, as Khalaf (2002) argues, the shared experience of occupation and the desire for national sovereignty served as powerful unifying forces, transcending sectarian divisions to a significant degree. Moreover, the resistance movement had to contend with the reality of a weakened Lebanese state, which had lost much of its authority and legitimacy during the civil war. In this context, resistance groups, particularly Hezbollah, began to take on quasi-state functions in areas under their control. This included providing social services, maintaining security, and even engaging in limited forms of governance. While this enhanced the popularity and legitimacy of the resistance movement among many Lebanese, it also raised complex questions about the relationship between resistance groups and the state (Knudsen & Kerr, 2012).

The resistance movement's military confrontations with Israel, characterized by guerrilla warfare tactics and a deep understanding of the terrain, proved increasingly effective in challenging Israeli occupation. These confrontations not only inflicted significant casualties on Israeli forces but also eroded the psychological advantage that Israel had long held over its Arab adversaries (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002).

The tactics employed by the Lebanese resistance, particularly by Hezbollah, represented a significant innovation in asymmetric warfare. The use of sophisticated intelligence gathering, decentralized command structures, and advanced weapons systems allowed the resistance to effectively challenge a superior military force. As Saouli (2019) notes, these tactics not only proved successful in the Lebanese context but also influenced military doctrines and resistance movements worldwide. Furthermore, the resistance movement's success in mobilizing popular support and maintaining operational effectiveness over an extended period challenged prevailing assumptions about the sustainability of guerrilla warfare. It demonstrated that a well-organized resistance movement, with strong local support and a clear ideological framework, could withstand prolonged conflict with a superior military power.

The rise of the Lebanese resistance also had significant implications for regional dynamics. It challenged the narrative of Israeli military invincibility that had been established through successive Arab-Israeli wars. The ability of Lebanese resistance groups to inflict casualties on Israeli forces and to sustain their struggle over many years altered the strategic calculus of the region, influencing both state actors and other resistance movements (Sayigh, 2007). Moreover, the Lebanese resistance experience contributed to a broader reassessment of the role of popular mobilization and non-state actors in national liberation struggles. It demonstrated that resistance could be effectively waged not just by conventional state armies but by grassroots movements deeply embedded in local communities.

As the resistance movement grew in strength and sophistication, it also began to play an increasingly vital role in shaping Lebanese national identity. The narrative of resistance against occupation became a powerful unifying force, offering a shared sense of purpose that transcended sectarian and political divisions. This narrative emphasized Lebanese agency and resilience in the face of external aggression, countering long-standing perceptions of Lebanon as a weak state at the mercy of regional powers. However, the centrality of resistance to Lebanese national identity also raised important questions about the long-term implications of defining a nation primarily in opposition to an external threat. As El-Husseini (2012) argues, while the resistance narrative provided a powerful source of national cohesion during the period of occupation, it also posed challenges for post-war reconstruction and the development of a positive, forward-looking national vision.

In sense, the rise of the Lebanese resistance represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that transformed not only Lebanon's relationship with Israel but also its internal dynamics and its position within the broader Middle East. Understanding this process is crucial for comprehending the evolution of Lebanese national identity and the country's contemporary political landscape.

The Culture of Resistance: Overcoming the Fear of Israel

One of the most profound impacts of the Lebanese resistance movement was its role in transforming the collective psyche of the Lebanese people, particularly in relation to their perception of Israel. For decades, Israel had been viewed as an invincible military power, a perception reinforced by its victories in conventional wars against Arab states. This perception had fostered a culture of fear and resignation among many Lebanese, who saw resistance as futile or even dangerous (Khashan, 2000).

The resistance movement, however, challenged this narrative through both its actions and its discourse. By inflicting casualties on Israeli forces and demonstrating the vulnerability of the occupation, the resistance began to erode the myth of Israeli invincibility. As Abdelnour (2003) argues, this shift in perception was crucial in galvanizing popular support for the resistance and in fostering a sense of national pride and agency among the Lebanese people.

The culture of resistance that emerged from this process was characterized by several key elements:

1.   The cultivation of steadfastness (Sumud): The concept of steadfastness or remaining rooted in one's land despite hardship and oppression, became a central tenet of the resistance culture. This ethos was particularly evident in the southern villages that endured the brunt of Israeli occupation and retaliation (Khalili, 2007). Sumud represented not just physical presence but a form of existential resistance, a refusal to be displaced or to surrender one's identity in the face of overwhelming force.

2.   The emphasis on collective action: The resistance culture promoted the idea that liberation could only be achieved through collective effort and sacrifice. This emphasis on collective action helped to bridge sectarian divides and foster a sense of national unity (Knudsen & Kerr, 2012). It challenged the individualistic and sectarian tendencies that had long characterized Lebanese society, promoting instead a vision of shared struggle and shared destiny.

3.   The reframing of martyrdom: The resistance movement reframed the concept of martyrdom, presenting it not as a futile sacrifice but as a noble act in service of the nation. This narrative played a crucial role in sustaining the resistance effort and in shaping collective memory (Deeb, 2003). While this reframing was powerful in mobilizing support and creating a sense of shared sacrifice, it also raised ethical questions about the valorization of death and the potential exploitation of young people's idealism.

4.   The rejection of fatalism: Perhaps most importantly, the culture of resistance rejected the fatalistic acceptance of occupation and oppression. Instead, it promoted a narrative of agency and empowerment, encouraging Lebanese citizens to see themselves as active participants in shaping their nation's destiny (Peteet, 1991). This shift from passive victimhood to active resistance was crucial in transforming the collective psychology of the Lebanese people.

5.   The valorization of armed struggle: While controversial, the armed resistance came to be seen by many Lebanese as a legitimate and necessary means of national defense. This perspective was reinforced by the perceived failure of diplomatic efforts and international interventions to secure Lebanese sovereignty (Saouli, 2019). However, the emphasis on armed struggle also posed challenges for post-conflict reconciliation and the development of non-violent means of conflict resolution.

This transformation in cultural attitudes was not limited to the realm of armed resistance. It permeated various aspects of Lebanese society, influencing literature, art, music, and popular culture. As Larkin (2008) notes, the culture of resistance became a powerful force in shaping collective memory and national identity, particularly among younger generations who came of age during the period of occupation and resistance.

The impact of this cultural shift was profound and multifaceted. On one level, it fostered a sense of national pride and unity that transcended sectarian divisions. The shared experience

of resistance against a common enemy provided a powerful narrative around which diverse elements of Lebanese society could rally. This was particularly significant given Lebanon's history of sectarian conflict and the fragmentation of national identity along confessional lines. Moreover, the culture of resistance challenged long-standing power dynamics within Lebanese society. It empowered previously marginalized groups, particularly the Shi'a community of southern Lebanon, who played a leading role in the resistance movement. As Deeb (2003) argues, the resistance narrative allowed these communities to reposition themselves within the national imaginary, claiming a principal place in the story of Lebanese nationhood.

The culture of resistance also had significant implications for Lebanon's relationship with the broader Arab world. By positioning itself at the forefront of the struggle against Israel, Lebanon was able to assert a new role for itself in regional politics. This was a marked shift from its previous image as a weak state vulnerable to external interference. The success of the Lebanese resistance became a source of pride not just for Lebanese but for many across the Arab world, elevating Lebanon's status, and influence in regional affairs. However, the dominance of the resistance narrative in Lebanese national discourse also posed challenges. As Haugbolle (2010) notes, the emphasis on resistance and conflict in national memory often came at the expense of other aspects of Lebanese history and identity. This risked creating a one-dimensional view of Lebanese nationhood, defined primarily in opposition to an external threat rather than through positive attributes or shared aspirations. Furthermore, the culture of resistance, with its emphasis on armed struggle and martyrdom, raised important ethical and psychological questions. While it provided a powerful means of mobilizing society against occupation, it also normalized violence and sacrifice in ways that could be problematic in a post-conflict context. The long-term psychological impact of living in a state of constant conflict and the glorification of martyrdom is an area that merits further study and consideration.

The culture of resistance also had complex implications for Lebanon's relationship with the West. While it fostered a sense of national pride and self-reliance, it also contributed to tensions with Western powers, particularly the United States, which viewed groups like Hezbollah as terrorist organizations. This created challenges for Lebanon's diplomatic and economic relationships, often placing the country in a difficult position between its resistance narrative and its need for international support and engagement.

Despite these challenges, the culture of resistance played a crucial role in reshaping Lebanese national identity and collective psychology. It transformed the perception of Israel from an invincible force to a vulnerable occupier, empowered Lebanese society to take an active role in shaping its destiny, and provided a unifying narrative that transcended sectarian divisions. Understanding this cultural transformation is essential for comprehending contemporary Lebanese politics and society, as well as the broader dynamics of resistance movements in the Middle East and beyond.

The Victory of May 24, 2000, and Its Implications

The Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000, marked a pivotal moment in the history of the Lebanese resistance and in the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This event, widely celebrated in Lebanon as a victory, had far-reaching implications for both Lebanese society and regional dynamics.

The withdrawal was significant for several reasons:

1. Boost to national morale: The withdrawal provided a significant boost to Lebanese national morale. For the first time in decades, Lebanon had achieved a clear victory against Israel, a fact that resonated deeply with a population long accustomed to defeat and occupation (Abdelnour, 2003). This victory challenged long-standing narratives of Arab military inferiority and demonstrated that determined resistance could succeed against a superior military power.

2. Challenges to the peace process: The withdrawal, achieved through armed resistance rather than negotiation, posed challenges to the ongoing peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It raised questions about the efficacy of diplomacy and the potential role of

armed resistance in achieving political objectives (Saouli, 2019). This had significant implications for other conflict zones in the region, particularly the Palestinian territories.

3.   Impact on regional dynamics: The Lebanese resistance's success had a profound impact on regional dynamics, particularly in relation to the Palestinian struggle. It provided inspiration and a potential model for resistance against occupation, influencing Palestinian groups and public opinion (Sayigh, 2007). The withdrawal also altered the strategic calculus of the region, demonstrating the vulnerability of occupation and the potential of asymmetric warfare.

4.   Internal Lebanese dynamics: While the withdrawal was celebrated across Lebanon, it also raised new questions about the future role of armed resistance groups in Lebanese politics and society (Avon & Khatchadourian, 2012). The success of the resistance, particularly Hezbollah, gave these groups significant political capital and popular support. This posed challenges for the Lebanese state in terms of monopolizing the use of force and asserting its authority over all Lebanese territory.

5.   Validation of resistance strategy: The Israeli withdrawal was seen as a vindication of the resistance strategy, particularly the armed struggle. It challenged the long-held belief that Israel could only be compelled to withdraw through diplomatic pressure or conventional military defeat (Norton, 2014). This had significant implications for military doctrine and resistance strategies worldwide.

The aftermath of the withdrawal saw a period of relative calm along the Lebanese-Israeli border, although tensions remained high. The unresolved issue of the Shebaa Farms, a small strip of land claimed by Lebanon but occupied by Israel, continued to serve as a point of contention and a justification for the continued armed presence of resistance groups (Norton, 2014).

The victory of May 2000 also had profound implications for Lebanese national identity. It provided a powerful shared experience that transcended sectarian divisions, offering a moment of national unity and pride. The narrative of resistance and victory became a principal component of Lebanese national discourse, shaping how the country viewed itself and its place in the region. However, the centrality of this victory narrative also posed challenges for Lebanon's post-conflict development. As El-Husseini (2012) argues, the emphasis on resistance and conflict in national memory made it difficult to transition to a peace-time mindset and to address pressing domestic issues. The continued glorification of armed resistance also complicated Lebanon's relationships with Western countries and international institutions. Moreover, the success of the resistance movement, particularly Hezbollah, in forcing the Israeli withdrawal raised complex questions about the relationship between resistance groups and the Lebanese state. Hezbollah's enhanced status following the withdrawal allowed it to maintain its armed wing alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces, creating a situation of dual sovereignty that continues to be a point of contention in Lebanese politics (Knudsen & Kerr, 2012).

The events of May 2000 also had significant implications for Israeli society and military doctrine. The withdrawal, often referred to as a "unilateral" decision by then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak, was seen by many in Israel as a tacit admission of the failure of the occupation strategy. It led to a reevaluation of the costs and benefits of occupation and influenced subsequent Israeli military operations, including the 2006 Lebanon War and operations in Gaza (Norton, 2014).

On a broader scale, the Lebanese resistance's success in forcing an Israeli withdrawal without formal negotiations or international intervention challenged prevailing paradigms of conflict resolution in the region. It provided a model of popular resistance that resonated with many populations living under occupation or authoritarian rule, influencing resistance movements from Palestine to Iraq (Sayigh, 2007).

The victory of May 2000 also contributed to a shift in the balance of power within Lebanon. The success of the resistance, particularly Hezbollah, enhanced the political and social standing of the Shi'a community, which had historically been marginalized in Lebanese politics. This shift had profound implications for Lebanon's sectarian balance and political dynamics in

the following years (Salloukh et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that the narrative of "complete victory" surrounding the events of May 2000 has been contested by some scholars and observers. Critics argue that the continued Israeli occupation of the Shebaa Farms and ongoing tensions along the border indicate that the victory was incomplete. Moreover, the human and economic costs of the long resistance struggle, including the displacement of many southern Lebanese and the destruction of infrastructure, are often overlooked in triumphalist narratives (Nuwayhid et al., 2011).

Accordingly, the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 represents a watershed moment in Lebanese history and in the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its implications continue to shape Lebanese politics, regional dynamics, and global understandings of asymmetric warfare and resistance movements. Understanding this event and its aftermath is crucial for comprehending contemporary Lebanese politics and the ongoing challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and national identity formation.

Resistance Culture and National Identity

The culture of resistance that emerged from Lebanon's struggle against Israeli occupation had a profound impact on Lebanese national identity. This impact was complex and multifaceted, both reinforcing existing aspects of Lebanese identity and introducing new elements.

One of the most significant effects was the way in which the resistance narrative challenged sectarian divisions within Lebanese society. As Makdisi (2000) argues, the sectarian system in Lebanon has historically been a source of division and conflict. However, the shared experience of occupation and resistance created a unifying narrative that transcended sectarian boundaries to a significant degree.

The resistance culture offered a new basis for national cohesion, one rooted in shared struggle rather than confessional identity. This was particularly significant given Lebanon's history of sectarian conflict and the fragmentation of national identity along religious lines. The resistance narrative provided a common point of reference around which diverse elements of Lebanese society could rally, fostering a sense of shared destiny and collective purpose. Moreover, the resistance culture contributed to a reimagining of Lebanon's place in the Arab world and its relationship with its neighbors. As Salibi (1988) notes, Lebanese national identity has long been characterized by a tension between its Arab character and its unique historical and cultural features. The resistance narrative, with its emphasis on Lebanon's role in the broader Arab struggle against Israel, helped to reconcile these competing aspects of Lebanese identity to some extent.

By positioning itself at the forefront of the struggle against Israel, Lebanon was able to assert a new role for itself in regional politics. This marked a significant shift from its previous image as a weak state vulnerable to external interference. The success of the Lebanese resistance became a source of pride not just for Lebanese but for many across the Arab world, elevating Lebanon's status, and influence in regional affairs.

The resistance culture also played a crucial role in shaping collective memory and historical narratives in Lebanon. As Haugbolle (2010) demonstrates, the memory of resistance and liberation became a central element in Lebanese public discourse, education, and commemoration practices. This had significant implications for how younger generations understood their national history and identity.

The narrative of resistance provided a powerful framework for interpreting Lebanon's recent history, offering a story of national resilience and eventual triumph in the face of overwhelming odds. This narrative helped to create a sense of national pride and self-confidence, countering long-standing feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness in the face of external threats. However, the impact of resistance culture on Lebanese national identity was not without its complexities and contradictions. As Reinkowski (1997) argues, the emphasis on armed resistance and the glorification of martyrdom in some quarters sat uneasily with

Lebanon's long tradition of mercantile cosmopolitanism and its aspirations for peaceful development.

The centrality of resistance to national identity also raised questions about the long-term sustainability of this narrative. As El-Husseini (2012) notes, while the resistance narrative provided a powerful source of national cohesion during the period of occupation, it also posed challenges for post-war reconstruction and the development of a positive, forward-looking national vision. Moreover, the dominance of the resistance narrative in national discourse risked overshadowing other aspects of Lebanese identity and history. This could potentially lead to a one-dimensional view of Lebanese nationhood, defined primarily in opposition to an external threat rather than through positive attributes or shared aspirations for the future.

The resistance culture also had complex implications for Lebanon's relationship with the West. While it fostered a sense of national pride and self-reliance, it also contributed to tensions with Western powers, particularly the United States, which viewed groups like Hezbollah as terrorist organizations. This created challenges for Lebanon's diplomatic and economic relationships, often placing the country in a difficult position between its resistance narrative and its need for international support and engagement. Furthermore, the resistance narrative had different resonances within different Lebanese communities. While some wholeheartedly embraced it, particularly within the Shi'a community, others viewed it with ambivalence or even skepticism. This reflects the ongoing challenges of crafting a unified national narrative in a country as diverse and complex as Lebanon.

Despite these challenges, the culture of resistance has undeniably become a central element of contemporary Lebanese national identity. It has reshaped how Lebanese citizens view themselves, their country, and their place in the region and the world. Understanding this transformation is crucial for comprehending contemporary Lebanese politics and society, as well as the broader dynamics of resistance movements and national identity formation in the Middle East and beyond.

Challenges and Controversies

Despite its significant impact on Lebanese society and national identity, the culture of resistance has not been without its challenges and controversies. These include:

1.   Challenges to pluralism: While the resistance narrative has provided a unifying force in many ways, there are concerns that it may also limit the space for diverse perspectives and dissent within Lebanese society. The dominance of the resistance narrative in national discourse may marginalize alternative visions of Lebanese identity and national priorities.

2.   Challenges to state authority: The success and popularity of resistance groups, particularly Hezbollah, has posed challenges to the authority of the Lebanese state. The existence of an armed non-state actor alongside the national military raises complex questions about sovereignty and the monopoly on the use of force (Salloukh et al., 2015).

3.   Disarmament debates: In the years following the Israeli withdrawal, there have been ongoing debates about the disarmament of resistance groups. These debates reflect broader questions about the role of non-state actors in national defense and the nature of state sovereignty (Knudsen & Kerr, 2012). The continued armed status of Hezbollah has been a source of tension both within Lebanon and in its relations with the international community.

4.   Economic impact: The ongoing state of conflict with Israel, justified in part by the resistance narrative, has had significant economic costs for Lebanon. This includes both direct costs (such as damage from Israeli attacks) and indirect costs (such as reduced foreign investment due to perceived instability) (Nuwayhid et al., 2011). The emphasis on resistance has sometimes come at the expense of economic development and social welfare initiatives.

5.   Generational divide: As Hage (2015) suggests, there is a growing generational divide in perceptions of the resistance culture. Younger Lebanese, while often proud of the resistance legacy, are increasingly focused on economic opportunities, political reform, and social issues.

This generational shift poses questions about the long-term sustainability of resistance as a central pillar of Lebanese national identity.

6. Human rights concerns: Some aspects of the resistance culture, particularly those related to armed struggle and martyrdom, have raised human rights concerns. Critics argue that the glorification of violence and self-sacrifice can lead to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals and communities (Human Rights Watch, 1999). There are also concerns about the treatment of civilians in areas under the control of resistance groups.

7. International relations: Lebanon's culture of resistance, particularly its armed component, has been a source of tension in its relationships with Western countries. This has complicated Lebanon's diplomatic and economic relations with these countries (Norton, 2014). The designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization by several Western countries has posed challenges for Lebanon's international engagement.

8. Perpetuation of conflict mindset: The continued emphasis on resistance and the glorification of armed struggle may perpetuate a conflict-oriented mindset, making it difficult to transition to a peace-time focus on development and reconstruction (El-Husseini, 2012).

9. Regional complications: Lebanon's resistance culture, and particularly the role of Hezbollah, has complicated its relationships with other countries in the region. The ongoing Syrian conflict and Hezbollah's involvement in it have raised questions about the nature and scope of "resistance" activities (Salloukh et al., 2015).

10. Sectarian tensions: While the resistance narrative has had a unifying effect in many ways, it has also been a source of tension between different sectarian communities in Lebanon. Some groups, particularly those aligned with the March 14 Alliance, have expressed concern about the growing power of Hezbollah and its impact on Lebanon's political balance (Traboulsi, 2012). The resistance narrative has been embraced more fully by some communities than others, potentially exacerbating existing divisions.

These challenges and controversies highlight the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of Lebanon's resistance culture. While it has played a crucial role in shaping national identity and achieving national liberation, it has also created new challenges for Lebanon's development and its place in the regional and global order. Navigating these complexities will be crucial for Lebanon's future stability and prosperity.

Regional and Global Implications

Lebanon's resistance experience and the culture it engendered have had significant implications beyond Lebanon's borders. At a regional level, it has influenced perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict and strategies for addressing occupation and political oppression.

The success of the Lebanese resistance in forcing an Israeli withdrawal without formal negotiations or international intervention challenged prevailing paradigms of conflict resolution in the region. It provided a model of popular resistance that resonated with many Palestinians and other Arab populations living under occupation or authoritarian rule (Sayigh, 2007). This has had profound implications for resistance movements across the Middle East, influencing both their strategies and their popular support. Moreover, the Lebanese resistance experience has had a notable impact on Israeli society and politics. The withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and the subsequent 2006 war challenged long-held assumptions about Israel's military superiority and the sustainability of occupation as a security strategy. This has influenced Israeli military doctrine and public discourse about the costs and benefits of occupation (Norton, 2014).

On a global scale, the Lebanese resistance narrative has contributed to broader discussions about asymmetric warfare, the legitimacy of armed resistance against occupation, and the limits of conventional military power. Resistance movements and military strategists have studied it alike, influencing thinking about conflict and occupation in various contexts around the world (Saouli, 2019).

The Lebanese experience has also raised important questions about the role of non-state actors in international relations. As Alagha (2006) argues, the success of Hezbollah has

challenged traditional state-centric models of international politics, demonstrating the potential for non-state actors to significantly influence regional and global dynamics. Furthermore, the culture of resistance in Lebanon has had a profound impact on media narratives and information warfare. As Harb (2011) notes, resistance groups in Lebanon, particularly Hezbollah, have developed sophisticated media strategies to shape public opinion both domestically and internationally. This has implications for how conflicts are perceived and reported globally, challenging traditional Western media narratives about the Middle East.

The Lebanese resistance model has also influenced military and strategic thinking beyond the Middle East. The success of a non-state actor against a superior military force has led to reevaluations of conventional military doctrines and the development of innovative approaches to counterinsurgency warfare. This has had implications for conflicts and military planning worldwide. Moreover, the Lebanese experience has contributed to ongoing debates about the nature of sovereignty and the right to resistance in international law. The ability of a non-state actor to effectively defend national territory and force the withdrawal of an occupying power raises complex questions about the evolving nature of statehood and legitimate use of force in the international system. This case challenges traditional Westphalian notions of state sovereignty and highlights the growing importance of non-state actors in global affairs (Falk, 2013).

The culture of resistance in Lebanon has also had a profound impact on media narratives and information warfare. Resistance groups, particularly Hezbollah, have developed sophisticated media strategies to shape public opinion both domestically and internationally. This has implications for how conflicts are perceived and reported globally, challenging traditional Western media narratives about the Middle East (Harb, 2011). The development of Al-Manar television station and various online platforms has allowed these groups to disseminate their message directly to a wide audience, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers.

The Future of Resistance Culture in Lebanon

As Lebanon moves forward, the future of its resistance culture remains a topic of intense debate. The country faces the challenge of translating the narrative of resistance into a vision for peaceful development and inclusive nation-building. This transition is complicated by ongoing regional tensions, internal political divisions, and economic challenges.

El-Husseini (2012) argues that the post-war political settlement in Lebanon, often referred to as the "Pax Syriana," has struggled to fully incorporate the resistance narrative into a stable political framework. The continued armed status of Hezbollah, justified by the resistance narrative, remains a point of contention in Lebanese politics and a source of tension with Western powers. Moreover, there is a growing generational divide in perceptions of the resistance culture. Younger Lebanese, while often proud of the resistance legacy, are increasingly focused on economic opportunities, political reform, and social issues. This generational shift poses questions about the long-term sustainability of resistance as a central pillar of Lebanese national identity (Hage, 2015).

The ongoing Syrian conflict and its spillover effects on Lebanon have also complicated the resistance narrative. Hezbollah's involvement in Syria has challenged its image as a resistance movement focused solely on defending Lebanon against Israel, leading to increased sectarian tensions within Lebanon (Salloukh et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

The culture of resistance that emerged from Lebanon's struggle against Israeli occupation represents a multifaceted phenomenon with profound implications. It has played a pivotal role in shaping Lebanese national identity, challenging entrenched sectarian divisions, and redefining Lebanon's position in the region and beyond.

Through the lens of constructivist nationalism, we can appreciate how the resistance movement has crafted an "imagined community" that transcends traditional

sectarian boundaries. This imagined Lebanon, forged in the crucible of occupation and struggle, offers a unifying narrative with the potential to bridge longstanding divides. However, it also raises significant questions about the sustainability of a national identity predominantly defined by opposition to an external threat.

The concepts of collective memory and "sites of memory" illuminate how key events, symbols, and locations associated with the resistance have become anchors for Lebanese national consciousness. The annual commemoration of Israel's withdrawal on May 24, 2000, for instance, serves as powerful lieu de mémoire—a site where collective memory crystallizes, and national identity is reaffirmed. Yet, as with all collective memories, it is essential to question whose stories are being privileged in this narrative and whose voices are marginalized.

Social movement theory reveals the strategic acumen of the Lebanese resistance, highlighting how it successfully mobilized resources, seized political opportunities, and framed its struggle in ways that resonated with diverse sectors of Lebanese society. This perspective underscores the agency of Lebanese actors in shaping their destiny, challenging the narrative that positions Lebanon solely as a pawn in regional power struggles.

Through the prism of critical geopolitics, we observe how the Lebanese resistance has reshaped perceptions of power dynamics in the Middle East. By successfully challenging Israel's military dominance, the resistance not only altered the strategic calculus of the region but also disrupted long-standing assumptions about the inevitability of Israeli supremacy. This geopolitical shift has far-reaching implications, influencing resistance movements and military doctrines worldwide.

A postcolonial lens allows us to appreciate how Lebanon's resistance narrative has carved out a unique "third space" that defies simple categorization. It is neither fully Eastern nor Western, neither exclusively Arab nor non-Arab, but a hybrid identity reflecting Lebanon's rich historical and cultural heritage. This hybridity, far from being a weakness, may well be Lebanon's greatest strength—offering a model for navigating the complexities of identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Finally, the theory of cultural trauma provides insight into how the experiences of occupation and resistance have been woven into the very fabric of Lebanese society. The shared trauma of conflict has paradoxically become a source of social cohesion, offering a common reference point for disparate communities. Yet, this raises crucial questions about the long-term psychological and social impact of basing national identity on collective trauma.

The Lebanese resistance experience has showcased the extraordinary power of collective action and popular mobilization in the face of overwhelming odds. It demonstrates how a culture of resistance can transform fear into resilience, passivity into agency, and potential defeat into victory. However, it also raises critical questions about the role of armed resistance in national liberation, the delicate balance between resistance and state-building, and the long-term consequences of a resistance-centered national narrative.

As Lebanon grapples with ongoing internal challenges and regional instability, the legacy of its resistance culture remains a potent force in shaping its future. Understanding this culture—its origins, impact, and complexities—is essential for not only comprehending Lebanon's recent history but also anticipating its future trajectory and its role in the broader dynamics of the Middle East.

Lebanon's resistance offers valuable lessons for other societies facing occupation or oppression, while also serving as a cautionary tale about the potential dangers of perpetuating resistance narratives beyond their immediate context. It underscores the need for nuanced approaches to conflict resolution that recognize the legitimacy of resistance while striving for sustainable peace and development.

Ultimately, the story of Lebanon's culture of resistance is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of collective action in the face of adversity. It is a story that continues to evolve, shaping not only Lebanon's future but also contributing to global understandings of conflict, resistance, and national identity in the 21st century.

As Lebanon navigates its complex political landscape and ongoing regional tensions, the enduring impact of its culture of resistance will undoubtedly play a decisive role. The task ahead lies in harnessing the unifying potential of this shared narrative while simultaneously creating space for new, forward-looking visions of Lebanese identity that can address the challenges of the future

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