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English summary

This study analyses the Islamist movements in Tripoli, in light of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a religious field. Its point of departure is the empirical observation that the Islamist movements in Tripoli, a city in North Lebanon with approximately 500,000 inhabitants, are among the most fragmented in the entire *Ummah* (the Islamic nation). Previous studies have not sufficiently explained this high degree of fragmentation, because they have been unable to bridge the disciplinary boundaries necessary, and take into account the ideosyncracies of Lebanese politics, while at the same time insisting on the transnationalised character of most Islamist movements.

Seeking to account for the fragmentation within the religious field in Tripoli, the present study seeks to answer five main questions: Firstly, which are the most salient issues that divide the religious leaders within the field? Secondly, which are the endogenous and exogenous factors that account for the fragmentation within the field? Thirdly, do religious leaders in Tripoli relate to political decision makers when the political opportunity structures undergo changes? How is the religious field conquered by the political field, and through with means do its leaders manage to gain autonomy from the political decision makers? And lastly, what does the case of Tripoli tell us about the relationship between the religous and the political spheres in other Islamic centra in the Umma?

The main findings of this study is that the Islamist leaders in Tripoli are drawn between unity and fragmentation. The Islamist field is in fact located in the intersection between the national political field, on the one side, and the transnational Islamist field, on the other. Their sensitive position in which the religious leaders find themselves create a number of constraints as to how they can express their ideology. The various Islamist rhetorics become more volatile and prone to change, depending on political circumstances.

Sammendrag

Denne studien analyserer de islamistiske bevegelsene i Tripoli i Nord-Libanon, i lys av Pierre Bourdieus feltkonsept. Studien tar som utgangspunkt at de islamistiske bevegelsene i Tripoli, en by på kun 500 000 innbyggere, er blant de mest fragmenterte i hele Ummaen (den islamske nasjonen). Tidligere studier om emnet har ikke i tilstrekkelig grad forklart denne høye graden av intern splittelse, hovedsakelig fordi studiene enten analyserer spørsmålet som en funksjon av kjennetegn ved libanesisk politikk eller baserer seg på transnasjonalismeparadigmet, dvs. at man betrakter Islamisme i Tripoli hovedsakelig som en del av en transnasjonalisert Islamistisk bevegelse.

Med utgangspunkt i tanken om at den høye graden av fragmentering på det islamistiske feltet i Tripoli utgjør et mysterium, forsøker denne studien å besvare fem spørsmål. For det første, hvilke ideologiske konfliktlinjer finnes på feltet? For det andre, hvordan forholder religiøse ledere i Tripoli seg til politiske beslutningstakere, gitt ulike politiske kontekster og handlingsrom (”opportunity structures”)? For det andre, hvilke endogene og eksogene faktorer kan bidra til å forklare fragmenteringen på feltet? I forlengelsen av dette, hvordan blir det religiøse feltet erobret av det politiske feltet og på hvilke måter kan religiøse ledere oppnå autonomi fra de politiske beslutningstakerne? Og til sist, hva forteller tilfellet Tripoli oss om forholdet mellom religion og politikk i andre Islamske sentra i Ummaen?

Studiens hovedfunn er at de religiøse lederne i Tripoli er dratt mellom enhet og fragmentering. Feltet befinner seg i skjæringspunktet mellom det nasjonale politiske feltet, på den ene siden, og det transnasjonale islamistiske feltet på den andre. Den utsatte posisjonen som hver av aktørene befinner seg i, setter opp en mengde begrensninger for hvordan de kan uttrykke sin ideologi. De ulike islamistiske retorikkene på feltet blir dermed mer tilbøyelige til å tilpasse seg endrede politiske forhold.

Contents

Preface

This study contains revised extracts of a master's thesis, submitted to the Institut d'Études Politiques (IEP) de Paris (Sciences-Po in Paris) and defended on September 2, 2008. The thesis was carried out with a scholarship from the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). Once the thesis completed, I was so lucky as to be able to transform parts of it into an FFI-report.

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1 Introduction

Despite the newly established relative calm elsewhere in Lebanon, the northern city of Tripoli is going through one of the most difficult tests to its social cohesion since the civil war. More than 23 persons were killed, hundreds wounded, and several thousands families have been displaced since early May 2008 in clashes between Sunnis and Alawis in the crowded neighbourhoods of Bab Tebbaneh and Qubbeh, and Bal Mohsen, respectively, throwing a shadow of the past on the city.[1] To top off the situation of insecurity, two bomb exploded in mid-August and September in Tripoli, killing 18 and six persons, respectively. In fact, these are the same cleavages that existed during the civil war, now re-activated in a political struggle for the strategic and ideological future of Lebanon, which extends itself to the whole region, in the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the Iranian Islamic Republic. At the same time, the Sunni clerics in Tripoli, doctors of Islamic law, are far from united in one social movement in this struggle. Rather, they constitute a religious field, a space of ideological struggle over the assignment of meaning to disputed terms in Islam.[2] This religious field in Tripoli is tightly linked to the Lebanese political field, and many religious leaders see themselves engaged in the rivalry between the different "political streets" in Lebanon.[3] At the same time, dynamics such as the presence of Jihadi cells in the Nahr al-Barid

[1] See "The rocket came through the window at dawn", the United Nations Relief Web, *International Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*, July 29, 2008, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/VDUX-7GZLUP?OpenDocument, accessed July 2008.

[2] A field is an ideological battlefield, where different political or ideological positions fight each other for influence, the overarching stake of the game being to obtain hegemony over the field. It is a battle over meaning, all the same fought on the basis of a given balance of power between the different actors. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was the one who developed the notion of a field. See Pierre Bourdieu: *Questions de Sociologie*, (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1984). In the particular case of the religious field; Bourdieu analysed how and in which circumstances the hegemonic role of orthodox, religious institutions could be to be challenged by heretic sects or prophets, endowed with charismatic legitimacy, particularly in times of political turmoil. Actors within the religious field were, in this paradigm, competing over the legitimate exercise of religious power (power here understood in a Bourdieusian sense) and over the control of what Bourdieu called "salvation goods". This analysis, indebted to Marxist theory, argues that the ideology and selection of means of each actor can be understood in light not only of factors endogenous the religious creed and the divine revelation, but also as a function of the position of each rivalling actor in the power hierarchy within the field. It must be added, however, that in field analysis, all actors within the particular field share a common set of characteristics and beliefs, which justify analysing the actors within the field as a separate value. Within the Islamist field, actors share a conviction, which certainly can be understood to different lengths, depending on each specific actor, that Islam is a religion, which cannot be separated from any sphere of life and that Islam should be the main reference of the jurisdiction of Muslims. When analysing the dynamics within the Islamist field, then, such actors, internal to the field, can be called "specialists" [i.e. special or proper to the field], while, actors external to the field should be called "secularists". See "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", the key reference to Bourdieu's writing on religion, *Revue française de sociologie*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1971 (July/September), pp. 295-334; in particular, pp. 318-319 and 322.

[3] A political alliance, created in the aftermath of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, the 14 March alliance see themselves as advocates of the "independence and sovereignty of Lebanon" and of the development state institutions (in the face of Syrian and Iranian influence). It is named after the date of the so-called "Cedar Revolution". The alliance is formed by Christian parties such as the Lebanese Forces (led by Samir Geagea) and the Phalangist party (led by Amin Gemayyel), and Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), in addition to the Future Movement, led by Hariri's son, Sa'd. It is

refugee camp, ten minutes from the city, which initially dispatched mujahidin to Iraq, and later engaged in a protracted fight against the Lebanese armed forces (LAF), manifested the plug-in[4] of certain youth in Tripoli with actors connected to the transnational Salafi-Jihadi movement.[5]

1.1 The creation of a Sunni *asabiyya* in Tripoli in the 1970s- and 80s

Describing the Islamist movements in Tripoli during the struggle with the Syrians, in his classic study of the Lebanese Tawhid movement, the late French researcher Michel Seurat used the concept *neighbourhood asabiyya*.[6] He argued that the Islamic movements in the city were bound together by an *espirit de corps* ("group feeling") or "sense of belonging".

The *asabiyya* had evolved in the 1970s as a primordial loyalty towards the neighbourhood of Bab Tebbaneh.[7] This area, an urban shantytown located northeast of the city centre, had become the incarnation of Sunnism in north Lebanon. It housed Sunni countrymen who had emigrated from the impoverished countryside north of Tripoli, in search for a better future. The coastal parts of Akkar and Miniyeh, north of Tripoli, were almost exclusively inhabited by Sunni Muslims.[8] The social, economic, and political exclusion of the neighbourhood, mirrored in the margenalisation of north Lebanon compared to Beirut, made the youth in Tebbaneh more prone to become mobilised by protest movements.[9]

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opposed to the March 8 alliance, constituted mainly by Hezbollah, the Amal movement (led by Parliament speaker Nabih Berry), and Michel Aoun and his Christian allies, actors who defend the Lebanese resistance's (to Israel) right to exist and maintain their weapons.

[4] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social. An Introduction to Actor-Network theory,* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 299.

[5] Fatah al-Islam installed itself in Nahr al-Barid around October 2007. The group consisted of different sub-groups, which were seduced by Fatah al-Islam with different rhetoric. The group initially consisted of leader Shakir al-Absi and his men, who had arrived in Nahr al-Barid from Syria, via the Palestinian camps close to Beirut. In addition to Shakir al-Absi and Abi Hurayra, the group consisted of a number of Arab youngsters, mostly Saudis and Tunisians, who had been recruited through Jihadi web forums. They had come to Lebanon on their way to "fight the Americans in Iraq or the Jews in Palestine". The group issued communiqués, claiming to be a heritor of Yassir Arafat's Fatah movement, returning the Palestinian cause to "the right Islamic path". It claimed, at the same time, to be a Salafi-Jihadi group, and declared its adherence to al-Qaeda's ideology. See Fatah al-Islam, "Announcement of the Establishment of Fatah al-Islam" (in Arabic) in "A Call to the Knights of Islam in all Parts of the World and Especially in Lebanon, the Announcement of Jihad in Jerusalem" (in Arabic), *markaz al-fajr lil-i'lam, [al-Fajr Media Centre]*, April 25, 2007, http://kaled.modawanati.com, accessed June 2007. Detailed analyses of the rise of the Fatah al-Islam movement lies outside the scope of this report. For studies on this specific group, see Bernard Rougier, "Fatah al-Islam : un réseau jihadiste au cœur des contradictions libanaises", *Qu'est-ce que le Salafisme?*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2008); and
Tine Gade, "Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Between local and global Jihad", *FFI-report*, 2007/02727, Kjeller (Norway), December 2007, http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00102/02727_102478a.pdf.

[6] Michel Seurat, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli (Liban). Étude d'une '*asabiyya urbaine*", in Michel Seurat, *l'État de barbarie,* (Paris, Seuil, 1989), p. 110, 132-133.

[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 118-119, 121.

[8] See Éric Verdeil, Ghaleb Faour, and Sébastien Velut, *Atlas du Liban. Territoires et sociétés*, (Beirut, Institut Français du Proche Orient/CNRS Liban, 2007), p. 84.

[9] Michel Seurat, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli, *op.cit.,* p. 127.

The persistence of family ties between Tebbaneh and Akkar was one reason why the neighbourhood became a gateway to the Sunni countryside, the role of the market in Tebbaneh, a key commercial outlet for farmers from Akkar, another. The linkage of Bab Tebbaneh to the "Sunni reservoir in north Lebanon" would be a crucial element defining the identity of the youth in Bab Tebbaneh in the subsequent period of political crisis and communitarian mobilisation. Allied with the Islamo-Palestino-Progressivist alliance, the Sunni youth movements in Tripoli had by 1970 become immersed in the national power struggles, which led to the civil war. When the Syrian forces entered Tripoli in 1976, as part of the Arab Deterrence Force, they implanted themselves in the Alawi-majority hills surrounding the city and singled out Alawi community leaders, such as Ali Id, as their key alliance partners.[10] The first clashes between Syrian-backed Alawis and Sunnis in Bab Tebbaneh began in 1978.[11]

Sunni militant youth in Bab Tebbaneh were outraged by the Syrian meddling in Lebanese affairs and the crash down on the Palestinian resistance movement. The Syrian support of the competing Alawi community leaders and the perception that the Syrians had intervened in Lebanon in support of the Christians paved the way for proponents of a communitarian response. By the end of the decade, a set of local ideological entrepreneurs, inspired by the rhetoric of the Syrian Muslim brotherhood against the Assad regime, framed the struggle of the Sunnis in Bab Tebbaneh against the Syrian army and the Lebanese Alawis, as defence of Sunni identity against heterodox beliefs. After the destruction of the city centre in Hama in February 1982, the population in Tripoli was traumatised, feared for having to live the same fate.[12]

After its resilience to the Syrian army and the Lebanese state institutions, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July 1982, Tripoli gained a reputation for being a *cité-État combattante* – a "Combatant city-state".[13] Many of its religiously engaged youth participated in the joint ideological, military, and political enterprise of *Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami* (the Movement for Islamic Unity, or the Tawhid movement), and raised the black banners of Islam and the slogans of the "honour of Tripoli" (*karamat trablus*) and "purification of Islam".

1.2 The transformation of the Islamist field since the heydays of the *asabiyya*

A comparison of the religious movements in contemporary Tripoli with those that existed during the civil war, period during which most of the Sunni Islamist movement present today were created, shows that the field has been subject to profound transformation. Since the heydays of the *asabiyya* in the first half of the 1980s, the Islamist field in Tripoli seems to have been fragmented and put on the defensive in the face of Syrian control in north Lebanon and the rise of secular Sunni decision makers.[14]

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 134.
[11] Interview with a former fighter in Bab Tebbaneh, Tripoli, February 2009.
[12] Michel Seurat, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli, *op.cit.,* p. 136.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[14] Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya's loss of two seats in Parliament after the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1996, compared to the elections in 1992, could be interpreted as a sign of a loss of influence of Islamist parties. For an interesting analysis of Syrian control of religious dignitaries and youth in north Lebanon,

Interviews with religious dignitaries and participatory observation in Tripoli in March-May 2008 and February 2009 indicate that the city's religiously engaged youth (*al-shebab al-multazimun*) are fragmented in a multitude of different Islamist groups. Many of the existing religious movements give their loyalty to foreign countries and some even take up guns against each others, in what can be seen as a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.[15] Even the local offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, as well as the Salafists, are split in several factions, which regularly lash out against each other in the local press.[16] The protagonists in the Islamist field in Tripoli all seem to know each other personally. Why, then, is it so fragmented?

1.3 The Tripoli puzzle in the current status of research

A common idea in the study of social movements is that the density of networks of relation, or "social circles", is positively correlated with the occurrence of collective action. Social networks facilitate the emergence of one united social movement, with common interests, similar motivation, and shared goals.[17] It is therefore puzzling that Tripoli, a small city, where religious leaders have almost daily interactions, has given birth to such a fragmented Islamist scene. The religious leaders in the city even have a common history of mobilisation and a traumatic collective memory of suffering at the hands of the Syrian regime, and most are part of the same informal economy in one of the marginalised neighbourhoods in the city. Yet, the Islamist movements within its city walls seem to be among the most fragmented in the Umma.

The academic bibliography on Sunni Islam in Tripoli is rather thin. Despite the great interest given to power politics in Lebanon in the field of Middle East comparative politics, not many academic texts have been written focused specifically on the north of Lebanon. With regards to religious groups in Lebanon, more emphasis has been given to the structure and weakness of Lebanese confessionalism, to religious mobilisation of Shiites, or Maronites, and their connections to different foreign sponsors or custodians. The rather sparse corpus analysing the communitarian mobilisations of the Sunni community, including religious activism, in Lebanon, can be distinguished into two, perhaps three, categories.

The first category is the Arabic language media reports and writings destined for the broader public, based upon mainly first hand sources. The most detailed report, to this author's

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prior to the withdrawal in April 2005, see Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 2004), p. 231.

[15] *Shebab* is an Arabic word for youth. Rather than referring to the young age of the persons in question, it refers the neighbourhood youth. It is their zeal and enthusiasm and affiliation to a group, which is highlighted. One can very well remain a *shabb* (singular of *shebab*) until the age of fifty. Michel Seurat, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli, *op.cit.,* p. 129.

[16] See, for instance, "The Future Movement agreed, so we signed the Memorandum. And when they backed off, we froze it" (in Arabic), *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 21, 2008, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=10859&article=483708&feature=, last accessed in February 2009.

[17] See Jacques Lagroye, "Les pratiques de participation", in *Manuel de sociologie politique*, Fifth Edition, 2006, pp. 315-337.

knowledge, came with the publication of a compendium of 220 pages entitled "The Islamic movements in Lebanon", published by *al-Safir Information centre*, in May 2007. A Lebanese writer, Zuhayr Hawwari, published in 2003 a series of articles entitled "Broad journey into the Currents of the Sunni Islamic Political Movement", for the Lebanese daily *al-Safir*. Lebanese media reports, although essential in order to follow the day-to-day developments on the ground can hardly be said to constitute independent, academic research.[18] In fact, most, if not all, Lebanese newspapers, blogs, and TV channels are partisan, and many are directly sponsored by to political parties, such as al-Mustaqbal [Future] TV station and newspaper, financed by of the Hariri family, and OTV and The Orange Room forum (www.forum.tayyar.org), close to the Aounists. Another exemple of a Lebanese newspaper with a clear editorial line, is the daily *al-Akhbar*, financed by Iran. Some of these media outlets are "Lebanised" in the sense that they tend to link everything that occurs in Lebanon to the power struggle between the two competing political camps in the country. For instance, the rise of the Islamist Fatah al-Islam movement, which claimed to be a Salafi-Jihadi group, was read either as a creation of the Syrians (for the 14 March camp) or as a product sponsored by Saudi Arabia and the Future movement (for the supporters of the Hezbollah and the Aounists).

The emphasis is thus on the Lebanese conceptual frame therefore to the extent that there is even a slight tendency to see Lebanon as the centre around which the regional politics – and sometimes the world – evolves.[19] When dealing with Islamism in Tripoli, although giving several reasons for the fragmentation of the field, many studies written by Lebanese journalists, of different degrees of political orientation, seem to explain it primarily as a result of Lebanese politics as being fragmented *per se*. The Islamist field in Tripoli is rightly placed the within the framework of the Lebanese political system, which is characterised by a weak state, a neo-feudalist political system, where political power is confined to the large, influential families, and a high level of interventions by regional powers in local political affairs.[20] A nodal point in this debate is the idea that the political elite is instrumentalising the Islamist movements and that the Islamist leaders have personal interests of in concluding such alliances, to the detriment of the grass root militants, "who are fooled" and utilised at the hands of others. This argument, also echoed by most inhabitants in Tripoli, is however rather simplistic and quite deterministic, since it cannot be falsified (if no proof on financial backing of a group by political leaders is found; it is only because the journalists or researchers have not dug deep enough...). The argument, should it prove

[18] Certain books, written by Lebanese journalists or politicians, explicitly state that they do not claim objectivity in the Lebanese political polarisation. See, for instance, Marwan Iskandar, *Rafiq Hariri and the Fate of Lebanon*, (London, Saqi books, 2006), p. 18.

[19] Of course, there are also counter examples of extremely skilful journalists who cannot be clearly aligned with any Lebanese newspaper patron, such as Hazeem Amin, writing for *al-Hayat* and Qasem Qasir, working for *al-Safir*, *al-Hayat*, and *al-Shu'un al-Janubiyya*. See, for instance, Hazeem Amin, "How did the group Find a Foothold in the City? Al-Zahiriyyah and the Mitayn Separate the McDonalds Tripoli from the Tripoli of Fatah al-Islam" (in Arabic), *al-Hayat* (London) May 24, 2007.

[20] See Elizabeth Picard, "Le monde arabe, un ensemble construit par les représentations et structuré par les contraintes", in Elizabeth Picard (ed.), *La politique dans le monde arabe,* (Paris, Armand Colin, 2006), pp. 22-24, 27; and "The Middle East and the State Debate: A Conceptual Framework", in Nazih al-Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab state*, (London, Tauris, 2001), pp. 33-34.

pertinent, could gain strength if supplemented by a more precise analyses of the different types of relation which can exist between actors within the religious and the political field, respectively.
The second category of former studies on the Islamist field in Tripoli is the Western, mainly US, *think tank* reports on Islamism and Jihadism in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Most of these analyses seem to be reading the events in Tripoli within the "war on terror" paradigm.[21] Often visibly policy- and security oriented, many of these studies occupy a rather large place in the Western discourse on Sunnism in Lebanon (perhaps because Michel Seurat's article has never been translated to English!) Discursively many of these writings are very close to US neo-conservative rhetoric. Certain studies in this literature tend to exaggerate the attraction of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups among Sunnis in Lebanon. One example is Emily Hunt's "Can al-Qaeda's Lebanese expansion be stopped?", published by *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* in February 2006.[22] Although much of the work in this line is detailed and very precise, for instance Gary C. Gambill's article "Ain al-Hilweh: Lebanon's zone of unlaw",[23] other texts are suffering from inaccuracies or opinionated arguments.

In this material, there is a tendency that certain lines of argument, cited in numerous texts, are based upon a very thin or biased source selection (for instance based on translation of Arabic language newspapers), to the point of swallowing the propaganda of one of the camps in the Lebanese conflict. An example of how certain Middle East "specialists" writing on violent expressions of Sunni Islamism in Lebanon are inattentive to informants' possible personal motivations in how they portray the issue, is Seymour Hersh's famous article, published in *The New Yorker* in March 2007. In this article, Hersh claimed that the US government had agreed to co-operate with Saudi Arabia and Lebanese Future Movement politicians in funding radical Sunni movements in Lebanon, ideologically close the al-Qaeda, as an attempt to weaken Hezbollah.[24] No such funding, has however, been officially documented and many other researchers writing on Sunni Islamism in Lebanon have questioned Hersh's source selection.[25]

The third source is the French- and English language purely academic sources on Sunni identity in Tripoli and North Lebanon (written for a more specialised public, and often based on extensive field work in the region). Among the studies on Islamism in Tripoli, written in European languages, the most important reference is Michel Seurat's fine article "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli. Etude d'une *asabiyya* urbaine", written in 1984, and published in 1989, after

[21] For an comparison of the Bush administration's "war on terror" narrative and the "martyrdom" narrative (used by actors linked to the global Jihadi movement), see Gilles Kepel's latest book, *Terreur et martyre: relever le défi de civilisation*, *op.cit*, pp. 11-12, 21-25. The book has recently been translated to English, published by Harvard University Press, with the title *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*, (Boston, Harvard University Press, 2008).
[22] Policy Watch 1076, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2440 , last accessed in March 2009.
[23] Published in Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, vol. 5, No 6, June 2003, last accessed March 2009.
[24] Seymour M. Hersh, "The Redirection. Is the Administration's New Policy Benefitting our Enemies in the War on Terrorism?", *The New Yorker*, March 5, 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa_fact_hersh , last accessed in March 2009.
[25] Interviews and informal discussions with a number of Lebanese and foreign researchers writing on Sunni Islamism in Lebanon, conducted in Lebanon and France in 2008 and 2009.

the tragic death of the author. Seurat, who lived periods in the Bab Tebbaneh neighbourhood in Tripoil during the Tawhid Emirate, focused as mentioned above on the the body spirit (*asabiyya*) among the population in Bab Tebbaneh. The most significant recent contribution is Bernard Rougier's ground-breaking analysis of the militant Islamist groups in Ain al-Helweh, where he features an analysis of the role of the Islamic institutes in Lebanon in spreading the Da'wa (call to Islam).[26] In 2008, Rougier published a well-documented study on the rise of the Fatah al-Islam movement and its connections to Salafi clerics in north Lebanon.[27] The contributions of Seurat and Rougier put the rise of Islamic activism in Tripoli in conceptual and idiosyncratic frameworks making it possible for us to understand the Islamic field in Tripoli in 2008. Yet, some time has passed since the publication of these classics, and it could be interesting to note the evolutions since Rougier published his study in 2004, with both a growing transnationalism and increasing political stakes inside Lebanon. Omayma Abdel-Latif has recently written a report for the Carnegie Endowment, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists – A growing force", where she analyses the issue with a clever hand.[28] This interesting work, based on interviews with certain shaykhs, sheds particular light on the alleged co-operation between the Future movement and the Salafists. Patrick Haenni, writing for the International Crisis Group (ICG), also writes on Salafism and the Future movement, with particular emphasis on the militarisation of the Future movement, and the rise of private security companies.[29] His forthcoming book on the history of the city of Tripoli in the second half of the 20th century will fill a void in the study of comparative politics in Lebanon.

Hence, with a few fine exceptions, many of the former studies on the Islamist field in Tripoli seem perhaps too structural and read the field either as a function of the national political scene or as actors (actors undissociable from the transnational uniform references of the Salafi current) . Religious actors who engaged in politics are seen either within the conceptual frame of the nation state, or within the conceptual framework of transnationalism.

1.4 Structure and main argument of the dissertation

In this study I will argue that the key to understanding the Islamist field in Tripoli, and particularly its fragmentation, is to simultaneously study how the field relates to the transnational Islamist field, on the one side, and to the national, political field, on the other. I will aim to structure the analysis along the axis of one central question: in which ways does the religious field in Tripoli constitute a microcosm, or a resonance chamber, reflecting the matters of dispute taking place in other centra in the Islamic nation (Umma)? The general question poses a series of sub-questions: Which are the most salient issues that divide the religious leaders within the field?

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[26] Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au qutotidien*, (Paris, PUF, 2004), English translation, *Everyday Jihad*, (Boston, Harvard University Press, 2008).
[27] Bernard Rougier, "Fatah al-Islam : un réseau jihadiste au cœur des contradictions libanaises", *op.cit.*
[28] Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists – A Growing Force", Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Endowment, January 2008, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CMEC6_abdellatif_lebanon_final.pdf.
[29] See, for instance, "Lebanon: Hezbollah's weapons turn inwards", Middle East Briefing N° 23, May 15, 2008, http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east___north_africa/b23_lebanon_hizbollahs_weapons_turn_inward.pdf, last accessed March 2009.

Why are they so divided? How is the religious field conquered by the political field, and does its leaders manage to gain autonomy from the political decision makers? And what does the case of Tripoli tell us, about the relationship between the religious and the political spheres in other Islamic centra in the Umma?

More concretely, a study of the relationship between religion and politics in Tripoli could be operationalised by an assessment of how and under which circumstances actors operating within the field choose to change parts of their ideology, in order to concur with the more "easily sellable" rhetoric at each political opportunity structure.[30] For instance, depending on circumstances; religious leaders actors can easily jump from Umma-oriented discourses (defence of Muslims everywhere) to a more "Lebanised" confessional register – anti-Shia and anti-Hezbollah), depending mainly on the liberty of action and access to funding.[31] A jump from Umma-oriented Islamism to sectarian Islamism implies a profound change of the *diagnosis* and *prognosis* elements in the ideology propagated by the actors, not least a change of blame attribution from being an Israeli or an American soldier in Iraq to being a Lebanese Shia.[32] This study will propose to analyse to what extent and how such a transformation of ideology take place, under the severe constraints of Machiavellian *realpolitik*. As will be seen, since the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, Islamist movements find themselves at a crossroads, drawn between the intersecting cleavages of transnational bonds of religion, on the one side, and political bonds of clientilism in Lebanon, on the other.

Attempting to answer these questions in five chapters, this study aims to analyse three different political temporalities in Tripoli. Starting, after a brief background chapter, with an analysis of the local and national dynamics in the civil war, which will shape the rules on the field, it will shown in chapter three, that by the end of the 1980s, the dynamics are frozen on the local Islamist field in Tripoli, illustrated by the physical exit of many of its protagonists. In chapter four, it will be explained how transnational dynamics were imported to Tripoli during the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s. Through this transnational *plug-in*, the communications revolution and especially the increased availability of Internet facilities in Tripoli, contributed to revitalising but

[30] "Political opportunity structure" refers to the organisational or structural factors, which affect movement mobilisation. The term is used to describe the relationship between changes in the structure of the political opportunities, such as changes in the institutional structure and/or informal relations of a political system, and movement mobilisation. It has been one of the main foci of the research literature on social movements over the past 25 years. See Rober D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing and social movements: An Overview and Assessment", *op.cit.*, p. 628; and David A. Snow et. al., "Frame alignment processes, micromobilizaiton, and movement participation", *op.cit.*, p. 464.

[31] For a discussion around different Islamist projects, such as state-oriented, nation-oriented, Umma-oriented, morality-oriented, and sectarian (anti-Shia) Islamism, see introduction chapter in Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia*, *op.cit.,* p. 63.

[32] John Wilson distinguishes, in his classic book on social movements, between three different components of an ideology: *diagnosis* (presenting the problem), *prognosis* (solution to these problems and a vision of a better world); and a *rationale* for the movement. Wilson's concept of diagnosis framing contains two elements, first, problem identification and second, attribution of blame and causality. Blame for some problematic condition is attributed by identifying culpable agents, who could be either individuals or collective processes and structures". See John Wilson, *Introduction to Social Movements*, (New York, Basic Books, 1973), p. 95.

also completely transforming, the dynamic of the local field in Tripoli, "linking it in" through "imaginary exits" with Islamic centra throughout the Islamic nation. Then after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in spring 2005, Lebanon returns as a matter of dispute. This revival is the topic of the fifth chapter. This last chapter will explore the functioning of the field in the present time, created by local, national, and regional (explained in chapter three), and transnational (chapter four) dynamics. Which ideological debates and political disputes is it that shape the competition on the field? How do the Islamist leaders engage in rivalry over minds and meaning in the local population, and how are the different versions of Islamism in Tripoli re-affirmed through collective action?

1.5 The pertinence of Tripoli to the study of Islamism and comparative politics

It could seem rather odd to want to go into the minutiae of local politics in a medium-sized Lebanese city to shed light on the evolution of global Islamism. Yet, if we take as a starting point the fact that every structural phenomena, even culture, language or law, is produced somewhere, we suggest that no place is global – that everything can and must be localised somewhere.[33] For the French philosopher of science, Bruno Latour, "no place dominates enough to be global and no place is self-contained enough to be local".[34] With this idea in mind, Tripoli should be seen as a microcosm in which so-called global structures (of Islamism) are reflected.[35]

The term "microcosm" is derived from the Greek "mikro kosmos" ("little world"). It refers to the idea of "a place, community or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristics or features of something much larger".[36] As a microcosm, Tripoli is an interesting case study because the dynamic in the field to a great extent would be a reflex of events taking place within other fields in the Islamic world. Seen as a panorama, Tripoli becomes first and foremost interesting in terms of its passivity: it reflects and echoes dynamics that take place on other Islamic fronts in the Umma.[37] It seems to be no more than a *resonance chamber* echoing sounds of doctrinal and ideological disputes that take place elsewhere (such as in Saudi Arabia between modernist reformers and traditionalist ulama'[38] or on the European continent as a response to "offences against Islam") or a Platonian wall with shadows of battles that are being waged miles away (as happens, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine). The developments on the field in Tripoli do not seem to have much influence or echo on Islamic fields elsewhere in the Umma.

At the same time, since the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country in spring 2005, the religious leaders have become increasingly solicited by political stakeholders. It has led to the religious field in Tripoli becoming partly overtaken by strictly political issues, internalising the disputes that take place within the national political field. Because the religious field in Tripoli is

[33] See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social. An Introduction to Actor-Network theory, op.cit.*, p. 175.
[34] *Ibid.,* p. 204.
[35] *Ibid.,* p. 175.
[36] "Microcosm", entry in *Oxford American dictionaries*.
[37] *Ibid.,* pp.187, 189 (emphasis added).
[38] For an excellent analysis of the debates on the Islamist field in Saudi Arabia, see Stéphane Lacroix's doctoral dissertation, *Les champs de la discorde: une sociologie politique de l'Islamisme en Arabie Saoudite*, PhD thesis, supervised by Gilles Kepel, *Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris*, 2008.

closely connected to the national political field, as well as to other religious fields abroad, religious leaders in Tripoli are pushed to act by mechanisms taking place far beyond their reach. They can be seen as *intermediaries* or *mediators* between forces external to Tripoli and their local populations of believers. The term *intermediary* refers to the idea of replaceable actants. With no "proper value", an intermediary "simply transport" dynamics taking place elsewhere and can be replaced by any other actant. Conversely, *mediators*, are "actors in the true sense of the word", translating causes before re-applying it.[39] If the religious leaders in Tripoli can be analysed as relatively autonomous from their ideological midwives or financial sponsors, we would say that the religious leaders have become *mediators* in stead of simple *intermediaries*.

The religious field in Tripoli could then also be seen as a local site that not only reflects, but also *manufactures* global structures (or manufactures transformations to the articulation of "global Islamism"). What distinguishes such a *centre of calculation* is not size, but the number of connections linking the local site to other places in the world, and the existence of ideological transfers, vehicled through distinguishable "means of transportation", such as e-mails, text books, and money.[40] Latour insists that there are in fact some places that benefit from far safer connections with many more places than others. In order to "localise the global", he insists that one must follow the trail of those connections, cables, means of transportation, or vehicles linking the different places together myopically to produce a continuous trail.[41] This is what he calls to "flatten the social". This method of social investigation, developed by Latour is known as ANT (actor-network theory). According to Latour, only the enquiry will decide what the vehicles are and what are the documents for each case.[42]

So why it is that in 2008, Tripoli obtains such a special position, as a *microcosm* or even possibly a *centre of calculation*, in the Islamic nation (Umma)? Firstly, in the Islamist literature, Tripoli has a mythical status. This is in large part a result of the Tawhid Empire and their resistance to the Syrian regime (See Part Two). Sunni clerics in Tripoli have long been known for their uneasy relationship with the Lebanese state, their secular nation-builders, and the confessional political system. In the imagery of the Islamists, Tripoli is often assimilated with the city of Medina. This

[39] An "intermediary", in Latour's vocabulary is "what *transports* meaning or force without transformation: defining its input is enough to define its output. For all practical purpose, an intermediary can be taken not only as a black box, but as a black box counting for one, even if it is internally made up of many parts." According to Latour, a "mediator, on the other hand, cannot be counted as just one; they may count for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time." Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit., Ibid.*, p. 39 (emphasis added). In Latour's Actor-Network theory, *intermediaries* "transport" inputs, while *mediators* "translate" them. On the concept of *actors*, Latour writes, […] "all the actors we are going to deploy might be *associated* in such a way that they *make others do things*. This is done not by transporting a force that would remain the *same* throughout as some sort of faithful intermediary, but by generating *transformations* manifested by the many unexpected events triggered in the other mediators that *follow* them along the line. This is […] the 'principle of irreduction' […]: a concatenation of mediators does not trace the same connections and does not require the same type of explanations as a retinue of intermediators transporting a cause". *Ibid.*, p. 107 (original emphasis).
[40] *Ibid.,* pp.176.
[41] *Ibid.,* p. 176.
[42] *Ibid.,*, pp. 177-178.

is mainly because the city harboured members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood who fled the country after the massacre in Hama in February 1982.[43] Yet, even in the 1920s, Tripoli was seen by Islamic scholars as an ideal city-state, fit for the project of the Islamic state.[44] Tripoli is also a city with great historical Islamic legitimacy. It is called the "city of *ilm* [religious knowledge] and the *ulama*"". Since the Syrian withdrawal in spring 2005, Tripoli, for a number of reasons that we shall see in more detail, has become one of the main Sunni capitals in the Islamic Umma (or nation).

Secondly, the main currents in Sunni Islamism are present in the city, from the moderate Muslim Brotherhood to the most extreme Salafi-Jihadis, from the pro-Saudi Wahhabis, to the Pro-Iranian al-Tawhid, from the local shaykhs financed by the official Dar al-Fatwa Institution, to the internationally oriented and anti-establishment Hizb ut-Tahrir. It is documented that religious leaders in Tripoli, most of them sons of the city, have formed close bonds, though travels and sojourns abroad, to important personalities in Islamist milieu, the most notorious personalities in the Islamic Umma, from Saudi Arabia to Iran, passing through Kuwait, Qatar, the United States, Denmark, Germany, Australia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition, since 2003 Tripoli has functioned as a hub for global Jihadists on their way to join the Islamic resistance movement in Iraq.

Because of the multitude of different ties connecting actors at the site of Tripoli to actors on other local sites in the Umma, Tripoli is a unique gateway into assessing the conflicts between various Islamist agendas. It could be argued that "the one who holds Tripoli, holds contemporary global Islamism as such", or rather that "the one who holds global Islamism as such, also holds Tripoli". The case of Tripoli and its Islamist movements seems therefore pertinent far beyond the field of study of Lebanese politics.

1.6 Methodological notes and the challenges of qualitative interpretation

This work is the result of several stays in Tripoli and Beirut, April-May 2008, September 2008, and February 2009. The analysis is based on 37 interviews with 23 so-called "specialists" on the Islamic field in Tripoli, that is, religious leaders or "Islamic personalities".[45] In addition, eleven "secularists", two members of parliament, a few journalists, three researchers, one businessman from Tripoli, and several grassroots activists from political, cultural, or humanitarian associations, have been interviewed. While most of the interviews were so-called "semi-directive", others were closer to consultation (especially in the beginning, when "secular" researchers shared their knowledge of the local history of Tripoli or when former combatants told me about their personal experiences from the civil war (many of these former combatants are today active in grassroots associations in the city). Open questions to launch each interview were always prepared, in addition to a general introduction on the aims of the research and the background of the

[43] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, pp. 273-274. "Tarablus al-Sham", *L'Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, new edition, 1996, Volume X, pp. 231-233.
[44] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 120.
[45] As mentioned above, the terms "specialists" and "secularists" are borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu and his article "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.*, p. 322.

researcher. Hence, the person in question could more easily understand which topics were pertinent for the study. Yet the objective was at the same time to "sense the interviewee" and create an informal tone with the informants, hoping that they would take the researcher into their confidence and respond to questions with a more spontaneous register. As the weeks progressed, and several interviews were already carried out, the understanding of the field could gradually be re-organised. Thus, thanks to the recursivity of the fieldwork, the initial list of questions was gradually re-organised and more pertinent questions formulated in the latter half of the stay. This made it interesting to see some of the informants several times. At the end of the sojourn in Lebanon, especially if "confidence" or "credibility" had been obtained with some of my informants (especially those with whom interactions were almost daily) the interviews were directed more as "conversations", in order to reduce the "artificiality of the interview situation".[46]

Among the 23 specialists, seven do not carry the title of "shaykh" (notably all four members of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya as well as the spokesperson of Hizb ut-Tahrir). As has been shown, many of the "Islamic personalities", who work as "spokesmen" or head of media offices in the largest organizations, such as in al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (JI) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), are without formal training in Islamic jurisprudence. There are also young Islamic journalists in Tripoli, who hold their own radio shows or who publish articles on Islamic affairs in the media, who seem to have a certain impact on the "hearts and minds" of the pious youth.

Choosing the informants among the "specialists" (religious leaders) within the religious field, special attention was paid as to keeping the sample selection as representative as possible. Although the sample of informants were also created on the basis of feasibility, depending on the contact networks, efforts were made to meet with people representing most of the different political projects advocated within the Islamic field in Tripoli. The efforts included participation in several conferences or colloquia to meet people outside those close to the core circle of informants. Since it is focused in this study particularly upon the Islamist field (and not Islamic, which would be a larger, more general field), actors ("specialists") who were somehow politicised or bearers of specific political projects were often chosen. Thomas Hegghammer defines Islamism as "Islamic activism", that is, "someone who exerts a systematic religious effort which goes beyond the ritual observance of Islam and which is not organised by the state".[47] Knowing that the question of the autonomisation of the actors vis-à-vis the political decision makers will be discussed all through this study (and particularly in the last part), it suffices to emphasize here that those who were deemed of most interest to this study are shaykh-s or "Islamic personalities" who are not primarily "organised" by the state and the official religious institutions, as is the case for the preachers who remain very close to the *Dar al-Fatwa* institutions. During discussions with spokesmen of the official institutions linked to the state, notably Dar al-Fatwa, they showed themselves to be somewhat sceptical of the sample selection upon which this study is built. According to two "specialists" close to the Dar al-Fatwa, the researcher of this study had seen nothing less than "the worst" of Sunni Islam in Tripoli, only "the most extreme shaykh-s", who

[46] See Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "*La politique du terrain: sur la production des données en anthropologie*", in *Enquête*, 1-1995 (pp. 71-109), p. 83.
[47] See Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia, 1979-2006. op.cit*, p. 76.

did not represent the "moderation" of the "great majority of the religious leaders in Tripoli".[48] Although pertinent, this criticism also shows the interest of specialists to represent the field from the angle where they themselves seem at most ease. Because of the particular interest of this study in the religious leaders who pronounced themselves on political affairs, i.e., politicised religious leaders, the researcher of this study had to some extent, consciously or not, "neglected" the most "official" 'ulama', who only had connections to the Dar al-Fatwa. The actors in this study could be characterised as "Islamists", or "Islamic militants", following Hegghammer's definition. It has also been somewhat of an aim to see most of the religious leaders in the city, who receive the largest amounts of money from abroad.

The ambition was therefore to form a sample selection as objective as possible of politicised Islamism (political Islamism or simply Islamism) in Tripoli, which would include most politicised religious leaders with influence upon the local population in the city. I tried to see representatives from all the different large Sunni religious movements. The sample selection of 23 informants (the part of the sample selection constituting the "specialists", religious leaders or "Islamic personalities"), consists of three representatives from the official Dar al-Fatwa institution, four representatives from al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (JI), and seven representatives from Tawhid, the Islamic Action Front and its avatars, in addition to four representatives of pro-Saudi Wahhabism and four representatives of "private Salafism". Furthermore, one representative of the transnational pan-Islamist Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) movement has been interviewed. "Participatory observation" during a colloquium organised by the HT was also carried out. This also turned out to be the occasion for an interview with a dozen of its female members. Lastly, interviews with two journalists, specialising in "Islamic affairs" in the television station of the Future movement, were also carried out, in addition to a meeting two influential shaykh-s with no specific affiliation, apart from the Dar al-Fatwa.

A quick glance on the sample selection shows that competition within the Islamic field in Tripoli is partly structured along political lines, notably around the ideo-strategic conflict between Saudi Arabia, guardian of Wahhabism and the two Holy places, and Ahmadinejad's Iran, the only country where the Islamic revolution has been carried all the way through.[49] The pro-Iranians represent a minority in Tripoli and Akkar, an area massively invested in by the Future movement during and after the legislative elections in May-June 2005. In the sample selection used in this study, the existence of certain "strategic groups", that is, aggregations of individuals who, confronted with the same problem, in our case the Lebanese crisis, have globally adopted the same attitude, can easily be noted.[50] Six "specialists" hail from Yakan's Islamic Action Front, who defines itself to be pro-March 8, while thirteen others, representatives from the Dar al-Fatwa, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, and the pro-Saudi Wahhabis, characterised themselves as "close" to the Future Movement. Others again, five in total, described themselves as "centre" or "moderate" (*wasati*) or refused to position themselves towards the political crisis. For these individuals in

[48] Interview with Fadi Adra and a student at al-Azhar (shaykh Massaj), Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[49] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad. Expansion et déclin de l'Islamisme*, (Paris, Gallimard, 2003).
[50] De Sardan, "*La politique du terrain*", *op.cit.,* 93.

particular, Islam was a universal reference, uniting all the believers, beyond partisan divisions (*hizbiyya*), in the face of the "corrupted" politicians.

2 Background

2.1 The problem of authority in Sunni Islam

In Sunni Islam there is no sole authority to impose solutions to disputes regarding interpretation of the divine revelation. Contrary to the situation in Shia Islam or in the Catholic Church, there is no hierarchically organised body of clerics, which yield loyalty to one over-arching institution. This creates a problem of authority. The Hungarian Arabist and Islamologue Ignác Goldziher, often considered one of the founding fathers of modern Islamic studies in Europe, wrote in 1910 that "the consensus, the supreme authority to solve questions concerning religious practices, exerts an elastic jurisdiction, in a way that is barely definable, and which is, in addition, conceived in a variety of ways. What is accepted as a consensus by one party is far from being accepted as such by another".[51]

At the core of this problem of authority is the indefinite status of the clergy, whose status remains largely un-established in the sacred texts. The clergy defines itself as a corps of "specialists of a regularly exercised cultural enterprise" or as "technicians of the daily worship", as Max Weber points out.[52] When Islam spread across the African and Asian continents in the centuries that followed the death of the Prophet, his successors felt the need to safeguard the dogmas of the creed. With the specialisation of labor and the development of city cultures in the Muslim world, a specialised body of clerics and centralised, official institutions, considered "guardians of Islam" in their respective countries evolved.[53] In the Levant, the al-Azhar institution in Cairo was founded in the tenth century, while in North Africa, la Zitouna in Tunis was constructed already in 734 and la Qarawiyyin in Fez created by the Almoravids in 859.[54]

The authority of the clergy has since the first schisms in Islamic history been contested by "heretic" movements, such as the Kharijites in the first century of Islam, by the followers of Ali (*shi'at 'ali*) and subsequently by Ibn Taymiyya.[55] Since the twentieth century, the Islamic world

[51] Ignác Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den islam*, Second Edition, Heidelberg, 1925, pp. 183-184, Cited by Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
[52] Max Weber, *Économie et Société*, (Paris, Plon, 1971), p. 451. Cited in Malika Zeghal, *Ibid*.
[53] See Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab People*, (Oslo, Gyldendal, 1991, Norwegian translation 1994), pp. 155, 190-192.
[54] Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
[55] The Kharijites, who contested the authority of both Mu'awiya and the followers of Ali (*shi'at 'ali*), are considered the first "heretic movement" in Islamic history. The followers of Ali (*shi'at 'ali*) refers to the group of the Companions of the prophet, who remained loyal to Ali, and insisted on the principle of hereditary transmission of the Caliphate (*ahl al-beyt*), after the death of the Prophet. The community around Ali would later evolve into a fifth school of Islamic jurisprudence, Shia Islam (from *shi'at 'ali*). Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1326), is one of the most important Hanbali Medieval thinkers. Witnessing in his lifetime the Mongol invasions, and the fall of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad, he tried to adapt the Islamic ideals to the difficulties faced by the fellow Muslims in his time. He is known as someone who tried to return to the

has seen the exasperations of movements of political Islamists and Islamic modernisers rivaling the monopoly of the clergy to interpret the divine revelation, with a basis in the sacred texts. It is claimed that every Muslim has an equal right of access to the religious and that Islam does not have a specialised corpse of formally educated clergy, with a monopoly to interpret the divine revelation.[56]

As a result of the problem of authority, the reference to Islam has become "subject to multiple, diverse appropriations, often antagonistic, fighting for the hegemony over meaning and values".[57] Fuelled by this problem of authority, religious power is often subject to political power. Gilles Kepel shows that the frontiers between the religious field and the political field in Sunni Islam, already blurred in the sacred texts, grows progressively more ambigious with the rise of political Islam since 1930s, and notably after the creation of Hamas (1987), the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), and the effervescence of both conservative and anti-establishment Islamism in the aftermath of the Yum Kippur war in 1973:

> Usama bin Laden and the al-Qaida movement, Saddam Hussein and his henchmen, the Iranian as well as the Saudi leaderships, [the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, as well as preachers close to the Muslim brotherhood], but also Sunnis as well as Shias, who count a billion of peaceful believers spread all over the surface of the globe all claim to represent the Islamic reference with a similar conviction, but with profoundly differing interpretations – beyond the reference to a common religion.[58]

At the same time as the religious field has often been appropriated by the political field, it would be simplistic to reduce the religious leaders to pure ideological spearheads of the different political decision makers. Many religious leaders on the field hold both official and private religious authority (or channels). They tend to gain autonomy by attempting to forget the state and live their own life within the margins of the official religious institutions.[59] Rather, we see in Sunni Islam a situation where the religious power is often subject to the political power, but where actors on the religious field hold local, national, regional, and transnational resources (or "channels"), which enable them to gain autonomy (bypass the state), to a greater or lesser extent, from their political midwives. It seems that they largely play their own game on the margins between the political field and the religious field.

"book and the Sunna" and was the first to introduce the ideas of excommunication, *takfir*, in Islam. See G. Levi Della Vida, "Kharidjites", in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Volume IV, (Leiden, E. J. Brill, New Edition, 1978), pp. 1106-1109; and H. Lahoust, "Ibn Taymiyya", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Volume III, *op.cit.,* pp. 976-979.

[56] Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit.*, 22.

[57] Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et Martyre. Relever le défi de civilisation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 15, 21.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] This point has been frequently made in earlier case studies within the academic debate. See for instance, Gilles Kepel, *Prophète et pharaon : aux sources des mouvements islamiques*, (Paris, Seuil, 1993), p. 264; Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit.,pp. 31-33;* Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia, the story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi revisited", in *International Journal of Middle East studies*, 2007-02, vol. 39, no 1, pp. 103-122; Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and liberals: Saudi Arabia's new "islamo-liberal" reformists, *Middle East Journal*, 2004, Summer, vol 48, no 3, pp. 345-365; and Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit.*

2.2 From the alim to the "new intellectuals of Islam"

Most of what we have called the "specialists" within the religious field in Tripoli can be called shaykh-s (Arabic: singular: *shaykh*, plural: *shuyukh*), that is, clerics.[60] A shaykh is a religious leader, with a degree in Islamic studies. The shaykh-s normally have preaching positions in mosques, as *khatib* (the one who holds the Friday sermons) and/or imam (the one who leads the prayers). The khatib often also gives lessons in religion to children in the mosque on specific hours and tries to call people to Islam. The notion of a *da'iyya* (constituted by the Arabic verb to call or invite to Islam, *da'a*, *yad'u*) means someone who preaches Islam, i.e., someone engaged in missionary activity, the *da'wa*. The *da'iyya* can be either formally trained (an *alim*, which means a religious knowledgeable, a scholar) or an autodidact.

Although also a qualification of honour, the notion of a *shaykh* normally refers to a person specialised in Islamic studies or in Sharia studies, some with an official degree (*shahada,* in Lebanon, *licence*) from an official university, such as the prestigious *al-Azhar* in Cairo or the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Others hold less formal *ijaza* degrees from one of the numerous officious Islamic teaching institutions in Tripoli, such as from the Islah University, the Bokhari Institute, or the Da'wa Institute.[61]

The degree of specialisation in Islamic jurisprudence (*ilm)* of each religious leader varies. Although a large number of the religious leaders hold Doctoral or Masters degrees from prestigious universities, these are not necessarily in Shari'a studies (Islamic law). Other specialisations can be literature or Qur'an recitation. Not every shaykh claim to be an alim, a veritable specialist on Islamic jurisprudence, with the competence to interpret difficult questions in the creed by pursuing *ijtihad*.[62] Further, some religious leaders, who call themselves shaykhs, in fact do not hold any degrees in religion. Some have pursued complementary secular studies, such as engineering, business and medicine. Many of these claim to have learned about religion from young age in the local mosque. This shows that the term "shaykh" is often used for a very heterogenous group of religious leaders.

[60] The terms "specialists" and "secularists" are borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu. The first term refers to an actor operating within the field, while the second refers to actors external to the field. In the case of the religious field, religious leaders (whether formally educated or not) are "specialists". Actors external to the religious field are all those who do not share the set of values common for al actors within the field, in this case, political Islam. Many of these "secularists" nontheless observe or influence the religious field through their daily workings, for instance, business men, political decision makers and journalists. See Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit, .p. 322.*

[61] An *ijaza* degree is traditional Islamic degree, which certifies that a student has studied a specific book on religion with a named professor. An *Ijaza* degree is not necessarily certified as an educational degree in the modern, secularised university system (*Shahada*). See Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab people*, *op.cit.*, p. 191; and Thomas Pierret, "Les cadres de l'élite religieuse sunnite: espaces, idées, organisations et institutions", in *Maghreb Machrek*, N° 198, Winter 2008-2009, pp. 7-17, p. 15.

[62] *Ijtihad* is a method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*), used when confronted with a problem of how to apply Islamic jurisprudence to a particular case, unsolved in the Qur'an and the Sunna. The one who pursues *ijtihad*, is called *mujtahid*. See D. B. Macdonald, "Idjtihad", in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Volume III, (Leiden, E. J. Brill, New Edition, 1969), p. 1052.

The scholarly literature often distinguished between the ulama' (plural of *alim*), doctors of Islamic law, on the one hand, and the "new religious intellectuals" or "the new intellectuals of Islam", on the other.[63] Preachers without formal education are often described as "newly cultivated" because they lack the formal education in Sharia or Qur'anic studies of their rivals, the ulama'. Both political Islamists and modernist Islamic scholars fit the category "new religious intellectuals" because they "often share a certain sense that one does not necessarily need the Islamic Medieval tradition to understand the true meaning of Islam and that one certainly does not need the ulama' to interpret Islam to the ordinary believers". Autodidacts, the "new religious intellectuals" propagate the idea that "authority belongs to everyone and to no one in particular".[64] Earlier commentaries of the Qur'an are valorised by these "new religious intellectuals" as "earlier records of the struggles to understand the mind of God but they are not seen as building blocks which should enter one's own deliberations when trying to comprehend the mind of God".[65] A recurrent idea is that Islam does not have a specific corpse of men of religion (*rijal al-din*), who monopolise the reading of the sacred texts. Sayyid Qutb, one of the political Islamist ideologues whose ideas of *hakimiyya* and *jahiliyya* have shaped the Islamist discourse in the twentieth century, insisted that "Islam does not countenance any priesthood that would mediate between ordinary human beings and God".[66] The same idea was echoed during an interview with Hizb ut-Tahrir Media officer Ahmad Qassas in Tripoli, during an interview in April 2008:

> In Islam, we do not have a thing called "men of religion" (*rijal al-din*). It is a Western concept that Westerners use to control us. In Islam, we search for those who understand religion without necessary classifying them "men of religion". Every one of us has a responsibility to guide the society. People do not necessarily have confidence in the official religious references. What matters is the extent of conscience and understanding in the society. I personally see myself as one of the most important personalities on the Islamist scene in Tripoli. But I am not a shaykh! You do not have to be a shaykh to have a lot of influence within the field.[67]

In the research literature, too, it is often claimed that ulama' have ceded religious authority to lay Islamists, to the point of becoming an anachronistic and powerless institution. According to this dogma, autodidacts are gaining ground on the religious field and propagating their interpretation of the sacred texts in the Muslim populations, often to the detriment of the ulama'. Although the competition of the formally trained religious scholars with the "new religious intellectuals" for

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[63] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad. Expansion et déclin de l'Islamisme*, (Paris, Gallimard, 2003). See also *Prophète et Pharaon : aux sources des mouvements islamiques*, by the same author (Paris, Seuil, 1993).

[64] What divides the modernists and the Islamists is, of course, their different vision of *how* one should understand the Qur'an, i.e., whether the holy script is to be understood in the metaphorical and contextual sense or in the purely scriptural one. This conflict over the interpretation of the text, between those who understood the Book metaphorically and those who understood it scriptually, has existed ever since the very birth of Islamic theology and the disputes between the Mu'talizites and the Hanbalites. See William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and theology,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1962), pp. 49-51, 53, 98.

[65] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 10.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[67] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

the interpretation of the sacred texts is nothing new, the trend accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century with rapid urbanisation, and the rise of general literacy and mass education, However, recent studies point out that formally trained religious scholars enjoy much more popular support and wield much more influence than many think. For Muhammad Qasim Zaman, the doctors of Islamic law are adapting themselves to modernity, and far from being a homogenously constituted group, they are taking different approaches to accommodate political and social change. Distinguishable as a social category by their intellectual formation, their vocation, and their orientation, that is, with that certain "sense of continuity with the Islamic tradition that defines the ulama' as ulama'", the doctors of Islamic law are promoting themselves as the guardians of tradition, of "cultural authenticity" (*athala*) and "Islamic heritage" (*turath*).[68] Yet they are constantly re-visiting, re-activating and re-formulating the tradition of which they claim to be the guardians.[69] Some of the traditional ulama' are in fact moving towards the modernists, on an "islamo-liberal" field (reading the sacred texts as compatible with the ideals of enlightenment) while other formally trained scholars have drawn nearer to the Islamists.[70]

The distinction between the ulama' and the "new religious intellectuals", especially the political Islamists, is not always clear-cut. In fact many formally trained and recognised ulama'-s manoeuvre on the margins of the official religious institutions (either the Dar al-Fatwa in Egypt, or the Council of Higher Ulama' (*Hi'yat Kibar al-Ulama'*) and the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia) and hold many resources which enable them to autonomise themselves from the political centre.[71] In her classic study of the ulama' of al-Azhar, Malika Zeghal distinguishes between the *centre-ulama'* and the *peripheral ulama'*. She shows that some of the ulama', especially the less prestigious ones, peripheral ulama', enter into alliances with the political Islamists, such as in the middle of the 1980s, during the judicial prosecution of the Islamists by the Egyptian president Husni Mubarak's regime.[72]

Zeghal analyses the al-Azhar institution as a religious field, where the doctors of Islamic laws engage in ideological competition among themselves for the interpretation of the holy text. She shows that local mosques and charity networks, developed particularly in the 1970s, provided a new space for the Azharis, where they could preach without being hindered by state control. Many Azharis were thus able to gain autonomy from the state, depending less on official mosque

[68] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, *op.cit.*,, p. 10.
[69] See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The re-invention of tradition*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[70] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, *op.cit.*,, p. 10. See Thomas Hegghammer's *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia, 1979-2006. The Power and Perils of Pan-Islamic Nationalism*, PhD Thesis in Political Sciences (directed by Gilles Kepel), Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007, p. 76.
[71] See Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit.,* as well as Stéphane Lacroix's "Les nouveaux intellectuels religieux saoudiens: le wahhabisme en question", in Malika Zeghal (ed.), *Nouveaux intellectuels de l'islam* (Aix, REMMM, 2008).
[72] Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, *op.cit*., pp. 31, 242, 246.

networks, than on private, more informal channels.[73] For most of the informants, prestige attached to their family name mattered more than the education from al-Azhar.[74]

The competition between the ulama' and political Islamists is of course given different expression in the various countries in the Islamic world. Malika Zeghal distinguishes between the situation in Egypt and Morocco, on the one hand, and the one in Algeria and Tunisia, on the other. In the first case, there are centralised, official institutions, considered "guardians of Islam" in their respective countries, and it is widely established in the population that these are the only ones in power to publish fatawa-s (sing. *fatwa*, pl. *fatawa*: "a ruling on a point in Islamic law given by a recognised authority").[75] If the guardians of these institutions, al-Azhar and la Qarawiyyin, respectively, are rivalled by the political Islamists and even by the peripherical Islamists, their control of the interpretation of the sacred texts in their respective countries is yet more advanced than in Algeria or Tunisia.[76] In these two countries centralised religious institutions were either dismantled in the 1960s (Tunisia) or created a few years before the advent of political Islamism (Algeria), which gives the "new intellectuals of Islam" without formal religious schooling the chance to pose a real challenge to these institutions and to take more space on the field. Far from having a centralised institution similar to al-Azhar in Cairo, the Sunnis in Lebanon seem to be confronted by a situation which resembles more the one in Algeria and Tunisia. In fact, the official religious institution in Lebanon, Dar al-Fatwa, which was never centralised such as the one in Egypt, lost much of its credibility in the population, notably after the Salafists started a campaign against the Ahbash, a Sunni group, considered "heretical" and perceived by other Islamists as an instrument of the Syrian regime.[77]

The scholarly education also seems to have become a less pertinent distinguishing criteria between the ulama' and the "new religious intellectuals". The distinction between the two groups is not rendered more transparent by the fact that the term being used for most religious leaders, formally educated or not, is most often "shaykh". The channels through which the officially educated preachers convey their messages are often private and linked to the religious capital of the family. Most of the Islamic preachers in question started to hold sermons (*khutba*) long before entering al-Azhar. Often sons of shaykh-s themselves, many were encouraged by their fathers to go up on the *minbar* as a child, to hold Friday prayers. Even for the formally trained religious scholars, family prestige seems more decisive than official university diplomas. According to one of Malika Zeghal's informants in al-Azhar,

> Knowledge is not as important as behaviour. Myself, I go to see people who are illiterate, who do not know how to read or write and who speak of religion as an 'alim who would have a doctorate from al-Azhar. What can you do with a doctorate from al-Azhar? It is the love a person has within himself, that matters.[78]

[73] *Ibid*., p. 30.
[74] *Ibid.* pp. 179-180.
[75] "Fatwa", entry in *Oxford American Dictionaries*.
[76] La Qarawiyyine is located in Fez, Morocco. See Malika Zeghal, *op.cit.*, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, pp. 35-36.
[77] See chapter three, "La lutte contre al-Ahbash", in Bernard Rougier, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-126.
[78] See Malika Zeghal, *op.cit.*, 180.

In fact, the same dynamics seem to reproduce themselves in Lebanon, a country where the division between the ulama' and the "new religious intellectuals" seems less pertinent, because the religious education offered by the Islamic teaching institutions in the country is often supplemented by secular studies, such as language or history classes, or courses in international politics or world economy.[79] The Dar al-Fatwa does not recognise the university diplomas issued by the other Islamic teaching institutions in Lebanon, "which were created during the war, when there was no central state". [80] According to the cabinet director of the Dar al-Fatwa in Beirut, Muhammad Nokkari "these institutes only provide a general Islamic culture and are not specialised in religious sciences like us [the institute of the Dar al-Fatwa, *kulliyat al-shari'a al-islamiyya*]. They educate individuals who do not have a spiritual relation to the holy scripts".[81]

In addition, many of the shaykh-s who claim to have numerous institutions and employés in Lebanon, notably in the field of social charity, in fact hold very little formal education in religious studies.

It therefore seems that the ulama' – even those with a degree in religious jurisprudence – constitute a very heterogeneous group with differing, and often contradictory, sets of opinions on central ideological and political matters. They adapt their messages to the space in which they are located at that very moment, either private or official.

If the ulama' can still be recognised to a degree, as is the case in Tripoli, by their formation, in "vocation and orientation" there seems to be as much difference among the ulama' themselves as between them and the "new religious intellectuals".

2.3 The idiosyncrasies of Lebanon and Tripoli: Islamism in a confessional state

The city of Tripoli with its almost homogenously Sunni Muslim population is a great exception within the Lebanese plural state. Close to Tripoli, today a city with around 500 000 inhabitants, was initially the seat of a bishop. It was conquered in the early decades of the Islamic caliphate by Mu'awiya,.[82] The city owes its name to its earliest settlements, which consisted of three separate neighbourhoods or towns (hence: *tri-polis*).

Its narrative of the past, constitutive of the imaginary of the city, in fact resembles more that of Damascus, than that of Mount Lebanon. Before the allied forces invaded Greater Syria during the First World War, the three main cities on the coast, Tripoli, Beirut, and Saida, had been part of Greater Syria, governed by Ottoman *walis* (governors). The port of Tripoli, al-Mina, was the main harbour used by the Damascene merchants. When the French mandatory power integrated

[79] See "Le role des instituts islamiques au Liban", chapter six in Bernard Rougier, *op.cit.,* pp. 179-206, on the different Islamic teaching institutes in Lebanon, especially the college of the Dar al-Fatwa (al-Azhar) in Ai'sha Bakkar, the Institute of the Imam al-Awza'i (*kulliyyat al-imam al-awza'i*) in Tareq al-Jdaide, and the College of the Islamic Call (*kulliyyat al-da'wa al-islamiyya*).
[80] Cited in Bernard Rougier, *Le Jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit,* p. 191.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] "Tarablus al-Sham", *L'Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Volume X, (Leiden, E. J. Brill, New Edition, 1996), pp. 231-233.

the coast and the Beqa'a valley into Mount Lebanon, to form the new "Greater Lebanon" on September 1, 1920, Tripoli found itself split off from its Syrian hinterland. The road between Beirut and Tripoli was new in 1909.[83] Tripoli's population consisted at the time of 75 per cent Sunnis, who protested at being part of a government led by the French. On October 12, 1918, the French troops entered Tripoli. According to the historiography of the time, "Tripoli was traumatised by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the separation from Syria, and the forced integration with the Lebanese entity".[84] Integrated into "the Lebanese entity", Tripoli, once Syria's most important port, lost grounds to rivalling Beirut in the competition to be Lebanon's capital.[85] It was a great shock to the collective memory of the city to have to submit to Beirut, a city that had a less prestigious colonial history. There were, at the same time, plans to integrate Lebanon into Syria and to split "the Lebanese entity" into several countries.[86] Yet, in the 1930s, mostly as a result of their liberation from the Syrian nationalist protectors, the Sunni notables (*'ayan*) began accepting the new Lebanese state.[87] The same ideas were yet to come back repeatedly, first in 1958, when many Sunnis wanted to be part of the United Arab Republic, and then in the 1970s, during the Lebanese civil war, when most Sunnis supported the Palestinian cause and Fatahland in Lebanon.[88]

Abdul Hamid Karami, the former Mufti and governor of Tripoli, dismissed by the French regime, became the leader of the resistance movement, which led to the creation of the Republic of Lebanon in 1943. He became the first Prime Minister of the Republic in 1945, the highest position a Sunni can hold in the Lebanese confessional system.[89] During the first Lebanese civil war in 1958, most of Tripoli's inhabitants rallied Rashid Karami, the son of Abdul Hamid, who was allied by late Egyptian president Jamal Abdul Nasser, against the pro-Western Camille Chamoun, in a reflection of the Arab cold war.

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[83] *Ibid.*
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] See the classical work on the Lebanese civil war in Tripoli by the late French researcher Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, , in particular pp. 115-116. See also John Gulick, *Tripoli. A Modern Arab City*, (Boston, Harvard University Press, 1987); and Ghassan Salamé, *The Society and the State in the Arab Machreq* (in Arabic) (*al-dawla wa'l-mujtam'a fi'l-masriq al-'arabi*), (Beirut, Press of the Arab Unity, 1987, second print, 1999).
[86] Ghassan Salamé, *The Society and the State in the Arab Machreq, op.cit.*, p. 52.
[87] Ghassan Salamé, *The Society and the State in the Arab Machreq, op.cit.*, p. 58.
[88] The Ta'if agreement, the Lebanese National Reconciliation Accord, signed in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia on October 22, 1989, put an end to 15 years of civil war in the country. Ghassan Salamé, *op.cit.*, p. 58. See also Georges Corm, *Le Liban contemporain*. Paris: La Decouverte, 2005).
[89] The confessional political system in Lebanon is outside the scope of this study. Thorough analyses of this important subject have been pursued elsewhere, such as in Ghassan Salamé, *op.cit.*; Elisabeth Picard: "Les habits neufs du communautarisme libanais". *Cultures et Conflits*, No 15-16, Automn-Winter 1994 (pp. 49-70); "Le communautarisme politique et la question de la démocratie au Liban", *Revue Internationale de Politique comparée*, Vol. 4(3), 1997 (pp. 639-656), Georges Corm: *Le Liban contemporain,* (Paris, La Decouverte, 2005); Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds.): *Lebanon in Limbo. Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, (Baden Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003); and Nadine Picardou: *La dechirure libanaise*, (Brussel, Editions Complexe 1989).

It is often said about Lebanese politics that the political system in the country is based on rural *asabiyya-s* (senses of belonging or body spirits).[90] Feudal bonds to the traditional large families, in Tripoli such the Karami, the Ahdab, and the Miqati, are still dominant for the political life, yet new families, such as the the Safadi and Tripoli-based Allouche family have also gained ground. Many of the old feudal families in Lebanon have succeeded in establishing modern industries, hence establishing themselves in capitalism.[91] The political families in Lebanon all belong to almost the same social class.[92] Ten per cent of the seats in the Parliament have been directly passed from father to son, while 42 per cent of the Parliamentarians have inherited their seats from another relative.[93] Because of the fragile equilibriums in the Lebanese confessional system, a census has not been held since 1932 and people therefore have to vote in the villages of their grand parents, often transported in buses paid for by the politicians themselves.[94]

Tripoli is recently being overrun by the political power struggle at play in the political struggle for the strategic and ideological future of Lebanon, which extends itself to the entire region, fed by the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, exasperated after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's coming to power in Iran in 2005.[95] The Sunni capital has become a key weight at the national equilibrium between competing strands of the different nation building projects in Lebanon. In the last parliamentary elections in the country, in spring 2005, the Future Movement won a thin majority largely thanks to the heavy support from the Sunni community in the north, and particularly in Tripoli, Diniyyeh, and Akkar. The north of Lebanon, controlled till 2005 by the Syrians, have since become somewhat of a stronghold of the Future Movement.[96] The Future Movement is a political party established in 2003 by former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri that rose to become the most important Sunni force in Lebanon. Following the assassination of Rafiq Hariri (February 14 2005) the Future Movement has increasingly been mobilising according to sectarian rhetoric. The assassination led to a feeling among Sunnis in Lebanon that they were targeted as a communal group.[97] The movement, led by Rafiq Hariri's son Sa'd, is trying to present itself as a guardian of the Sunni community in Lebanon, against Syria, Iran and the Hezbollah. If some of the Salafists in the city, which see the Shia doctrine as heresy, have come to see the Future movement as a political ally against Hezbollah, the US alignment of the Future movement is more difficult to swallow.

[90] Ghassan Salamé, *op.cit.*, p. 239. For more on Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya*, see introduction chapter.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[95] Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et Martyre*, *op.cit.*, p. 78.
[96] Interview with Patrick Haenni, International Crisis Group (ICG), Beirut, April 1, 2008.
[97] Interview with Muhammad Nokkari, Dar al-Fatwa, Beirut, April 14, 2008; and Interview with Ahmad Ayoubi, Freedom and Growth Association and journalist on Islamic affairs in Future television, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.

2.4 The Lebanese state of emergency and the crisis in the Arab world

It is important to point out that this research shows the state of affairs within the Islamist field in Tripoli in the context of a severe crisis. The Arab world has, in the last century, witnessed a succession of crises, provoked by an interaction of external and internal factors. The current crisis faced by the Arab and broader Islamic world has political, economic, social and identity dimensions. The "state of emergency" in the region has of course been fertile soil for the rise of anti-establishment and socio-revolutionary ideologies, such as some strands of Islamism. The Islamist field in Tripoli must be interpreted in this light. Many religious leaders in Tripoli, as spokesmen of the youth, were naturally very eager to emphasize this point. According to one cleric, the Islamist field in Tripoli was in a state of emergency because of the tense political situation in the region as a whole.

> Difficult times put pressure on people, and Muslims among them. When the situation goes back to normal, we will see a decrease in engagement. There is currently a limitation of what we can do in terms of Islamic work and in the results it brought about. But this does not mean that we must give up the Da'wa to our Islam through which we see the light.[98]

In addition to the crises witnessed in the Arab world as a whole, Lebanon, between November 2006 and July 2008, experienced a state of emergency because of the political confrontation between the March 14 and the March 8 alliances. This crisis will be the topic of chapter five of this study. Many of its institutions were simply "on hold", waiting for the appointment of a president, a new government and for the parliament to resume on a more regular basis. The deadlock in the Lebanese political institutions is the reason why the youngsters arrested in connection with the fighting in Nahr al-Barid have had to remain arrested until the time of writing, without trial, waiting for their files to be opened and for their cases to be heard.[99] The political standstill and the insecurity in the country have had enormous economic consequences, especially in light of the global rise in the price of petrol and aliments. Many religious leaders are eager to point out how the youth ceding to extremism, as the result of a rising frustration in the population. According to another religious leader, who is very popular among the local population because he seeks to "defend their interests", by functioning as a "mediator" between them and the central state, the media is representing the crisis upside down.

> No one currently wants to invest in Lebanon. The youth only wish to leave the country, they only dream of emigrating. Since the July (33 day) war in 2006, 200,000 Lebanese have left the country. The prices of petrol and the rents are becoming increasingly expensive. The youth are frustrated

[98] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

[99] Fighting between the Lebanese army (LAF) and FAI broke out on May 20, 2008, after police investigation into a series of bank robberies in villages close to Tripoli in northern Lebanon. On May 19, a "hot pursuit" of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) into a "safe house" rented by FAI members in the Tripoli city centre (Miatain street), led to the killing of one FAI member and the arrest of others. In response, some members of FAI attacked ISF officers in the Zahariyyeh area in central Tripoli. The next morning, other members in the group embushed a Lebanese army check point next to the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp, killing two soliders. The camp is located approximately 15 minutes from the Tripoli city centre, towards the border with Syria in the North. Fighting continued for 106 days and left 169 soldiers, 202 militants, and numerous civilians dead. 202 others were arrested, accused of being members of FAI. See Bernard Rougier, "Fatah al-Islam : un réseau jihadiste au coeur des contradictions libanaises", *op.cit.*, pp. 179-180.

> and ceding to extremism. After the rise of Fatah al-Islam all Lebanese say that the Palestinians are extremists. Frankly speaking, there is no truth coming out of the media (*al-ha'i'a ma fi fi'l-i'lam*).[100]

The crisis, particularly since the 1980s, centered on questions of identity. The identity of the individuals in the region has become a matter of dispute. The frustration of youth in many cases results in depressions among young, single men, which has become a generational phenomenon in the region. Because of the intensity of the confrontation between secularists and religious people (*mutadayyinun*), the individual is continually solicited on his belonging. It is in this context of a crisis in Sunni Islam and in the Middle East more globally that Salafism, a rising force since the 1980s, could penetrate Lebanon (as we will see, the city of Tripoli and the Palestinian refugee camps were particularly influenced). Before being Islamised with the rise of the Tawhid organisation, Tripoli had in the 1960s- and 70s been a hub for Nasserite socialism, and communism.

The characteristic of the political Islamists as recent creations is a recurrent idea among the informants, who do not adhere to a politicised conception of Islam. According to one specialist, close to the official Dar al-Fatwa institution, the Islamists constituted a group of people who took advantage of the current identity crisis, for their personal gains.

> The Islamists are not representative of the Tripoli population. They are recent in the city. Their institutes are not recognised by the Dar al-Fatwa. If you take away politics and money from these, nothing else will remain! Regular people do not feel associated with them. No Muslim who knows his religion is convinced by them. Some people are speaking to the right, others to the left. Nobody is speaking straightforwardly. These people are benefiting economically. What rules them is the money, politics, and positions. Egypt has no money and loses out in the struggle against Saudi Arabia for influence in Lebanon.[101]

Ahmad Ayoubi, journalist specialising in Islamic affairs in Future television points out that Islamism in Tripoli is exaggerated in the media. He argues that only five to ten percent of the Tripoli population are part of an Islamist movement.[102]

3 The constitution of the Islamist field in Tripoli during the civil war in Lebanon

This third chapter aims to explain how the religious field in Tripoli was constituted in the 1980s. It will analyse the dynamics of a period when the absence of a strong central state gave possibilities for new political organisations to appear, many of them Islamic in nature. Islamism in Tripoli in the 1980s draws its roots from the early 1940s, with the birth of the first Islamic associations in Tripoli and the greater Levant area. These associations which gradually evolved

[100] Interview with a well-known religious leader in Tripoli, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[101] Interview with shaykh Massaj, student at *al-Azhar*, Beirut, a faculty of shari'a depending directly on Dar al-Fatwa, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[102] Interview with Ahmad Ayoubi, Freedom and Growth and journalist specialising in Islamic affairs in Future television, Tripoli, May 8, 2008

into the pan-Islamist movements al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (JI) and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) constituted a counter-culture to socialist Nasserism, at its peak in Lebanon in the 1950s and 60s.

The decline of Nasserism and the rise of both anti-establishment and conservative Islamism throughout the Arab world after the Yum Kippur war (1973) were factors conducive to changing the ideological power equilibriums in Tripoli. The Islamic Tawhid movement, created in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July 1982, was midwifed by the PLO and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Yet, as the successor of a socialist grassroots movement, the Popular Resistance (*al-muqawama al-sha'biyya*), which evolved in the 1960s and 1970s, Tawhid mobilised large parts of the traditionalist population in the working class neighbourhoods. Tawhid was therefore first a social movement fighting for the social mobility of a generation of youth, who had lost out with the centralisation and bureaucratisation of Lebanon beginning from the turn of the last century. Yet, as a social movement, Tawhid was able to ascend political power for a short period, because of the lack of a strong central state in Lebanon in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion. Lebanese soil was, in the early 1980s, an arena of the struggle between the PLO and the Syrian regime and its dissident, Palestinian, allies. Creating an Islamic Emirate in the city between 1982 and 1985, the youth in the Tawhid movement were able to yield political and ideological influence over the entire city. Political positions had until then been far outside the reach of these marginalised youth, and confined to the spheres of the large families, who formed the political elites in the city.

The Islamic Emirate was all the time an identity project, which defined itself against the Syrian Assad regime. The Alawi sect, from which the Assad family hails, only represents roughly twelve percent of the Syrian population, yet it is disproportionally over-represented in the political elite and in civilian- and military institutions in the country.[103] The Tawhid mobilised through slogans such as "the purification of Islam" and "the honour of Tripoli". The Sunni identity of the Tawhid militants from Bab Tebbaneh was consolidated through their engagement in military battles against Alawis in the adjacent Baal Mohsen area. The Tawhid movement was, during its entire reign, besieged by Syrian troops, surrounding the city and facing imminent threats of invasion. Islamism as a political project ended in disillusionment after the entry of the Syrian army in Tripoli in September 1985 and the traumatic massacre in Bab Tebbaneh (October 19, 1986). The rise and fall of the Tawhid Emirate and the subsequent Syrian tutelage was a constitutive period for the collective memory of the city. Narratives of suffering at the hands of the Syrians, of brave resistance, and Sunni *asabiyya* laid the grounds for the consolidation of Tripoli's identity as a

[103] Alawism is a branch of Ismaili Twelver Shia Islam. The Alawi community only represents around twelve percent of the Syrian population, yet the community is highly overrepresented in milieu of the political decision makers in Damascus. President Bashar al-Assad, his family, and the majority of his advisers all hail from the Alawi mountains. Although most Alawis consider themselves Muslims, many Sunni Muslims see them as heretics. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, during their violent confrontation with the Assad regime in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s voiced the grievance of many Sunnis in Syria that they were politically marginalised at the hands of the ruling minority. However, Michel Seurat shows that the contestation of part of the Sunni population in Syria can be read along several axes of analysis. See his classical article "l'État de barbarie. Syrie, 1979-1982", in *l'État de barbarie*, *op.cit*, pp. 18-19. . For more on the Assad regime, see also Patrick Seale's excellent biography of Hafiz al-Assad, *Asad of Syria. The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London, Tauris, 1988), pp. 173, 321-322, .

Sunni Muslim city. Yet, disputing memories of the period are cementing political cleavages between different groups of the population. These cleavages are re-activated today in the context of the current struggle for the ideo-strategic future of Lebanon, fuelled by the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In this thrid chapter it will be argued that the dynamics were frozen and slowed down within the local field from the late 1980s, illustrated by the physical exit of many of its protagonists. A great number of Tawhid leaders were arrested, and subsequently co-opted, by the Syrian regime. Others fled and began a new life in clandestinity, yet many of these were also to be arrested, and co-opted by the Syrians. Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, which had never really had a large popular constituency among the marginalised youth, followed the necessities of *realpolitik* and began interacting with the Syrian regime. The movement would later be split along political lines, between partisans of Syrian tutorship of the Levant and partisans of a specific Sunni identity, forged by Saudi Arabia. The Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) remained an intellectual movement, laying the conceptual grounds for the return of the historical Caliphate, and was confined to clandestinity. The Salafists, who equally had taken advantage of the lack of a central state, had created a small nucleus during the civil war. They would rise to become Tripoli's strongest Islamist force in the following decades. Yet during the Syrian ideological, military, and political dominance of Tripoli, the city could not find space for them. Many moved on to other places in the Umma, such as Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and meanwhile left Tripoli's politics both physically and mentally. They knitted bonds to important Islamic personalities abroad, and invested in "international capital", only to re-appear in Tripoli in the following decade.

3.1 The rise of a social movement

3.1.1 The seeds of the first Islamist movements in Lebanon

One of the most famous Tripoli ulama' is Rashid Rida', one of the pioneers of the Islamic Revival movement in the early 20th century. He was born in Qalamoun, a conservative Sunni village just south of Tripoli, in 1865. Although he travelled to Cairo in his early childhood, his early upbringing was in Qalamoun, where he studied under the eminent shaykh Husayn al-Jisr.[104] Rashid Rida' advocated a modernist reformist position on religion (*al-islah al-dini*) in his early academic works and was considered one of Muhammad Abduh's students. However, towards the

[104] Husayn al-Jisr (1845-1909), is one of the most respected ulama' in the history of Tripoli. A graduate from al-Azhar in Cairo, al-Jisr founded an Islamic school, *al-madrasa al-wataniyya*, in Tripoli, which also taught "modern subjects" such as geometry, geography, and French. An acquaintance of Muhammad Abduh, al-Jisr is also the author of *al-risala al-hamidiyya*, in which he argued that the Islam doctrine, understood in a traditional sense, was compatible with modern sciences. See Barbare Kellner-Heinkele, "Review of Johannes Ebert, Religion und Reform in der Arabischen Provinz, Husayn al-Gisr at-Tarabulusi (1845-1909). Ein Islamischer Gelehrter Zwischen Tradition und Reform", (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991). Review published in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1993), pp. 345-347.

end of his life, Rida' adhered to Hanbalism[105] and the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya. When the Sauds established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1920s, through an alliance with Muhammad Abdul-Wahhab, and laid the grounds for Saudi Wahhabism, Rida' publicly supported their coming to power. The changing regional political order post World War one, the fall of the Caliphate in 1924, and the disillusionment of many Arabs after the fall of Faysal's short-lived monarchy in Damascus and the implementation of the Sykes-Picot agreement,[106] were factors conducive to a new vision of how Muslims should interact with non-Muslims, and notably with the European colonial regimes. The transformation of the Tripoli Islamic thinker can be seen as some sort of an incarnation of the rise of political Islam to the detriment of the modernist reformist Islam (such as his predecessors Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh). The ideas of political Islam developed in the last part of his life were later to penetrate Tripoli, and his natal village, Qalamoun.

3.1.2 From the Egyptian Muslim Brothers to Ubbad al-Rahman

In 1928, Rida's most famous student, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), created the Society of the Muslims Brothers in a colonial town in the Egyptian Delta, Isma'iliyya, along the Suez Canal.[107] It was one of the first mass movements that promoted political Islam. Al-Banna's experience with the British industrialists employed by the Suez Canal Company in Isma'iliyya, and his concern that the educated classes in the country had strayed from Islam and were "blindly emulating the West", were among the factors, which led him to create the movement.[108] The movement gradually spread throughout Egypt and mobilised zealous youth, notably from the lower middle classes, through preaching in local mosques and coffee shops, through establishing social services, and by arranging summer camps and scouts for youth.[109] In the late 1940s, the movemened expanded to become the largest non-elite pressure group in the Levant, with perhaps as many as a million members and branches in a dozen countries.[110]

The Lebanese branch of the MBs, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (JI), started as a movement called Ubbad al-Rahman. It was one of the first movements promoting political Islam in Lebanon, and it

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[105] Hanbalism, based on the theological works of Ahmad Bin Hanbal (780-855), a Medieval Islamic thinker of Persian background, is known to be the most rigid among the four schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam.

[106] "Rashid Rida", *l'Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, *Tome VIII*, New Edition, 1996, pp. 461-463. The Sykes-Picot agreement was a secret agreement, concluded in 1916, between Francois Georges-Picot and Mark Sykes, representatives of the French and the British government. In the document, the two delegates defined their zones of influence in the Levant following the foreseeable disintegration of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. King Faysal and Sherif Hussein bin Ali, who were promised an Arab kingdom, with a capital in Damascus, if they agreed to launch the "Arab Revolt", were not informed about the agreement before Trotsky made it public when he took charge over the Russian Foreign Service after the October Revolution.

[107] Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.The rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1842*, (Reading, Ithaca Press, 1998), p. 27.

[108] *Ibid.,* p. 31.

[109] *Ibid.,* see particularly pp. 34, 130-136, 151-152.

[110] According to a Muslim Brother survey from 1937, the society had by then established branches in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Bahrain, Hadramawt, Hyderabad, Djibouti, and Paris. *Ibid.*, p. 155. See also Dalal Bizir Bawab, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

was created notably as a response to the traumas and defeatism experienced by the *nakba* (the dispersal of Palestinians from their home country in the aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948) and the subsequent interdiction of the MBs in Egypt. Its main goal was to "liberate the masses from the reasons of their decadence and misery".[111] A main factor leading to the creation of the movement was the direct ideological tutorship from figures in the Egyptian mother organisation.[112] Ubbad al-Rahman, imbibed also much of its ideological inspiration from the Syrian MBs, created in the late 1930s. Between 1951 and 1952, Lebanon would function as a refuge for Syrian MB militants, including leader Mustapha Siba'i, fleeing the repression of Shishakli's regime in Damascus. Holding frequent lectures in Beirut and Tripoli, Siba'i is reported to have left important influences on Ubbad al-Rahman.[113] Three years later, he was appointed representative of Syria and Lebanon to the executive board of the Muslim Brothers in the Arab Countries. He remained leader of the joint Syrian and Lebanese MB until his death in 1964.[114]

3.1.3 The Pan-Islamism of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya in Tripoli

The JI itself was founded in Tripoli in 1964, after a split from the Ubbad al-Rahman, which had at that time become influenced by Nasserite thought, at its peak in the Levant in the early 1960s.[115] The JI adopted a line closer to the Syrian MBs. Fathy Yakan, born in Tripoli in 1933 into a religiously conservative family, was leader of the JI from 1967 to 1992. Referred to as "shaykh-doctor" (*al-shaykh al-doktor*), he is an eminent Islamic scholar whose influence extends throughout the entire Islamic nation. Fathy Yakan sees the abolishment of the Caliphate as root to the current problems faced by Muslim youth in Tripoli.

> The conflict between the religion and the secular state (*al-dawla*) goes back to Atatürk and the abolishment of the Caliphate. Atatürk abolished the Arabic language and Islam. He even forbade the Friday prayer outside mosques. In Islam, religion and politics are closely connected. There are no separations in Islam between the political and the religious sphere. A situation, in which religion is confined to the personal sphere, is unthinkable. […] After the abolishment of the Caliphate), with the *asabiyyas* and the *qawmiyyat* came racism and discrimination (*unsuriyya*).[116]

The declared goals of the JI were to spread the Da'wa in the population and to encourage a spirit of Jihad. They mobilised on issues of morality, and they aimed to "organise, cultivate, and educate those who had received the Da'wa. In addition, just like Hassan al-Banna's organisation, they emphasised the need to "confront the Western civilisation".[117] Similarly to other Islamic movements in the city, the JI imbibes its doctrinal roots from the writings of Sayyid Qutb and his

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[112] Interview with Fathy Yakan, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[113] "al-jam'a al-islamiyya fi lubnan" ("the JI in Lebanon"), in Ahmad Riyadh Salman (ed..), *al-harakat al-islamiyya fi'lubnan* (*the Islamic movements in Lebanon*), *Al-Safir Information centre* (*markaz al-safir lil-m'alumat*), No. 42, May 2007.
[114] Dalal Bizir Bawab, *op.cit.*, p. 124.
[115] Interview with Fathy Yakan, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] Dalal Bizir Bawab, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

concepts of *jahiliyya* and *hakimiyya*.[118] Inspired by Qutb's understanding of the world as a Manichean struggle between forces of Islam and forces of *kufr*, the movement, in its early days, furthered the narrative that there is a conspiracy against Islam. In 1981, JI leader Fathy Yakan wrote that,

> [c]onstituting one fifth of the inhabitants of the earth, and the surface of their lands equalling one fourth of the globe, as the first to produce cotton, petrol, and rubber, (Muslims) are the target, they and their religion, of all organised forces on the planet. All the evils witnessed by Islam and the Muslims in the present time are fruits of an old conspiracy coming from the enemies, who are more conscious than any other of the danger posed by Islam. Crusaders, Jews, and communists have participated, together and separately, to invent all sorts of means to cause Islam and Muslims to go to waste. They are responsible for the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, the Sykes-Picot agreement, the creation of Israel, and the establishment of secular states with positive law in the Islamic world (…)[119]

The idea of an "injustice" committed towards Muslims in Tripoli and elsewhere is one of the key themes emphasized by most Islamic groups in Tripoli. Versions of the same idea would later be propagated by the Salafists and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).

3.1.4 An evolving counter-culture: "The great shaykh" in Tripoli in the 1940s

The one who later came to describe himself as the "founder of Salafism in Lebanon" is Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal. He was born in 1961 in Nuri, a village close to Tripoli, and he had eight brothers and sisters. Brought up in a Muslim family, at a time when socialism was at its peak, he identified himself in his childhood years in opposition to the communists and the Baath party. In an interview with this author in April, 2008, he said that, from he was very small, he was zealous (*mutahammis*). His resistance to socialism in Tripoli encouraged him to call people to follow the path of Islam.[120]

The figure behind this first Islamic mobilisation in Tripoli in the 1940s and 50s was Da'i's father, Salem al-Shahhal, born in Tripoli in 1927. This religious community in Tripoli, which gathered around the Great mosque and the adjacent souqs, had crystallised their identity through the ideological struggle with the city's secularists. Known as the "great shaykh" (*al-shaykh al-kabir*), Shaykh Salem had established a movement called *al-Jama'a "muslimun"* (the association: "Muslims") in the 1940s. The group was a loose network which dedicated itself to preaching in Tripoli neighbourhoods and mobilised against the Baathists and the communists in the city. Former JI leader Fathy Yakan, Tawhid leader Sa'id Sha'ban, and several members of HT are said to have given their allegiance to the group in its early days. Salem "was not a man of organisational thoughts" and did not establish any structured Salafi movement in Lebanon.[121] His movement lacked organisation, institutionalisation, and finance. Yet, as we shall see, it seems to have been important in laying the roots for later Islamist and Salafi activism in the city. It would

[118] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad. The Trail of political Islam*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 62-63.
[119] Fathy Yakan, *The Islamic world and the international plots during the 14th century of the Hegire*. (Beirut, al-Risala, 1981). Cited in Dalal Bizir Bawab, *op.cit.*, p. 163.
[120] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[121] *Ibid.*

have to wait until the Lebanese civil war two decades later in order to transform itself into one of the first Salafi organisations in the country.[122]

The Islamic references of the Shahhal family would come to frame large parts of the population in Tripoli. Their name has an incredible symbolic value in the city. Another member of the family, Hassan al-Shahhal, who claims the same Islamic background, travelled to Egypt in the period when Sayyid Qutb was hanged in Cairo.[123] The trip, which he had made alongside Salem al-Shahhal, had a great impact on Hassan, who then was only in his teens. Internalising an episode that crystallised the defeat of the Egyptian Islamists against Nasser's regime, Tripoli's first Islamists reached out to a considerable proportion of Tripoli's traditionally oriented populations.

> When I grew up, Tripoli was bathed in an atmosphere of Nasserism. But I did not take part in this wave. The ambiance of my childhood was the environment around the great mosque of Tripoli. Among those my age, I got to know the religious youngsters of Tripoli. I was 17 when Sayyid Qutb was hanged in Egypt. It had a great deal of influence on me. I have read his works, especially *Milestones*, several times.[124]

The early Islamic activities of the Shahhal family seem to have been part of a broader Islamic counter-culture, prevalent in the Sunni coastal cities of Lebanon in the 1940s and 1950s. An almost endless number of Islamic associations and brotherhoods were created in Beirut and Tripoli, the two largest Sunni cities, in the same period. Most of these were general, pan-Islamist associations, mobilising on themes of morality and religious education and involved in social works.

3.1.5 Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT): From Pan-Islamism to a Revival of the Caliphate

The Lebanese branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) is another pan-Islamic movement, with a long history in the city. It was established in Lebanon in the mid-1950s. Hizb ut-Tahrir is a transnational, Sunni, pan-Islamist movement aiming to unite all Muslims and restore the historical Caliphate. The founder, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, was a Palestinian from Haifa who had studied at al-Azhar in Cairo. Living in Jerusalem in the 1940s, he had adhered to the Egyptian MBs, when they engaged in political activities in the country between 1945 and 1948. In 1948, he created the Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HT). Due to British repression of the movement, al-Nabhani was not able to interact for a long period with the MBs. In addition, with the creation of the HT, he intended to go further in the adherence to the Islamic doctrine than the MBs.[125]

In 1954, al-Nabhani sojourned in Beirut and Damascus. Because of al-Nabhani's personal ties with Lebanon, the country was one of the first to establish a branch of the pan-Islamist movement. It was later to spread throughout the Islamic Umma, from Indonesia to the Northern European countries. Yet, it had to wait until after 2005 to emerge as a legal force in Lebanon.

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[122] For further details, see next sub-chapter.
[123] Sayyid Qutb was hanged in Cairo on August 29, 1966. The event is interpreted as having marked the radicalisation of the rupture between nationalism and Islamism. See Kepel, *Jihad, op.cit.*, p. 49.
[124] Interview with Hassan al-Shahhal, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[125] Dalal Bizir Bawab, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

Qassas claims that the HT has a programme that distinguishes itself from all others. The organization in fact sees Islam as part of a specificly Islamic universe of meaning. HT members are taught that the culture of the organisation is "the mentality of Muslims". According to Qassas, it is a culture that is not influenced by other cultures, he says.

> The one organisation, which built my mentality, was Hizb ut-Tahrir. I adhered to them (HT) when I was 18 years old. HT is developed from a special philosophy. All members have the same ideas. I know the founder of HT better than his own family, because I share his ideas. The HT has a particular culture. In some respects you can compare HT to a university. But it is also so much more. It is a political group, which strives for social change. Its goal is to change the attitudes that drive and re-shape society.[126]

So which attitudes is it that the HT really wants to propagate? According to one female member, who adhered to the group through her husband, it is all very clear:

> Hizb ut-Tahrir is an Islamic party, which seeks to establish an Islamic state. An Islamic state applies the Islamic Sharia. Islam is a doctrine and a system (*al-islam 'aqida wa-nizam*). The doctrine is the belief (*iman*) in God, and the angels, and his Book, that life lies in the hands of God (*al-qada' wa'l-qadar*), and the day of judgement (*al-yawm al-akhir*). The doctrine is the mindset from which the system emanates. The capitalist system is the separation of religion from life. In Islam, religion is politics, i.e., the patronage of political affairs (*ri'ayat shu'un al-siyasa*). In Islam, the system is economic, social, educational, and cultural.[127]

These sentences are easy to comprehend and to memorise. Surrounded by a group of other female members who all agreed on the exact formulations of these phrases, during informal conversations in early May 2008, the woman wrote them down quickly, without hesitation. It is a telling example about the methods the HT uses for socialisation and control of its members.

The HT propagates the idea that there exists a separate "culture of Muslims". Just like Sayyid Qutb (and later, Samuel Huntington), the HT sees "Islam" as a civilisational entity in confrontation with other civilisations, especially the Western civilisation. Rather than seeing religion within the limits of "intersectionality" (the individual has several roles, which intersect, only one of which is Islam), HT sees Islam as being broader than just confined to the religious sphere, it is all-compassing (*shumuli*).[128]

> Islam must not be mixed with other cultures, absolutely not! The Islamic nation carries a message and can be distinguished from all other civilizations. A civilization is "a way of living". For a while, Muslims abandoned the Islamic way of living. The West invaded our culture and propagated ideas of the clashes of civilizations, all these very violent invasions, which led to the fall of the Islamic civilization and the complete dominance of the Western, material mindset over the Umma. But then, what happened? The 1970s came as a great surprise to the West. Islam re-

[126] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[127] Interview with a female member of HT, Tripoli, May 2, 2008.
[128] For more on the concept of "intersectionality", see Susanne V. Knudsen, "Intersectionality - A Theoretical Inspiration in the Analysis of Minority Cultures and Identities in Textbooks", Paper presented on the conference "Caught in the Web or Lost in the Textbook", Caen, France, 26 Nov 2007.

> emerged and now stands up. The only civilisation which confronts the West is Islam and the revitalised Islamic nation.[129]

More than a broad mass movement, the HT is an intellectual current, and puts great emphasis on concepts and language-power. A central idea is that an important part of the "cultural hegemony of the West" is that "the West" controls the concepts, which are exported throughout the world and through which "other civilisations" see the world. On the occasion of the *Salon du Livre* in Tripoli at the beginning of May 2008, the HT organised an open conference attended by this author, entitled "Islam and the assertion of Civil Society". Using rationalistic argumentation, HT media officer Ahmad Qassas stressed need of resisting the symbolic power of the West.

> We must pay close attention to Western thoughts. We must not let ourselves be led to behave according to Western concepts. If we accept their concepts, we start thinking like them, and they end up dominating us. One example is the notion of "secularism", which they try to spread among our peoples. They try to depict "secular" (*'almani*) as the opposite of "terrorist" (*irhabi*). Another is the term "civil society", which has an extremely ambiguous meaning. "Civil" is an expression of the conflict between the Church and the state in Europe on the eve of the enlightenment. The term is in confrontation with the idea of Islam as all-encompassing (*shumuli*). Yet the state in Islam (*al-dawla fi'l-islam*) is neither theocratic nor civil. When exporting these concepts to us, the West forces us to chose A or B, as if we were in a TV show. It is a trap. These thoughts are not originally present in our culture. We need to use our own concepts, to express our particularities. If they rule the concepts, they will rule our thoughts.[130]

The HT in Tripoli therefore shows itself to be a movement confined to a fairly limited sphere of particularly engaged individuals, and their families, around 200 in total.[131] With such clearly defined ideals of how a "Muslim" should live and behave but still not wanting to pass to "action", the HT remains an intellectual movement for a somewhat well (but traditionally) educated middle class. Especially in this first period, it remains marginalised, waiting to recover from clandestinity with the rise of the Future movement in 2005.

3.2 Ascending political power, and subsequent disillusions

3.2.1 The rise of the Tawhid: A gradual Islamisation of the urban poor

With the rise of the Tawhid movement (*harakat al-tawhid al-islami*) in the early 1980s, the city of Tripoli gained important parts of its current Islamist credentials. Established in Tripoli in the summer of 1982, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Tawhid was created by the fusion of three already existing local Sunni-based community groups. These three groups constituted a rather heterogenous ensemble, only one was originally Islamist, while another component was Maoist. All were close the PLO and to Yasir Arafat. In the first Tract of the Tawhid movement, dated August 25, 1982, the signatories declared that they have "abandoned all other senses of

[129] Ahmad Qassas, "Islam and the assertion of Civil Society", Hizb ut-Tahrir conference, Rachid Karami conference centre, al-Mina, Tripoli, May 2, 2008.
[130] *Ibid.*
[131] Estimation based on attendance of the conference "Islam and the assertion of Civil Society", in May 2008, informal conversations with HT members the same day, as well as on interviews with religious leaders and Islamic journalists in Tripoli, April and May, 2008.

belongings (*asabiyyas*) and that they in the future would be working solely for the victory of Islam".[132]

The ideological and political direction of the group was conveyed to shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban. He was a school teacher in history and religion. A graduate of the prestigious al-Azhar university in Cairo, he became leader of the JI in Tripoli in 1981. Yet, Sha'ban had his differences with the JI. The latter was primarily an elitist movement, without large presence on the ground, while shaykh Sa'id "gathered everyone".[133] As Tawhid leader, Sha'ban is remembered as a personality with great charismatic legitimacy. Even his political opponents acknowledge his "people skills". According to one Tripoli inhabitant, "if you listen to his discourses, even today, they would make perfect sense".[134]

The Popular Resistance (*al-muqawama al-sha'biyya*), initially a Maoist group, led by Khalil Akkawi (Abu Arabi), was by far the movement with the broadest popular support of the three groups in the Tawhid umbrella. Still revered in the city as a true popular hero, Akkawi was a community leader in the blue-collar Bab Tebbaneh neighbourhood in Tripoli, who had succeeded in mobilising nearly the totality of the youth in the area. The Popular Resistance was in many ways part of a social movement in north Lebanon, which contested the legitimacy of what they referred to as the "Lebanese entity". In the ideological universe of Khalil Akkawi, "the Lebanese state found itself at the intersection of all the lines of refusal, which, for him, constituted *Tripoli's personality*".[135] The contestation to the Lebanese state had been expressed in Nasserite terms in the 1950s, -60s and -70s but adopted a gradually more Islamist vocabulary after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

Apart from the Popular Resistance, the groups that came to constitute the Tawhid, were Jund Allah, an Islamist movement led by Kan'an Naji, and an offshoot of the PLO, called The Movement of Arab Lebanon (*harakat lubnan al-arabi*). The key military force in the Tawhid, apart from the *shebab* from Tebbaneh, came from Naji's movement, who joined the Tawhid in the beginning of 1983.[136] With the establishment of Tawhid, leader sheikh Sa'id Sha'ban, succeeded in taking personal control over a large part of the popular basis of the Popular Resistance, changing the ideology of the movement to Khomeinist Islamism. Tawhid imbibed its doctrinal *asabiyya* (body spirit) from the Shiite revolutionary movement, and in particular from shaykh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, who at around the same time contributed to the creation of the Lebanese Hezbollah.[137] Fadlallah is today considered one of the spiritual guides of the party.

[132] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 131.
[133] Interview with Salim, Tripol, May 7, 2008.
[134] Interview with Sara, Tripoli, May 23, 2008.
[135] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
[136] Ibid., p. 155.
[137] Ibid., p. 168.

3.2.2 The transformation of the Popular Resistance

It could at first seem paradoxical that Akkawi, the leader of the Popular Resistance (*muqawama sha'biyya*), a socialist group, joined the Islamic Tawhid movement. A popular hero in Bab Tebbaneh and by far the more influential of the ensemble at the grassroots level, why did Akkawi agree to enter a group over which ideological and strategic leadership was conferred to Sa'id Sha'ban, close to the Islamic Republic of Iran and a former member of the JI?

In fact Akkawi seems to have been subjected to great pressure at the time leading up to his joining of Sa'id Sha'ban's umbrella movement. The Iranian regime, wishing to spread its revolution to other Islamic countries had begun financing Islamist figures in many Arab countries, and especially the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.[138] The new-born Islamic republic had also begun channelling money to certain Sunni figures in Tripoli, one of Khomeini's strategies to portray the revolution as Pan-Islamic and not Shiite. Unlike Sha'ban and other Tawhid leaders (through Sha'ban), Akkawi did not receive money from Iran. Despite his support at the grassroots level, Akkawi died poor. In addition, he must have feared that Sha'ban would take up arms against his groups, if he did not cede authority to him, in the name of the "unification of the Islamic field" (*tawhid al-saha*).[139] Added to these factors can be the "enemy at the door", the overhanging menace from the Syrian regime.[140] After the destruction of the historical centre of Hama in February 1982, the population of Tripoli was traumatised and feared undergoing the same fate.[141] During the entire reign of the Tawhid Emirate, Syrian troops surrounded the city.

Akkawi, despite being a socialist in a traditional neighbourhood coloured by Islam, was also a political leader very close to his constituency.[142] According to a former Tawhid militant, currently close to the JI:

> Until his death Khalil Akkawi kept on living in an ordinary apartment in Bab Tebbaneh, just like everyone else. Born into a working class family, he only distinguished himself from others in terms of his thoughts and intellectual gifts. As leader of the Popular Resistance, he did not change his house, but stayed with the people, as if he was like anyone else. He was very influential. The others in Tawhid were not so close to the people.[143]

Sensing that Islam was the sole most important reference for his constituency, Akkawi had "Islamised" his rhetoric already towards the very end of the 1970s. The youth had "passed from Marxism to Islam following Khalil".[144]

Another main reason why the Tawhid movement actually could unite was the financial and ideological support from Fatah. With increasing tensions in Tripoli from the autumn of 1983,

[138] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*., *op.cit.*, pp. 123, 130-135,
[139] Interview with a former Popular Resistance fighter, Tripoli, April 8, 2008.
[140] Interview with a former Popular Resistance fighter, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[141] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.,* p. 136.
[142] *Ibid.,* pp. 115-116.
[143] Interview with Salim, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[144] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.,* p. 155.

between the PLO and the Syrian regime in what later became known as the "Syro-Palestinian" war in 1983, Tawhid saw new opportunities. After the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon following the Israeli *Peace in the Galilee* invasion in July 1982, the PLO had attempted to secretly redeploy its personnel in northern Lebanon. PLO militants utilized a sea bridge from Limassol, Cyprus, so that PLO personnel, weapons, vehicles, and non-combat supplies could be smuggled in from the sea.[145] In a defiant challenge to the Syrian regime, Yasser Arafat himself suddenly re-appeared in Tripoli mid-September 1983. Arafat visited the Beddawi and Nahr al-Barid refugee camps near Tripoli and declared, with reference to Syria, that "the PLO is a giant revolution that nobody can contain or control; we shall preserve our independent national will".[146] Heavy fighting between the PLO and Syrian military men and pro-Syrian Lebanese proxies lasted for several months in Tripoli, until Arafat and his fighters were evacuated with UN assistance in December the same year. Leaving Lebanese territory, the PLO left their weapons with the Tawhid.[147]

In his thrilling analysis of the Syro-Palestinian war, Yezid Sayigh shows that, in order to increase their support in the face of the conflict with Syrian regime, Fatah had placed local militia men on their payroll. The local PLO official in charge in Tripoli before Arafat, Abu Jihad al-Wazir, was giving monthly salaries to the local members of the PF-GC and PPSF, to secure their neutrality. Wazir also "assisted allied Lebanese militias".[148] As this demanded large funds, Lebanese merchants had financed parts of the PLO's activities in Tripoli.[149] This build-up reached its peak with the arrival of Arafat in mid-September and shortly after clashes with the PF-GC, which left 24 people dead. The organisation expelled pro-Syrian militias, such as the Sa'iqa, and the PF-GC, something Damascus responded to by the confiscation of all Fatah properties and assets on Syrian soil.[150]

In the midst of these rising tensions, the Tawhid movement proceeded to exploit the chaos and attack some main political and doctrinal opponents of their own. On October 12, 1983, Tawhid launched a two-day offensive against the Lebanese communist party, leaving a final death toll of 60 and 130 wounded. Members of the communist party, the majority of whom were Christians, were slaughtered in their beds or on their way home from work.[151] The Islamist movement justified the events stressing that according to Islamic jurisprudence, "the blood of atheists was legal".[152] The PLO did not attempt to stop the attack, because the communist party was considered as being close to the Syrian regime. The communists subsequently accused Yasser

[145] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State. The Palestinian National Movement. 1949-1993*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 569.
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] Interview with Salim, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[148] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, op.cit,* p. 569.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] *Ibid.*
[151] Interview with residents in Tripoli, April-May 2008 and February 2009.
[152] Michel Seurat, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

Arafat and the leadership of the Fatah organisation in Tripoli of having "sponsored and encouraged the bloodshed".[153]

3.2.3 The dispute over the interpretation of Tawhid's reign

For nearly three years during the civil war (1975-1990), between 1982 and 1985, the movement controlled the totality of the city of Tripoli, militarily, politically, and ideologically. It was eventually crushed at the hands of the Syrians in September 1985 after a battle that lasted for 21 days.

During the Tawhid rule, cinemas and bars in Tripoli came to a complete halt. Christians started leaving Tripoli, and the city became more homogenously Muslim. Unveiled women were harassed. On the main square, when entering the city from the Tripoli-Beirut road, the statue of Abdul Hamid Karami was replaced by a statue with the words of "Allah" and the inscription "Tripoli, the citadel of Muslims".

The different collective memories, *pro ad contra* the Tawhid emirate contributed to cementing the trenches between the pious populations and the secularists in Tripoli.[154] Traditionally oriented Abi Samra, a middle class neighbourhood in the 1970s, but today a working class neighbourhood, has a different memory of the Tawhid reign than the white-collar neighbourhoods of central Tripoli and the Greek-Orthodox communities in al-Mina.

The conflicting memories of the Tawhid reign are today re-activated in the political rivalry between partisans of a Lebanon aligned with Syrian Arabism on the one hand, and partisans of an alliance with Saudi Arabia on the other.[155] The memory of the Tawhid rule as "un-Islamic practices" is intensified today because it has been appropriated by representatives of the Future movement, who function as mediators conveying the historical narrative. Religious leaders in Tripoli play a key role in disseminating the memory of "suffering" and "repression" at the hand of the Syrian regime. This memory seems to unite most of the Islamic field in the sense that the informants emphasized that, *in spite of their political and other differences*, "the Islamic field (*al-saha al-islamiyya*) in Tripoli is fragmented, but we stand together in times of crisis".[156] This shows how the different religious leaders in the city, despite being divided along political lines,

[153] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State. op.cit.,* p. 569.
[154] The notion of "collective memory" can be broadly defined as "the ways in which people construct a sense of the past". See Alon Confino "Collective memory and cultural history. Problems of method", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5, (Dec. 1997), pp. 1386-1403, p. 1386. In his article, Alon Confino convincingly argues that "there is a great advantage in thinking of the history of memory as the history of collective mentality. […] Collective memory is *an exploration of a shared identity that unites a group*, be it a family or a nation, *whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations.* […] The crucial issue in the history of memory is not how a past is represented but *why it was received or rejected*. […] To make a difference in a society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action." *Op.cit.*, pp. 1389, 1390.
[155] According to Alon Confino, "the history of memory's construction is commingling with that of memory's contestation." *Op.cit*., p. 1398.
[156] Interview with Raed al-Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.

somehow perceived themselves as part of *a single, transcending Islamic belonging*.[157] The continuous Syrian military presence until 2005 and, after that, the perceived imminent menace from the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), and Shiite families implanted in the North recently with financial aid from Hezbollah, help explain why the memory of the Bab Tebbaneh massacre has been kept so vivid for over twenty years.[158]

Among the religiously engaged population in Abi Samra the Tawhid Emirate is remembered as a period that "brought back Islam to Tripoli". Riyadh Rifa'i, who participated in the Tawhid experience, characterises it as a "religious awakening":

> The Tawhid represented the aspirations of Muslims in 1983. It called Muslims to Islam, in a way that did not exist in Tripoli before. The whole population was delighted by this achievement. It was an Islamic awakening (*sahwa*). All of a sudden, women were pushed to veil and men to grow the beard (*lihya*). There was suddenly a freedom to pursue Islamic works. From an environment dominated by socialists and communists, the Islamic works began and the environment changed into being extremely inspiring.[159]

The movement itself used a discourse where it presented itself as the spokesman of the "marginalised youth". Bab Tebbaneh, whose residents were in a large majority immigrants from the poor countryside, from Akkar and Diniyyeh, had been subject to social and economic exclusion in the city. In a communiqué issued by the Popular Resistance in September 1981, they defended their movement against those who criticised their violent struggle and justified it by presenting themselves as the "legitimate heirs of Tripoli", its previously excluded youth:

> We wish to recall that we are sons of Tripoli, among its poorest, and not a band of *za'ran*, as some like to call us. Those who know the advanced positions of Israel and its agents know us, of course. We have sprung from the oppressed people (*al-sha'b al-mustada'fun*). That people is a part of this Arab and Islamic nation, which shall remain – God willing – upright and firm, even if the fire of the earth was to hurl down on it.[160]

Valorising Islamic activism, Tawhid also gave new social roles to the traditionally educated youth in Bab Tebbaneh. One preacher, who now lives in Abi Samra, grew up in Bab Tebbaneh and, as a teenager took part in the Tawhid experience with enthusiasm, raising the banner of "the honour of Tripoli".

> I began preaching religion when I was very young; I was only 16 in 1983. I came from a religiously knowledgeable family (*a'ila ilmiyya*) and chose to continue the works of my forefathers. So I began to preach in 1984 before I ended my studies. I lived in Bab Tebbaneh. In

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[157] The expression is borrowed from Alon Confino. In the case of the "Zionist collective memory", analysed by Yael Zerubavel in *Recovered roots: Collective memories and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, 1995), Confino writes that "a key dilemma, not to be excluded from the research could be how opposing Zionist groups came to believe, *in spite of their political and other differences*, that they *shared a single, transcending national belonging*.", Confino, *op.cit.*, p. 1398.

[158] Discussions with actors, religious leaders and secular community figures, close to the Future Movement, April-May, 2008.

[159] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

[160] Communiqué of September 1981, Khalil Akkawi, the Popular Resistance. Cited in Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-152.

> the face of the problems that the area was exposed to, we felt that there was a need for a group of persons who studied religion and who were specialists in the shari'a. The condition on the ground for the Islamist movements in Tripoli was suitable. So we followed that path. My role was to spread the Da'wa in Bab Tebbaneh. I felt that I had an obligation to preach (*wajib da'wi*) to the sons of my country.[161]

At the same time, secularists and communists recall the period with horror. Also former Tawhid militants currently aligned with Sa'd Hariri distance themselves from the experience of the Emirate and shed light on the indiscriminate violence and bad practices. In an interview with this author in May 2008, one former member in the Popular Resistance, today close to the Future movement, said that "everyone used to fear the Tawhid militants. They would come and harass people who did not follow their strict version of Islamic morality. Rather than using ordinary cars, they used to arrive galloping on horses. We could hear them approaching from far away".[162] This memory of the Tawhid movement emphasizes the abuses of the leaders, notably the liquidation of the doctrinal and political enemies of the movement. The informant probably refers to the episode in mid-October 1983, mentioned above, when 28 alleged "communists" were killed in their homes in al-Mina, under the pretext that "the blood of atheists (*kuffar*) is legal (*damun hallal*)".[163]

A significant part of the Islamic activists in the city, and notably those in the JI, never part of the movement and today close to the Future movement, associate the reign of the Tawhid with "un-Islamic" practices. A former cadre in the JI, draws a sharp line between the abuses of the Tawhid and religious ideals of tolerance and respect. In an interview with this author in May 2008, he emphasizes that the Tawhid did not follow the true rules of the religion. Women were forced to wear hijab, although it is written in the Qur'an that there is no force in the religion (*la ikrah fi'l-din*); it had a very negative influence on the city of Tripoli", he regretted.[164]

Another central theme in this narrative, which presents the Tawhid emirate as a period of unskilled, cruel and un-Islamic warlords, is how those in power, utilized their positions for rapid enrichment. High-level figures in Lebanese political circles in Tripoli, close to the Future movement, emphasized in an interview with this author in April 2008 that "Tawhid leader Hashim Minqara is not a politician, he is a criminal. He stole six hundred million dollars from the port of al-Mina during his reign".[165]

3.2.4 The fall of the "combatant city-state" and the dawn of a new era

The end of the battle for Tripoli and the subsequent departure of Arafat, on December 17, 1983, weakened the "sense of common purpose" among the militants. It revealed their lack of a coherent political and ideological project.[166] With the departure of Fatah from Tripoli, the Tawhid movement lost its key ally on the ground as well as its main suppliant of arms . Shortly after, in January 1984, the Tawhid umbrella fell apart into its main building blocks, the organisations led

[161] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[162] Interview with Amr, Tripoli, April 8, 2008.
[163] Interview with Salim, Tripoli, April 8, 2008. The episode is mentioned in Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 159.
[164] Interview with Salim, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[165] Interview with an important personality in Tripoli, close to the Future Movement, May 8, 2008.
[166] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State, op.cit.*, p. 598.

by Kan‘an Naji, Abu Arabi (Khalil Akkawi), Hashim Minqara, and Sa‘id Sha‘ban.[167] Akkawi withdrew the allegiance (*bay‘a*) which had connected him to shaykh Sa‘id and chose to entrench to his original constituency of Bab Tebbaneh, creating an organisation he called The Councils of Mosques and Neighbourhoods (*lijan al-masajid wa’l-ahya’*).[168] Kan‘an Naji also withdrew from the Tawhid and formed a movement called the Islamic Councils (*al-lijan al-islamiyya*).[169] Having taken control of the al-Mina port, and thus financially independent, Hashim Minqara also distanced himself from Sa‘id Sha‘ban and created al-Tawhid in al-Mina. Esmad Mrad, the leader of the Movement of Arab Lebanon, was assassinated in August 1984.

Although having their own movements, each with their political platforms, they remained close to Sha‘ban’s movement. The Tawhid umbrella falling apart was above all an indication that the other Tawhid founding fathers wanted to exploit shaykh Sa‘id’s falling status, to each augment their own power. It never meant an end to their shared cause, a defence of Tripoli’s Sunni identity against the abuses of the Syrian regime.

Tawhid’s era was soon to be over. The city eventually fell to the Syrian army after a battle, in September 1985, which lasted for 21 days in Koura, al-Mina, and Bab Tebbaneh. During the heavy fighting, hundreds of rockets, launched from inside the Syrian territory, destroyed important parts of the city.[170] Rather than fighting till the last man, Sa‘id Sha‘ban travelled to Damascus and signed an armistice with the Syrians. According to the agreement, the Islamists agreed to give up their weapons and their control of the city to the internal security forces (i.e. to the Syrian intelligence), in return for impunity. However, the armistice agreement was not respected. Arrests and torture of youth connected to the Tawhid movement began a month after the Syrians entered the city. The whereabouts of these youth, arrested in 1986, is still a burning issue between Tripolitanians and the Syrian regime today. Almost all those who were not arrested fled. Many JI militants left Tripoli for Saida, where the JI had a strong position. Former Tawhid militants also left for Saida, where Fatah was in secret gradually building up its power base.[171]

Khalil Akkawi, who had remained in Bab Tebbaneh, was assassinated on February 9, 1986. Tawhid emir in al-Mina Hashim Minqara, arrested in 1986, would spend 12 years in Syrian jails, while Kan‘an Naji, leader of Jund Allah, one of the oldest Islamist groups in Tripoli, and a member of Tawhid, would remain on the run until 2003.[172] Sa‘id Sha ‘ban, who had signed the armistice, was now officially left in Tripoli as an *emir* without an emirate.[173] As for the rest of the local population, they were left with a strong feeling of betrayal at the hands of the Syrians.

[167] Interview with Ayad, a former Tawhid fighter, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[168] Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 119.
[169] *Ibid*., p. 165.
[170] Interview with religious leaders and community figures in Tripoli, February 2009.
[171] Yezid Sayigh, *op.cit.* Interview with Salim, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[172] “Awal liqa’ yajtami‘’a al-tawhid mundhu 20 seana” (“First meeting with the symbols of “Tawhid” after 20 years”), in *al-harakat al-islamiyya fi’lubnan* (*the Islamic movements in Lebanon*), *op.cit.*
[173] Interview with a former High official in the Tawhid movement, Tripoli, Febraury 2009.

After a failed attempt to reconstitue the Tawhid movement in Bab Tebbaneh in 1986 by third rank Tawhid members, pro-Syrian militia men sent a last signal that they would not accept any political or religious engagement among the city's youth. The massacre in Bab Tebbaneh on October 19, 1986, is engraved in the collective memory of the city. Sunni figures in the city, close to the Future movement, singles out the Syrian army, the Alawi-based Arab Democratic Party, and the Tripoli resistance as the main forces behind the atrocities.[174] Although the official figures are only 300, spokespersons of the Tawhid militants allege that 963 people were killed that day.[175]

The brutalities of the period are not forgotten. Sara, as most other residents in Tripoli remembers the cruel hand of the Syrian regime in Tripoli:

> When Hafiz al-Assad was ill for some time, there were rumours that he had died. In Tripoli, where the population lived under the hard hand of the Syrian regime, people showed signs of joy and some people shot in the air to celebrate his death. When Hafiz al-Assad was informed about that, he ordered the army to bomb the city continuously for 24 hours, as a punishment.[176]

Sara, a lady from Abi Samra, was in her twenties when the Syrian forces entered Tripoli in 1985. In an interview with this author in April 2008, she revealed that there is a very high number of widows in Tripoli's poor neighbourhoods. A significant part of them, especially those in the older generation, lost their husbands at the hands of the Syrians during the war. "Many of these widows are exposed to very dire conditions", she regretted.[177]

3.2.5 The lessons of the Tawhid

Ironically, the Tawhid movement, having risen as a mass movement mobilising against the Syrian regime, would after 1985 end up as one of Syria's main allies in Tripoli. The goals of the organisation were transformed from being a defence of the Sunni *asabiyya* locally to its joining the regional resistance against Israel and Western imperialism, contrarily to most other Lebanese Sunni actors. Yet, while the historical leaders of the group were compelled to reverse their political alliances, under the stick- and carrot practices of the Syrian regime, the religious masses in Tripoli did not follow them in the turmoil.

Today confined to a core circle of protégés, the movement has had a crucial role in influencing the Islamist personalities in Tripoli in the 1980s. Many of the most important personalities in the

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[174] The Democratic Arab party, led by Ali 'Id during the war, is today run by 'Id's son, Rif'at. It is the main political force among the Alawi community in Jabal Mohsen. 'Id's movement was the main protagonist on the Alawi side during the claishes between Bab Tebbaneh and Mal Mohsen in May to August 2008. Phone interview with a figure close to the Future Movement in Tripoli, Oslo, August 13, 2008. For more on the Democratic Arab Party and the 'Id family, see Hanin Ghaddar, "A family matter. Now Lebanon dissects a decades-old feud in Tripoli", *Now Lebanon*, August 14, 2008, http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=54721, accessed August 2008.

[175] Interview with Salim, Tripoli, May 6, 2008.

[176] Interview with Sara, Tripoli, April 22, 2008. Hafiz al-Assad's heart attack, in November 1983, and the following confrontation between the Syrian president and his younger brother Rifa'at is described in Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria. The Struggle for the Middle East*, *op.cit.*, pp. 421-425, 430-433.

[177] Interview with Sara, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

field today, such as Ahmad Qassas (Hizb ut-Tahrir), Bilal Muhammad Sha'ban (a judge in the Shari'a court in Tripoli, politically unaligned) and Riyadh al-Rifa'i (former member of Tawhid, who remains close) started their careers in the Tawhid movement.

What remains of the Tawhid are notably its name and its historical legitimacy. For many youth in the city, the Tawhid heros had embodied the popular resistance against the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime. Yet as time goes by, even this historical resource is diminishing. The movement, split into several factions with rival leaders, appears a remnant of the civil war militias and does no longer have a clear cause, apart from a subordinate role in the resistance against Israel. In today's political climate their anachronistic relationship of the Tawhid with Iran and Syria has only made them tantamount to a "Shiiticised group" in the eyes of the Sunnis in Tripoli.

> The Tawhid and the Front are besieged. There are no limits to their cooperation with the Shias. They are exploited and influenced by the Shias (*mutashshyyi'a*) so that Iran can gain control over them. They advocate a political project instead of seeking the true references, of those who really represent the Sunni community. It is all staged by Iran (*ikhraj irani*).[178]

As we shall see in the two next chapters of this study, other actors will take a gradually larger share of the influence in the field. When members of the movement clashed with Hariri supporters from the Hassoun family in Abi Samra in November 2007, the limited capacities of the Tawhid movement became clear to all. For Hariri supporters, the clashes showed that the Tawhid could not stand up to the supporters of Hariri, not even against one family.[179]

3.3 Creation and departure of a Salafi Nucleus

3.3.1 A Salafi Vanguard in Tripoli in the midst of the Civil War chaos

The first real Salafi organisation (*tanzim*) in Tripoli emerged shortly after the civil war started in Lebanon. The organisation, which took the name the "Islamic Nucleus army" (*nuwat al-jaysh al-islami*), was created by Da'i and his father in January 1977.[180] It engaged itself in military activities, in addition to spreading the Da'wa. Its main goal, according to Da'i himself, was to preserve itself. Not a part of the Tawhid umbrella organisation, it had not taken part in the regular battle against the Syrian army, but utilized armed force only for self-preservation, against the pro-Syrian Ahbash, and the Iran-sponsored Tawhid movement.

> Today I consider resorting to combat and Jihad (*istikhadam al-qital wa'l-jihad*) a wrong-doing (*khata'*) inside Lebanon. It should only be used in self-defence. Yet, in the days of the chaos, before the Ta'if agreement, we carried arms for a short period, we were subject to dangers, from the Ahbash and slightly also from the Syrian intelligence services..[181]

Although working in tandem with his father, Da'i al-Islam seems to have been the main driving force behind the organisation. His father, the one who introduced him to Islamic works, had not

[178] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamus, April 22, 2008.
[179] Interview with a grass root militant close to the Future Movement, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[180] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[181] *Ibid.*

had false expectations when giving Da'i his name, which literally means "the Islamic preacher". Benefiting from the symbolic value attached to the name of his father, the young Shahhal carried through the Da'wa with zeal and enthusiasm.

> I followed along the broad lines of my father. My father did not have many activities at the time, but I took the general direction from him. He was old, I was a young boy. I sat with him and understood things, about Islamic religion and rights and wrongs. These things.[182]

Compared to the period of *al-Jama'a "muslimun"*, Da'i's activities in Tripoli belong to new period in the history of Islamism in Tripoli and in the Arab world more broadly. Whereas Da'i presents himself as the "founder" of Salafism in Tripoli, his father worked in a broader, more general direction. As we have seen, Salem al-Shahhal did not call himself a Salafi in the early stage. Salem al-Shahhal's first movement embraced personalities, who would later be associated with very different Islamic groups, from Sa'id Sha'ban and the Tawhid to Fathy Yakan's JI and the HT.

The presence of the Salafi group, engaged in political and ideological rivalry with other Islamist movements indicates that Islamism in Tripoli already in the 1970s and 1980s was leaning towards fragmentation. Even if it, in its collective action against the Syrian army and the communists, functioned as a united social movement, there were already yawning contradictions. These cleavages would grow and cement themselves in the course of the following decade.

Da'i al-Shahhal's affirmation of belonging to the Salafi doctrine must be seen in light of the development elsewhere in the Islamic world, which had witnessed great upheavals since Salem began his preaching activities in the 1940s. The period after the Yum Kippur war and the first petroleum crisis (1973) had seen the rise of both anti-establishment and socio-revolutionary Islamism and conservative Islamism.[183] Earlier, beginning from 1954, after the attempted assassination of Nasser in Alexandria, members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, fleeing from prosecution in Egypt, had installed themselves in Saudi Arabia. They had obtained positions in the Saudi University sector, where the modernisation reforms introduced by King Faysal in the same period had increased demand for teachers with modern education. The political ideas of the Muslim brotherhood, fusioned with the theological conservativism of Saudi Wahhabism, would later be conducive to the emergence of a new generation of politicised, Saudi Islamists.[184] Saudi Arabia was also beginning to feel a dawning ideological and political rivalry from Iran and the Shiites in the Gulf countries and the eastern provinces of the Kingdom. Although the transformations in Shiite doctrine from quietism to prophetic Khomeinism would not reach the masses before the return of Khomeini to Tehran (February 1979), Shiism had already seen an effervescence of revolutionary activism in the 1960s, with the intellectual works of Ali Shari'ati

[182] *Ibid.*
[183] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, op.cit.*, pp. 107-108, 111.
[184] See Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia, the story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi revisited", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2007-02, Vol. 39, No 1, pp. 103-122; and Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and liberals: Saudi Arabia's new "islamo-liberal" reformists, *Middle East Journal*, 2004, Summer, Vol 48, No 3, pp. 345-365.

and Khomeini's transformation of the Ashura celebration in June 1963 into a demonstration against the Shah.[185] The rise of Saudi Wahhabi petro-Islam, coupled with its Shiite and socio-revolutionary rivals, must have been important factors for the dawning fragmentation of Tripoli's Islamism. All these developments in the Islamic nation reached Tripoli through the press. Functioning as "imaginary exits", they were conducive to changing the perception of the self and the other among a segment of Tripoli's youngsters.[186]

3.3.2 Exit from Lebanon and new loyalties

Yet Lebanon, whose territory had been partly occupied by Syria since 1976, was not yet ripe for large-scale Salafi mobilisation. Although he had developed close contact contacts with Ibn Baz since the latter became appointed as vice-president of the Islamic University of Medina in 1961, Salem's movement had been in need of financial and bureaucratic resources.[187] There is reason to believe that the same was true for the Islamic Nucleus army. The Salafi movement in Tripoli, which had accepted young Da'i as main leader, must also have been in need of a group of cadres, specialised in Islamic jurisprudence to take direction of the movement. This education was not to be found in Lebanon, suffering from a civil war at the time.

After around two years leading the Islamic Nucleus army, Da'i entered the Sharia section (*al-qism al-shari'*) in the public University in Tripoli, Dar al-Tarbiyya. "I studied for two years then I completed my studies in the Prophetic city in Saudi Arabia", he remembers.[188] Encouraged by his father Salem, he left Tripoli for the Islamic university in Medina, accompanied by his brother Radi al-Islam (literally: the one who seeks to pleasure God).[189] Al-Azhar, traditionally seen as the most prestigious Islamic university in the region, had due to its closeness to the Nasser regime, and subsequently Sadat's regime, lost credibility in some parts of the Muslim populations. Da'i's entry to the Islamic university was facilitated through the connections his father had developed with Ibn Baz.

Although busy with his studies in Medina, Da'i did not forget his natal Tripoli and the still ongoing war, but often corresponded with his "brothers" in the city. In an interview with this author in April 2008, he stressed that, while in Medina, "I followed the situation in Lebanon, the youth in Lebanon and the Da'wa," he said.[190] His appetite for following current affairs during his studies in Medina is confirmed by a number of his fellow students.[191]

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[185] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-75.
[186] The concept of "imaginary exits" is used by Bernard Rougier to describe how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon disconnected their own ideological universe from that of the PLO and came to embrace Salafi-Jihadism. He builds his analysis on Anthony Gidden's idea of a dissociation of time and space as a consequence of modernity. See Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, op.cit., p. 230.
[187] Salim al-Shahhal had got to know Ibn Baz through al-Albani, whom he had met in Damascus. Interview with Hassan al-Shahhal, Tripoli, September 25, 2008.
[188] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16.
[189] *Ibid.*
[190] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, May 16, 2008.
[191] Interview with an alim in north Lebanon, February 2009.

Yet, in Medina, Da'i, his brother Radi, and their Lebanese peers, also became submerged in a new universe, that of the Islamic university. Physically cut off from the rest of society, they had the chance to interact with the most eminent scholars in the Kingdom at the time.

> I was there during a period of scientific greatness, during the presence of Ibn Baz and al-Albani. They were not my teachers at the University, but I met them on my own initiative, asked them questions and read their texts. They, especially Ibn Baz, taught me how to interact, interpret (*al-ru'ya*), have conscience (*wa'i*) and have a sense of moderation (*i'tidal*). I learned how to stick to religion with conscience and understanding, to avoid extremism (*ta'assub*). But I also learned things from others, from well known scholars such as Abu Bakr al-Jazai'ri (and Abdallah Sulayman. And I also benefited much from shaykh-s who were not famous, from ordinary Egyptians and Saudis who were my teachers. But those I learned the most from were Ibn Baz, al-Albani, and Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri. Some in the style, others in the knowledge (*'ilm*), others in the style of thinking.[192]

Da'i al-Islam's studies in Medina were in fact part of a generational phenomenon. Around fifty Lebanese youth and young Palestinian refugees were sent as exchange students to the Islamic University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, in the 1980s. Some of these Lebanese youngsters provided the second generation of Salafist scholars to Lebanon, and upon their returns they maintained their close connections to the Saudi scene. The exchange with Medina had come into place through the Great Shaykh's contacts with Ibn Baz.[193] The Islamic University gave away approximately ten scholarships each year, which covered all expenses for the students. Tripoli received the lion's share of these scholarships. They offered a unique opportunity for social mobility and were so extensive that scholars could put money aside, and thus return to Tripoli, once the studies completed, with both a prestigious university diploma and a relatively significant sum of money in hand.[194] By the mid-1990s, many Islamic institutes in Tripoli and Akkar had developed their own particular exchange programs, many of which are still operative today.[195] Many members of the teaching staff at the different institutes are graduates from Medina, who were able to travel to the Kingdom, because they obtained scholarships.

Studying in Medina also meant abandoning a "material", self-content life in Tripoli, and giving oneself away to a separate universe of meditation and religious knowledge. One eminent religious scholar in Abi Samra, Samir Kamal al-Din, close to figures in the Future movement, emphasizes that the sojourn was a formative element in his life. In an interview with this author in May 2008, he said that for him, who was from a family of gold traders, going to Medina to pursue his studies meant that he chose academia (*'ulum*) rather than money.[196]

The sojourn at the Islamic campus must have been a life-changing experience for the Tripoli youngsters, which opened new perspectives. At the time, there were over a hundred different nationalities present at the campus. More than 70 per cent of the student body consisted of non-

[192] *Ibid.*
[193] Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit.,* p. 231.
[194] Interview with Muhammad Khodr, Tripoli, February 5, 2009.
[195] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamus, Akkar, April 23, 2008.
[196] Interview with Samir Kamal al-Din, Tripoli May 7, 2008.

Saudis,[197] with at least fifty per cent being from the Indian sub-continent.[198] All the Tripoli shaykh-s who studied in Medina speak of the time with special affection. Many of them, in interviews with the author in April and May, 2008, pick their words with care when describing the sojourn, in order to express how special it was. One of them said that the studies in Medina had blown a soul into his heart.[199]

The international ambiance also awoke a whole new set of priorities and a new view of Islam and the Umma. It gave a new sense of belonging and laid the foundation for strengthened transnational bonds between scholars throughout the Islamic Umma.

> […] studying in Medina was an extraordinary experience. We lived in the *haram nabawi* and met with the *kibar al-ulama'*, al-Albani, Ibn Baz, Ibn al-Uthaymin, and Atiyat Salim al-Jaza'iri. There were so many different nationalities at the University of Medina. There were students from Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Kashmir. We heard about the Iran-Iraq war. In Medina, we felt that the Umma was subject to both internal and external dangers. It created a vacuum in my heart. That feeling was speaking for the general status of the Islamic world. We felt that there were problems everywhere..[200]

As shown above, many Lebanese youngsters studying at the Islamic university in Medina had already in their childhood in Tripoli identified their situations and their suffering with that of other Muslims throughout the world, through imaginary exits. Yet, the experience from four years of sojourn at the Islamic campus in Medina seems to have awoken their conscience of the dire situation of Muslims throughout the Umma. It threw senses of loyalties and belongings of these youth upside down and took them far away from the Lebanese political scene.

The Islamic University in the 1980s was coloured by the internal debates between the older generation of the Saudi ulama', such as Ibn Baz and Ibn Uthaymin, and the newer generation of zealous, politicised youth. Only a few years before, the calm of the Saudi Peninsula had been shaken by an uprising in the Great Mosque during Ramadan in 1979. The group of youth, which had staged the revolt, had previously engaged in Islamic activities around the Islamic university. In fact, the group, which called themselves Juhayman's brothers, was an offshoot of a pietistic vigilantist group, *al-Jama'a al-salafiyya al-muhtasiba* (JSM).[201] The JSM had been active in the late 1960s and 1970s in a number of Saudi cities, with the Islamic university in Medina as its epicentre. Before an episode in 1977, which led to their radicalisation, they had close contact with leading figures at the university, such as al-Albani,[202] Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri,[203] and Ibn Baz.[204]

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[197] Interview with Zakaria al-Masri, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[198] Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit.,* p. 232.
[199] Interview with Raed al-Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[200] Interview with Samir Kamal al-Din, Tripoli May 7, 2008.
[201] "The Salafi Group which Practices *hisba"* i.e. "which Commands Right and Forbids Wrongdoing". See Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, *op.cit.*
[202] Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999) was a Syria-based scholar of Albanian origin. One of the most important references for Salafism, he is known for his adherence to the Medieval school of thought, Ahl al-Hadith. He was invited by Ibn Baz to teach at the Islamic University when it was founded in 1961.
[203] Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri was born in South Algeria in 1921. In 1952 he left his native Algeria to settle in Saudi Arabia and worked from its foundation in 1961 to his retirement in 1986 as a professor at the Islamic

One prominent Tripoli shaykh, Zakaria al-Masri, studied for 14 years in Saudi Arabia, 6 years in Medina and subsequently 8 years in Mecca. He and his wife were staying in Mecca during the revolt of Juhayman's brothers. In an interview with this author in Tripoli in April 2008, he laughs about the group that staged the revolt, and the members who believed that the Mehdi (Messiah) was returning. Shaykh Zakaria says he did not support or take part in the uprising. Because of the situation, he had stayed fifteen days without leaving the house. It was only a lucky coincidence that had led him go to the airport that day, instead of going to the mosque. He had known some of those participating in Juhayman's *Ikhwan* organisation: "they participated, they killed, and they died", he says, without much regret.[205]

3.3.3 The influence of the Sahwa movement and political contestation in the Kingdom

The Islamist field in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s was also experiencing the challenge of the evolving Sahwist movement. The movement had arisen from the Islamic University in the 70s and 80s as a result of the encounter – within the realms of the university – between Saudi students of religion, educated according to Wahhabi ideals of doctrinal purity, and Egyptian and Syrian expatriates, who promoted the politicised Islamic ideals that had been formulated by Muslim Brotherhood ideologues in the former decades. Wahhabism in the Arabian peninsula had until that period - with one notable exception[206] – focused less on the political affairs of the state than on matters of theology and doctrine. This younger, politicised generation of Saudi religious learners criticised the established Saudi ulama' for being cut off from the political reality and condemned them for being lackeys to the American government. The Sahwa movement, whose most important figures were Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawwali, shaped much of the political debate in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, criticising the Saudi regime for receiving US troops after the Gulf war. Al-Hawwali is a former head of the Department of Theology at the Umm al-Qura University and among the most eminent religious scholars in the Kingdom. Al-Awda, who obtained his degree in Islamic jurisprudence from the Imam Muhammad b. Sa'ud university in Riyadh, is a former member of the Teachers Board at the school of theology, al-Imam University, Riyadh. Since 2001, al-Awda has functioned as the director of the influential IslamToday website.

In September 1994, amid the exacerbated contestation of the Sawha movement in the Kingdom, al-Awda and al-Hawwali were both arrested, in a wave of arrests against political and civil society activists.[207] When released and rehabilitated in 1999, the figures in the Sahwa movement split between al-Awda, who became closer to the Saudi regime, and al-Hawali, who remained a

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University of Medina. He is known to have been close to the Tabligh movement. This could help explain his interest in pietistic grass root movements. See Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, *op.cit.*

[204] Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz (1909-1999) was one of the most respected religious references in Saudi Arabia. Initially a judge in the city of al-Kharj in Najd, he was appointed President at the Islamic University of Medina in 1961, where he stayed until 1975, when he was named Chairman of the Department of Scientific Research and Ifta with the rank of Minister. From 1993, until his death in 1999, he was Grand Mufti of the Kingdom.

[205] Interview with Zakaria al-Masri, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

[206] The revolt of the Ikhwan in the late 1920s.

[207] See Amnesty International, *Annual Report for Saudi Arabia*, 1995.

more intellectual figure, further away from the Saudi establishment. The rise of the Hezbollah, especially after the 2006 July war in Lebanon, further drew the two former colleagues apart from each other, as al-Awda began advocating a conciliatory position towards the movement and the Saudi Shiites, closer to that of the Saudi shaykh Awad al-Qarni and the Saudi Muslim Brotherhood.[208] Salman al-Awda recognises the theological differences of the Salafists with the Hezbollah, yet he emphasizes the latter's contribution in the common Islamist struggle against the state of Israel. Al-Awda's new "open-mindedness" led to a split between the traditional Sahwist leadership and the newer generation, whose main symbol is al-Awda. The traditional Sahwists, mainly al-Hawali and Nasir al-Umar, have withheld a much more anti-Shiite stance, refusing to give any support or recognition to Hezbollah.[209] Because of al-Hawwali's ill health, Nasir al-Umar is increasingly becoming the spokesperson of this wing of conservative, traditional Sahwists.[210]

During his stay in Medina in the 1980s, Da'i al-Islam seems to have been shaped by the Sahwist generation, meeting daily with his father's friend, Ibn Baz, and engaging in theological and political debates with his peers. He became close to both Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawwali and remained in contact with them subsequently, through phone and fax.

> In Medina I met and got to know and interacted with many shaykh-s in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia especially. I met with Salman al-Awda, I got to know him, Safar al-Hawwali, Nasir al-Umar, but mostly Salman and Safar, more than the others. The well-known shaykh-s in the Islamic university like al-Rabi' al-Masri, like Salih al- Hussayni. I met all the parties, from the right and from the left, those close to the government and those far away from the government, at that time. I got to know them, and I interacted with them. I also had good relations with many shaykh-s in Kuwait, but they were my peers (*zumala'*) and not well-known outside.

Zakaria al-Masri got to knew Safar al-Hawwali in 1974. They were classmates, but lost contact afterwards. Also Raed Hlayhel, who would later work for Da'i's Islamic institute in Tripoli studied in Medina at the end of the 1980s. He became, and still remains, close to Safar al-Hawwali and Salman al-Awda, who had, however, not been among his fellow students. In an interview with this author in April, 2008, he revealed that he still kept regularly in touch with the Sahwist leaders and last visited Safar al-Hawwali in Saudi Arabia a year ago. Speaking of his friend, Hlayhel regretted the dire condition of shaykh al-Hawwali's health. However, Hlayhel's friendships were not limited to the two Sahwist leaders. In the interview, he pointed out that he also kept in touch with many others from his days in Medina and had just returned from 12 days in Saudi Arabia, where he met with Nasir al-Umar.[211]

Although the Tripoli shaykh-s became close to the key figures in the Sahwa movement, they seem to have distinguished between the Islamic scene in Saudi Arabia and that of Tripoli. The

[208] Awad b. Muhammad al-Qarni is a professor at the School of Islamic Law, at the al-Imam University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
[209] See Faris b. Hazzam, "Hezbollah between the two shaykhs al-Awda and al-Umar" (in Arabic) ("hizballah bayn al-shaykhayn al-'awda wa'l-'umar"), *al-arabiyya*, August 25, 2006.
[210] Nasir b. Sulayman al-'Umar is a former Professor of Qur'anic Studies, al-Imam University.
[211] Interview with Raed al-Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

Tripoli youth, with experience in political and military activism from the Lebanese civil war, claim to have been more pragmatic than the Sahwist leaders.

> Safar al-Hawwali and Salman al-Awda were strong (*shadidin*). My opinion was that the strength of this conflict with the government was a mistake. But in the end, they learned lessons (*khibra*), which they did not know before the confrontation. The Saudi Sawhists had the preachers (*al-du'a*) but they were not experienced activists like us. They had more thoughts than practical experience (*khibra*) on the ground. In Lebanon we have practical experience. Our thoughts and religious knowledge (*'ilm*) may be less advanced (*wasat*) than theirs, but we have more practical experience. I gave them this advice (*nasa'ih*) and after that they took it. Not necessarily from me, but they achieved more experience (*sar 'andahum khibra akthar*).[212]

Lebanese students witnessed the political contestation in Saudi Arabia, which had the Islamic University as its nodal point at close hold. Some claim that the Tripoli shaykh-s became submerged in the Islamic university universe to the extent that they grew distant to life outside the campus, and political life in Lebanon. According to Zakaria al-Masri, a former student in Medina, in an interview with this author in April 2008, "many of those Lebanese, who stayed in Saudi Arabia, lost their Lebanese identity and dialect and became Saudis, in language, appearance, and ways of thinking.[213] Yet beyond the purely vestimentary dimension, it seems more credible that the Lebanese youth maintained a realistic understanding of the differences between Saudi and Lebanese societies. Even if they wanted to, they could not simply import all Saudi political debates into the social reality of Tripoli. The above remarks of Da'i al-Islam indicate that the Tripoli youth did not become purely "subordinate" to their Saudi teachers. Although absorbed into the "Saudi way of life" and accepting most of the theological lessons learned in the Desert Kingdom, they sensed the difference between Saudi and Lebanese politics. If many were inspired by the zeal of the Sahwist movement in the 1990s, they, at the same time, saw the need to modify its content, if applying the ideology to the multi-confessional Lebanese social reality.

One former student from Medina, Muhammad Khodr, has in fact become closer to the pan-Islamist position, traditionally advocated by JI in Lebanon. He is now a key player in the campaign led by former Prime Minister Najib Miqati, promoting religious, and political, moderation (*wasatiyya siyasiyya, wasatiyya diniyya*). Close to the Tawhid, Khodr is sometimes accused by sectarian Islamists in Tripoli of being just "the other face of the Tawhid".[214] He advocates the need to interpret the holy texts in the light of the political necessities of political cohesion between the different politico-confessional groups in Lebanon.

> The situation in Lebanon is different from the one at the Islamic University, where we had lived far from reality and especially from the political scene. Lebanon is characterised by the plurality of both confessions and politics. The situation made it necessary for us to take political decisions and to read the reality. We had to evolve our positions, especially in light of the continuity of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We began to feel the need of independent political decisions, characterised most importantly by due regards being paid to authenticity (the Shari'a) but also to realism (*waq'iyya*) (dependence on the particularity of the country).[215]

[212] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[213] Interview with Zakaria al-Masri, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[214] Interview with an employee in an Islamic Institute in Northern Lebanon, April 22, 2008.
[215] Interview with Muhammad Khodr, Tripoli, April 15, 2008.

It therefore seems that the Tripoli youth took advantage of their sojourns at the Islamic University of Medina to knit bonds with important Islamic figures throughout the Umma. They internalised a Wahhabi and Hanbali view of Islamic jurisprudence. Yet, even if they were inspired by the political projects of the Sahwists, and subsequently remained close to them, they were not pure "agents" of the Sahwist leaders. With plenty of experience in political and military struggle from the civil war, the Tripoli youth would support the ideas behind the Sahwist upheavals, but would promote a method based more on *realpolitik*.

3.3.4 A multifaceted Tripoli Diaspora knitting bonds with figures throughout the Umma

Not all Islamists in Lebanon have studied in Medina. Others have experience from elsewhere in the Islamic nation. The director of the Bokhari Institute in Akkar, Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, is not himself from Tripoli. His *curriculum vitae* is impressive, with diplomas in Islamic studies from Lebanon, the Indian subcontinent, and North Africa. He grew up in a religious family in Beirut, in the Ay'isha Bakkar area, next to the Dar al-Fatwa and spent his earliest years with the JI and participated in Islamic works. Having participated in Islamic works with the JI for a while, he began to study religion at the Imam al-Iwza'i centre, with doctor Toufic Suri. He stayed there only two years, before leaving for Karachi, Pakistan, where he studied religion with doctor Kamil Musa at the Abi Bakr University. He studied under one of the greatest ulama' of the Ahl-e Hadith, at the Diyar al-Sindi and graduated with an Ijaza degree in Hadith. After that, he travelled to Khartoum, to complete a Masters degree in the Jinan University (Umdurman). Having finished his degree, he pursued his doctoral studies at the Jinan University in Tripoli (Lebanon).

Another prestigious shaykh, often associated with Salafism, Bilal Baroudi, also has extensive international experience. Born into a family of religious scholars, known as eminent personalities in diverse Sufi brethrens, Bilal Baroudi headed for the prestigious al-Azhar university in Cairo. Before going to the Nile Valley, he had some preaching experience from the field in Tripoli. He pursued studies in Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences at al-Azhar for nine years, between 1987 and 1996. His specialisation was in recitation of the Qur'an, not in Islamic jurisprudence. As a student in the Mameluke city, he involved himself in preaching activities. With the diploma in his hand, he returned to Tripoli and began working at the al-Salam (peace) mosque. Specialised in reciting the Qur'an from al-Azhar, he is known to be the most skilled *muqri'* (reciter of the Qur'an) in the whole of North Lebanon. Yet, with the Egyptian state having less money to spend on its foreign students than the Gulf countries, he had to find his financial sponsors among his local crowd of followers.

4 The return: Connecting Tripoli with the Transnational Umma

> When you enter the scene, you feel that you have not made it up and that most of what you need to act, is already in place.[216]

This fourth chapter aims to show how, upon their return, some of the actors who had left the city at the end of the last decade, settled and established their institutions in the city starting in the 1990s (with a second wave after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005). Now enjoying the good graces of a transnational contact network woven through sojourns and study periods abroad, these doctors of Islamic law were to make Tripoli an "over-connected" Islamic centre. We will see how Tripoli was gradually connected with the outside Umma, so that what seem at first glance "local interactions" in Tripoli, reveal themselves as "the assemblage of a lot of other local interactions distributed elsewhere in time and space".[217]

As the *work-net* connecting Tripoli with the rest of the Umma is progressively developed, all these other places in the Umma are throwing their shadows on Tripoli. The virtual "presence" of other places in Tripoli means that the action which seemingly takes place locally, is *dislocated*, or "that most of the ingredients in the situation are already in place".[218] Debates which take place on other sites, be it the Islamic University of Medina, the council of the Assembly of Higher Ulama (*hay'at kibar al-'ulama'*) in Riyadh, or UOIF (the Union of Islamic Organisations in France, or *Union des Organisations Islamiques Francaises*) are transported to Tripoli, through different mediators, where they are reproduced by the local actors with either *subtle or radical changes.* These influences from other places can take material shapes: documents, tracts, and text books, signed conventions for university exchange programs, private exchanges of opinion on international Islamic conferences, advice given through phone and fax, and financial transactions. In addition, ideas and mentalities circulate as well between Tripoli and other loci. This is what Bruno Latour calls plug-ins. Once installed in your system, these newly acquired cognitive abilities, or plug-ins, allow you to *activate* what you were not able to see before.[219]

Hence, influences, taking material and immaterial forms, are dispatched from other places to Tripoli through specific channels. Created progressively by the religious leaders in the city, the connections are all part of a *work-net* transporting influences from other places to Tripoli and from Tripoli to other places. This interconnectedness results in the *standardisation* (or homogenisation) *of the sites*, i.e., the situation in one place can be compared to that in another

[216] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit.*, p. 194.
[217] *Ibid.*
[218] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[219] Although Latour, in his book *Reassembling the social. An Introduction to Actor-Network theory (op.cit.*) distances himself from Ervin Goffman's interactionism, such plug-ins could be seen as somewhat close to what David Snow (drawing upon Goffmann) calls frames or schemata of interpretations, for instance injustice frames.

through the elaboration of universal standards. Once internalised, these categories format the way the actors in Tripoli perceive themselves and their situation. Adopting schematas of interpretation "imported" from the Gulf or from Central Asia, the religious leaders in Tripoli begin identifying the situation of the Sunnis in Lebanon with that of the Sunnis elsewhere in the Umma.

In chapter four, I will present the hypothesis that if the connectedness between Tripoli and other places dates back to the 1980s, it was the new means of communication, especially the Internet, which really made the transnational arena able to "absorb" the Islamic field in Tripoli, in the sense that what goes on locally becomes more and more dependent on the developments in the rest of the Islamic nation, at the expense of the national policy makers. The transnational Islamic references circulating between sites facilitated the standardisation of self-perceptions and the perceptions of the other between the different places. As a result of the development of Internet infrastructure in Tripoli, the Islamist field in the city is becoming connected with other places in "real time". Networking with eminent Islamic personalities abroad, the religious leaders in Tripoli chose to invest in "international capital". The return of this investment rises exponentially with the increased usage of Internet because it enables the religious field in Tripoli to escape, consciously or not, from Lebanese political time. Tripoli is no longer seen as the second largest city in Lebanon, in the shadow of the decision makers in Beirut, but rather Lebanon's Sunni capital and a global Islamic centre. Its role as a symbol of the "resistance" of Muslims is propagated. Images and texts circulating on web forums create common references with which Muslims everywhere in the Islamic nation can identify.

I will try to analyse two key events witnessed by the Islamic field in Tripoli in the 1990s, when the tensions were at their peak, the "Diniyyeh affair" (2000) and the "Ashrafiyyeh events" (2006) in the light of this local/global dynamic. Are they the manifestation of the transnationalisation of Tripoli? Has the city become a crossroads for many tracks connecting other Islamic centres in the Umma, or, the provisional repository of many circulating different actors and ideas? The "Diniyyeh events" refer to the time when a dozen Chechen militants training in the Diniyyeh region in the north of Tripoli, accompanied by around fifty youth from Tripoli, saw themselves tilt towards armed insurrection against the Lebanese army (LAF). The "Ashrafiyyeh events" refer to a demonstration against the caricatures of the Prophet that was transformed into a mob assault against the Danish embassy and the burning of one nearby Maronite church, in addition to private cars and houses. I will analyse these events and evaluate to what extent they constitute the crystallisation of the "plug-in" of the Islamic centre of Tripoli with the rest of the Umma, from Denmark to Australia, passing through Chechnya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Emirates, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom.

4.1 From the *Guidance and Well-doing* Institute to subsequent fragmentation

4.1.1 The Guidance and Well-doing Institute in Tripoli in the 1990s

Da'i al-Islam graduated from the Islamic University of Medina in 1984 and immediately returned to Tripoli. After a stay at the Emirates in the end of the 1980s, he returned once again after the

conclusion of the Ta'if agreement (1990), which ended the civil war in Lebanon. Back in Tripoli, he established the Guidance and Well-doing Institute (*jama'at al-hadaya wal-ihsan*) in 1990. Previous to this, he had obtained authorisation from the Lebanese government to establish the Institute.

His father, Salem, was initially working closely with his nephew, Hassan al-Shahhal, a graduate in literature from the Université Saint Joseph (USJ) in Ashrafiyyeh, a Christian area in Beirut. Hassan had been appointed vice-émir (*na'ib al-emir*) of shaykh Salem in the 1980s, when Da'i was still a young student in the Gulf. Later, when he established the Institute for Da'wa and Guidance (*ma'had al-da'wa wa'l-irshad*) in 1988, Salem appointed Hassan as the director of the institute. Hassan al-Shahhal, who today directs the al-Nasiha magazine, is considered and considers himself close to the Saudi establishment.

Da'i's return to the scene in Tripoli seems to have transformed the power equilibriums within the emerging Islamic field. It seems to have pushed Hassan aside. One of the previous employees of Da'i's institute, reports that shaykh Salem and Da'i had more similar views on religion. Da'i had a much more independent vision than Hassan.[220]

The division between Hassan and Da'i al-Shahhal was based on both ideological conflict and personal rivalries and constituted the first division in the Salafi field in Tripoli. Da'i, who advocated a Salafi doctrine much more independent of the Kingdom, became the stronger figure of the two in the 1990s. Although there are rumours that there were some differences of opinion between Da'i and his father, Da'i denies this:

> I started the work and I was the one in charge of the shebab. My father a spiritual leader (*murshid 'amm*) in the community, but he did not have an organisation. When I started making the organization, the Syro-Lebanese intelligence (*mukhabarat*) became afraid of me, and the JI became afraid of me. Of the accusations was that I had a dispute with my father, in order to distort the image of me. The differences with my father were practical differences (*ikhtilaf 'amaliy*). Everyone has a different style of preaching..[221]

Da'i al-Shahhal rose to become the most prominent Salafi cleric in Tripoli. Until its closure in 1996, his institute, The Guidance and Well-doing Institute functioned as something close to what the Argentinean sociologist Ernesto Laclau would call a "nodal point".[222] It functioned as a hub for most religious activities in Tripoli associated with Salafism and was able to propose an almost hegemonic (in a Gramscian sense) definition of the Salafi doctrine, to the detriment of other Salafi institutes, such as Hassan al-Shahhal's Da'wa instiute. As Head of the Guidance and

[220] Interview with a shaykh in Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[221] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[222] Nodal points organise discourses (for instance the content of "liberal democracy", or in our case, "Salafism"). See Marianne Winter Jørgensen and Louise Philips, *Diskursanalyse som teori og metode* [*Discourse analysis as theory and methods*], (Roskilde, Roskilde Universitetsforlag/Samfundslitteratur, 1999), p. 63. See also Iver B. Neumann, *Mening, makt, materialitet, En innføring i diskursanalyse* [*Mening, Power, Materiality. An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*], (Oslo, Fagbokforlaget, 2001), p. 65. The cited work of Ernest Laclau is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Demoncratic Politics*, (London, Verso, 1985).

Welldoing, Da‘i al-Shahhal administrated both a teaching institute with the same name and a radio station called the Guidance radio. The radio station had two branches, one in Tripoli and one in Assioun. This “hegemonic victory” lasted until 1996, when, after the closure of the Guidance and Welldoing, the remains of the Salafi field in the city would be fragmented.[223]

Yet Da‘i al-Shahhal’s institute was all the time encountering difficulties because it was constrained by the Syrian hand. At the end of 1991, Da‘i al-Shahhal left Tripoli for around four years, because of growing pressure from the Syrian intelligence. Initially spending some time in Saida, he had headed for the Gulf. In an interview with this author in April 2008, he said that “there was a danger of assassination or arrest and prison so I left the city, the institution continued and I continued the *da‘wa* but I left, accompanied by some of the brothers.[224]

The pressure only mounted. In 1996 the Guidance and Welldoing Institute was closed down by a decision of the Lebanese Interior minister Michel al-Murr, formally for “inciting confessional hatred” (*na’arat ta’ifiyya*). The decision was based on the paragraph in a book used in the Institute’s curriculum, entitled *Contemporary Religions and Sects* (*al-adyan wa’l-madhahib al-mu‘asira)* by the Saudi scholar Ali al-‘Awaji, where the Alawis (*nusayriyyin*) were described as apostates. The paragraph added that there was a secret collusion between Israel and the Syrian regime.[225] Da‘i’s brother Radi, two teachers at the institute, and the photocopyist who had printed the book in Tripoli were arrested for two months.[226]

Da‘i al-Shahhal’s official narrative of the event is:

> The Syrian regime wants the totality of the Islamic movements to be under its command and to work solely under its guidance. They want the Islamic movements to be an instrument (*wasat*) of the Syrian regime, as does the Ahbash and others. I was an unacceptable opponent (*mu‘atarid ghayr shar‘iy*). My doctrine, thoughts, and policies were against them. But I was not entering into a conflict with them, I put this conflict aside and I focused on spreading the Da‘wa. I used to have five institutes and a radio and projects, social welfare services (*khadamat ijtima‘iyya*) as well, helping the poor and the needy. This of course irritated them because there was a change in the society in favour of the Salafi Da‘wa. I did not enter into a conflict with them, but the regime found that the issue was not in their interest, so they approached the government and the Ministerial council and asked them to close the institutions pertaining to the Guiance and Welldoing This is what happened. I did not enter into a conflict with the Syrians but doctrinally I am a Salafist and they are Nusayris. They don’t believe in the religion. In the dept of their hearts, they are fanatic entusiasts (*ta‘assub*) of the Alawi sect and the Shias.[227]

Although the common interpretation is that the Institute was closed down by the Syrians, “to please their allies”, some analysts have pointed out that the real reason was that Da‘i diffused a tape with a sermon of Safar al-Hawwali on the Guidance and Welldoing radio and that it was the

[223] According to Laclau, an hegemonic victory occurs when the objectives of a particular group find themselves identified with the society in its complete outreach”. See Ernesto Laclau, *La guerre des identitiés*, cited in Bernard Rougier, *Le Jihad au quotidien*, (Paris, PUF, 2004).
[224] Interview with Da‘i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[225] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, February 18, 2009.
[226] *Ibid.* Raed Hlayhel was one of the two teachers arrested, along with Raed Kabbara.
[227] *Ibid.*

Saudi regime that demanded the Lebanese authorities to close the Institute. One of the shaykh-s in Tripoli, himself a "scientific Salafist", close to the Saudi establishment, pointed out, in an interview with the author in April 2008, that "Da'i al-Islam agrees with the ideas of Salman al-'Awda and Safar al-Hawwali from the 1990s. Just like them, he tries to mobilise the youth against the regime".[228]

The closing down of the Guidance and Welldoing Institute had the impact of fragmenting the field. It transformed the power equilibriums within the Islamic field. With new institutions being created conveying the messages of so far relatively unknown scholars, it also changed the "balance of meaning" in the Islamist field. When Da'i was allowed to re-open the Guidance and Welldoing Institute in 2005 and re-appeared in the field after more than eight years, he found that many of his former employees had established their own teaching institutes. Many had gone on to work for his uncle, Hassan al-Shahhal, and later at the Amin institute in Zahariyyeh. As we will see in the second part of this chapter, the closing down of the institute also created a vacuum which made it possible for Jihadi Salafism to gain ground in the city.

4.1.2 The effervescence of Islamic Institutes in North Lebanon in the late 1990s

Subsequent to the closure of Da'i al-Shahhal's Institute, in the late 1990s, the city saw an effervescence of Islamic institutes, each financed as a result of personal contacts between individuals in Tripoli, many previously employed by the Guidance and Welldoing institute, with influential Islamic personalities in different countries in the Gulf. These links in fact constitute large patronage networks, in the interest of both the client and the patron. Establishing an Islamic institute of his own with funding from the Gulf, the local Tripoli cleric was guaranteed an influential position in society, official resources (recognition), and a significant income. The mother organisations in the Gulf, for their part, were eager to obtain a share of the Islamic market in Lebanon. Most of these institutes claim to be representatives of "scientific Salafism" (*salafiyya 'ilmiyya*). Scientific Salafism, also called purist Salafism, is seen by its adherents as being a religious doctrine unadulterated by politics.[229] "Scientific" is hence a positively connoted characteristic, which the Salafists dispute among themselves.[230] The main characteristic of its ideological content is its being very close to Saudi official Wahhabism. Pro-establishment and non-violent, those who call themselves "scientific" are rivals to the Jihadis on the broader Salafi field.[231]

According to one preacher in Tripoli, Salafism in Tripoli is not "true Salafism".

> There is no real Salafism in Tripoli. Even if Tripoli seems, from the outside, more and more pious. All the institutes come from the outside, from the Gulf, even the books. Everything comes from there. They do not apply the doctrine to the reality of the country. Focus on special things, all

[228] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamus, Akkar, April 23, 2008.
[229] See Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Volume 29, Number 3 (2006) (pp. 207-239), p. 210.
[230] Interview with Stéphane Lacroix, Chaire Moyen Orient Méditerranée, Paris, September 2, 2008.
[231] See Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", *op.cit.*, p. 211.

> comes from Saudi Arabia. For instance, in the preachings, they speak about the Sufis and the graveyards. But the Sufis in Lebanon do not have the same graveyards.[232]

This feeling seems to be common among many Salafis. During an interview with one of the main personalities in the field, the person I was interviewing was visited by two of his "brothers". They came to discuss an important matter with the shaykh. They politely raised their concern about the Saudi attempts to conquer the Salafi scene in Lebanon. "Saudi Arabia wants to control *(saytara)* Lebanon completely", they whispered to the shaykh.[233]

The trajectories of shaykh Raed Hlayhel are illustrative of the change of power equilibriums within the Salafi field in the 1990s. After graduating from the Islamic University in Medina, he was employed by Da'i al-Shahhal to work in his institute, which was at that time hegemonic on the Salafi field. During this period, Hlayhel married a Palestinian Lebanese lady, whose family lived in the Beddawi refugee camp just outside Tripoli. When the Guidance and Welldoing closed down at the hands of the Syrian in 1995, Raed Hlayhel was arrested and spent two months in prison.[234] After the break down within the Salafi field in Tripoli, following the Diniyyeh incident, shaykh Hlayhel decided to establish himself in Denmark, fearing future repressions of the field in his native country. After the Syrian withdrawal, in November 2006, he would once more return to Tripoli, with an expanded international contact network, and take over the position as director of the Amin Institute in the city.[235]

The institute where Hlayhel is currently in charge, the Amin Institute, was established in 2000, by the shaykh Bilal Haddara. 160 students, only girls, begin their studies each year at the institute. It is financed by the International Islamic Relief Organisation, a branch of the World Muslim League.[236] The World Muslim League is a Saudi NGO, sponsored by the royal family and other charitable individuals in the Kingdom, created in 1962. Aiming to "wahhabise" Islam everywhere in the Umma, the organisation sends religious missionaries and gives donations of the works of Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad Bin Abd al-Wahhab to other Islamic countries.[237] However, as the Kingdom cracked down on Islamic NGOs after the US pressure following the September 11, 2001 attacks, and especially after the Riyadh attacks on May 12, 2003, Saudi donations to the teaching Institute markedly became less generous.[238]

Another Islamic teaching institute created at about the same time was the Imam Bokhari centre. Sa'd al-Din Ka'bbi, who we saw in the first part as a young student in Karachi and Khartoum, was the one opening the institute in 1994-1995. The centre functions as a subsidiary branch to the Islamic University in Medina and is financed by them, through the Saudi embassy in Beirut.

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[232] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, May 7, 2008.
[233] Observations during an interview with a cleric in Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[234] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[235] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, February 18, 2009.
[236] See IIRO's website http://www.islamic-relief.com/ and www.themwl.org (website of the World Muslim league). See also http://www.islamic-relief.com/submenu/Appeal/Middle-east-campaign/lebanon/lebanon-country-page.asp, which describes the projects ongoing in Lebanon.
[237] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, *op.cit.*, Chapter Two.
[238] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

Students from the centre are sent every year to complete their studies in Medina, with a scholarship for the University. Located in Wadi al-Jamus, Akkar (North Lebanon), it focuses solely on teaching religion and theology and currently has 120-150 enrolled students. It is referred to in Islamic circles as "the most important representative of scientific Salafism in North Lebanon".[239]

The Imam Bokhari Institute gives lessons on religion and memorising the Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith. Students every year participate in regional memorising Hadith contests. This year it is about *hadith* on morality. Yet the course does not focus solely on religious jurisprudence. Students also take lessons in English (deemed necessary for trade), geography, and computer science. The structure of the courses at the religious institute is an illustration of the argument that the boundaries between formal religious training and lay Islamists are becoming more blurred in recent years, as formally trained scholars take use of modern computer sciences and reinvent the content of the religious heritage.[240]

Sa'd al-Din Kabbi maintains that he lives secluded from the events in Beirut and that he works primarily on scientific research. Yet, he seems to travel extensively to attend international conferences and he recently met Yusuf al-Islam (Cat Stevens) in Riyadh. He visits his Wahhabi peers in Tripoli very often, especially Hassan al-Shahhal.[241]

The Imam Bokhari Institute has been in contact with the greatest ulama' in the Umma and particularly in Saudi Arabia, such as Ibn Baz and Muhammad bin Uthaymin. It has direct connections with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments (*waqf*-s), Call and Guidance in Saudi Arabia and the Minister shaykh Salih Bin Abd al-Aziz, from the prestigious Aal al-shayk family. It receives yearly funding from the Saudi government, through the embassy in Lebanon. Students only pay a symbolic amount in tuition fees.

Although promoting scientific Salafism, the Imam Bokhari Institute was affected by the increased control and repression of the Salafi field subsequent to the Diniyyeh events (see chapter four). The institute was at that time banned from accepting foreign students. Prior to that, they had had Belgians, American converts, Australians, and Syrians studying with them.[242]

Another Islamic Institute, Dar al-Hadith, was established in 2003. It is financed by the Diaspora of Tripoli Sunnis in Australia (*al-jaliyya al-lubnaniyya li'ahl al-sunna wa'l-jama'a*).[243] It has 60 students, only girls, all between 12 and 20 years old. Many of the teachers do not hold any university diplomas. It is located in Abi Samra, yet it has been closed for several months. The former director of Dar al-Hadith, Nabil Rahim (born in 1971), was arrested in Abi Samra in January 2008, accused of being second in command of "al-Qaida and Fatah al-Islam" in Lebanon

[239] See the beginning of the paragraph of a short analysis of the characteristics of "Scientific Salafism".
[240] The argument is presented in Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama' in Contemporary Islam*., *op.cit.* See the debate in the introduction chapter in this study for a more extensive analysis of the question.
[241] Interview with Hassan al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[242] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamus, Akkar, April 23, 2008.
[243] Interview with Sahhar al-Atrache, International Crisis Group (ICG) Lebanon, Tripoli, April 10, 2008.

and the co-ordinator between Jihadists in Lebanon and actors in the global Jihadi network.[244] Nabil Rahim allegedly trained Saudi volunteers in Abi Samra, before sending them for Jihad in Iraq.[245]

Yet the one behind the perhaps largest new initiative in the field in Tripoli is Safwan al-Zu'abi. Born in Tripoli in 1970, he administers the Sunni Centre (*Markaz al-Sunna*), financed directly by the Wahhabi *Jama'at Ihya al-Turath* movement in Kuwait. Safwan al-Zu'abi is a former employee in shaykh Da'i's Institute. He spent five years with shaykh Salim al-Shahhal. Located in spacious and modern buildings in Abi Samra, the Sunni Centre rose to become one of the most frequented religious institutes in the city. Because of its abundant material resources and its medical dispensary, it has become a key force in the field, to the detriment of other institutes, such as Da'i al-Shahhal's Guigance and Welldoing Institute (which was, as we shall see in further detail in the third part of this study, re-opened after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005). According to Safwan Zu'abi himself, the money he currently received from Kuwait used to be given to Da'i al-Shahhhal:

> The Islamic centre was established in 2005. Al-Turath came to Lebanon. The money comes directly from the Turath al-Islami in Kuwait. Before they had links with and financed Da'i al-Islam. Things changed because of the administrative chaos and the lack of clarity. Nobody knew where the money was going. Secondly, Da'i is a person suffering from megalomania. He does not accept Shura.[246]

Because of his abundant financial supplies, Safwan al-Zu'abi is perceived by most specialists as being one of Da'i al-Shahhal's greatest rivals. When asked to describe the situation of the Salafi field, most specialists point out the conflict between Da'i al-Shahhal and Safwan. Yet, many add to this that Da'i is the one with the most credibility of the two, the one with "a history on the field". Although Safwan eagerly launches accusations at Da'i, his own opponents like to point out that, before he got to know "the Kuwaitis", he used to work in a factory, manufacturing underwear for women.[247] In a personal interview with this author in April 2008, one Lebanese journalist, close to the Tawhid movement and the Syrian regime, singles out Safwan al-Zu'abi as the "most corrupt" of all the Salafi clerics:

> The core of the problem is money. All of the Salafists are more concerned with politics than with religion, more concerned with money than with religion. They all search for money and power. The worst is Safwan al-Zu'abi, who is all about money. He was my neighbour for twenty years. He used to work in a factory producing underwear for women. Then, he got to know the Kuwaitis and he chose to ride the wave. He began working for the Lebanese security services, for the sake of the money. I still cannot call him "shaykh". I cannot call him anything else than "Safwan".[248]

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[244] See "The Second in command in al-Qaida is arrested" (in Arabic) ("Tawqi al-rajul al-theni li'l-qa'ida fi'lubnan"), *al-Hayat* (London), January 11, 1998, http://www.alhayat.com/arab_news/levant_news/01-2008/Item-20080110-653d0b38-c0a8-10ed-01ae-81ab43198e43/story.html, accessed April, 2008.
[245] *Ibid.*
[246] Interview with Safwan al-Zu'abi, Tripoli, April 15, 2005.
[247] Interview with a Lebanese journalist in the Islamic media, April 15, 2008, Tripoli.
[248] *Ibid.*

And Safwan al-Zu'abi has really known an incredible social mobility since he founded his Islamic institute. He has many employees and institutions, but it seems that many of these "followers" are less convinced by the Salafism of Ahya al-Turath, than working to properly feed their families.[249]

In the middle of the 1990s, therefore, the Islamic and Salafi field in city became increasingly connected to other sites in the Islamic nation through transnational fluxes of persons, money and equipment. Still today, many shaykh-s in Tripoli seem to travel frequently to visit Islamic scholars and former classmates abroad, to attend conferences, and for family visits. Outside shaykh-s living in countries such as Syria[250] and Saudi Arabia[251] also seem to visit Tripoli, for instance to attend conferences or hold lectures, and – as we will see – underground Jihadi militants travel trough Tripoli. As we will learn in the third part of this study, the curriculum and books used in Wahhabi teaching Institutions also come directly from the Gulf.

4.1.3 New actors in the field subsequent to the Syrian withdrawal

The withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon in 2005 in fact gave new opportunities for Islamic works in the city. According to Da'i al-Islam, who was able to re-open his institute, it retrieved the balance of power between the central state and the Islamists in the city, which had been the norm before the Syrian entry into the city, when it was ruled by the Tawhid movement.[252]

A set of "new actors" returned to the field after the Syrian withdrawal. Many of these actors had in the meantime spent many years abroad, investing in "international capital". They were able to make use of international contact networks, establishing new Islamic institutes with foreign funding.

Umar Bakri, born in Beirut in 1958, is Lebanese and returned to his home country after almost 20 years in London, where he had lived since 1986.[253] After the July 2005 attacks made it politically difficult for him to stay in the United Kingdom, he left the country for Lebanon. Bakri is the founder of al-Muhajirun, an organisation which openly supported the use of physical violence for political purposes in the West, but which – at least until 2004 or 2005 - had propagated a "covenant of peace" with the British government, in return for protection. In January 2005 Umar Bakri annulled the Covenant via the Internet on the grounds that Muslims no longer enjoyed freedom and safety within the UK (referring to arrests of Islamist activists mainly). He also incited his followers to join al-Qaida.[254] Shaykh Umar studied in Damascus, Beirut, and Saudi

[249] Visit to the head quarters of Ahya al-Turath, Tripoli, February 19, 2009.
[250] For instance, during the Tripoli international book fair held in May 2008, the Tawhid movement organised a lecture by the Syrian Islamic intellectual Muhammad Ratib al-Nablousi.
[251] See Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit.*, p. 233.
[252] Interview with Da'i al-Islam, in *al-watan al-'arabi* magazine, March 12, 2008.
[253] Many researchers and journalists claim that he is Syrian. Bakri himself, however, claimed, in interview with this author in April 2008 that this is not correct. According to Bakri, the confusion stems from the erroneous translation of the term "Greater Syria" (*Bilad al-Sham*), which he uses to characterise Lebanon.
[254] Petter Nesser, lecture at the Oslo Military Society, May 15, 2008.

Arabia.[255] He lived in Great Britain for more than 20 years and is, together with shaykh Abu Hamza al-Masri and shaykh Abu Qatada al-Filastini considered one of the most central charismatic leaders of the so-called "Londonistan" activist community.[256]

Having lived in his villa close to Beirut for nearly a year, Bakri sold it and moved to Tripoli between late 2006 and the beginning of 2007. The precise nature of his activities is unknown. It is uncertain to what extent he has the support of the shebab. Bakri himself affirms that he is a retired man. Yet, someone with his very name participated on the pass-word protected international Jihadi web forum *muntada al-hesba* during the Nahr al-Barid crisis. The forum where communiqués of global Jihadi movements are posted first, the Hesba forum, has been one of the leading international Jihadi web forum, and until it was recently closed down, the one which was amongst the most difficult to obtain access to. Umar Bakri also speaks very freely in the Lebanese and international Media and receives a lot of media attention. He recently married a young woman in the city. According to Fathy Yakan, Bakri gained a lot of support after the government arrested many zealous Muslim youths in relation with the fighting in Nahr al-Barid last summer (2007). However, this popularity among the youth seems not to have lasted very long. For some time directing the Iqra library (*maktabat al-iqra*) in the outskirt of Abi Samra, Bakri has gone on to establishing an institute in al-Azmeh street in central Tripoli, funded (he claims) by British associations close to his al-Muhajirun movement.[257] Yet, Bakri seems to be restrained by the Lebanese government from letting Tripoli benefit from his preaching, his institute having been closed and re-opened already three times in the last year.[258]

Umar Bakri is not the only shaykh who has recently returned to Tripoli, after a long sojourn in the West. The city has become a refuge for those who return to Lebanon after having been "persecuted" in the West, by police, media, and state authorities, "because of their religion". Shaykh Raed Hlayhel, who we followed to Denmark in the previous chapter, lived in Århus, Denmark for seven years. After a controversy between him and the Danish government was sparked up following the publications of the caricatures of the Prophet, Raed Hlayhel would once again return to Tripoli. In November 2006, he installed himself in Abi Samra, a conservatice neighbourhood in Tripoli and started working at the al-Amin Institute in Zahariyyeh in Tripoli. As has been mentioned above, the Institute was established by shaykh Bilal Haddara in 2000. Hlayhel is primarily involved in charitable works and gets his funding partly from Dar al-Fatwa, the highest representative of official Sunnism in Lebanon, partly from Islamic institutes in Saudi Arabia, linked to the Royal family.[259]

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[255]Mahan Abedin. "Al-Muhajiroun in the UK: An Interview with Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad", *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (2004).

[256] Petter Nesser, lecture at the Oslo Military Society, May 15, 2008.

[257] Al-Muhajirun was an Islamic movement created by Umar Bakri in January 1986, which openly supported al-Qaida, yet had concluded a "security pact" with the British government, pledging not to engage in armed activities on British soil, but use it as "safe havens" for operations abroad. It was banned in the aftermath of the bombings on July 7, 2005, of the London underground "tube" system, and a double decker bus. See Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam rising. Muslim Extremism in the West, (*Landham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

[258] Interviews with residents in Abi Samra, February 2009.

[259] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, February 18, 2009.

> I chose to return to Tripoli because I felt that, because of the hostility in the West towards Islam, preaching there would not yield results. There is no freedom of expression in the West! But there were also other reasons. I once held a sermon in Århus about the hijab, which led to a lot of debates in the Danish press. I felt that I was being mocked. I cannot live in a country where I need to give up my religion.[260]

Another actor within the field, the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) movement, also sort of "returned to Tripoli" in 2005. Outlawed as a religious and political movement prior to that date, the movement was legalised by then Interior Minister Ahmad Fatfat in 2005 and today enjoys a legal presence in Lebanon. Similarly to Tawhid, the movement has played and still plays a central role in socialising the city's youth into the "Islamic culture and civilisation". Yet, it seems to go even beyond that role. Two prime members of Fatah al-Islam, who also had links to the Salafi-Jihadi environment plotting the 2006 train bombing case in Germany, came from a family where the father had been a profiled member of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Lebanon.

4.1.4 Fragmentation as a result of characteristics inherent in the Salafi doctrine

It is not only the external factors (supply of money and foreign aid and the changed political opportunity structures) but also certain characteristics inherent in Salafi doctrine that lead to its fragmentation. As shown in the introduction, there is not one central authority in Sunni Islam laying out the criteria for the sole, "true", authentic doctrine. By definition, all religious leaders present their version of the Islamic creed as the "most authentic Islam" and engage in ideological competition in the Islamic field.[261] The fact that there is not one, centralised institution defining what orthodoxy and heresy consist of is the also very much the case for the Salafi field. "Salafism" refers to the Arabic term *al-Salaf al-Salih* that is, the "pious ancestors". These include the Prophet and his companions" and the two subsequent generations.

Salafism can be seen as sub-field located within the broader Islamic field. In general we can say that all Salafists are Islamists, but not all Islamists are Salafists.[262] In order to be part of the Salafi field, there are certain, given criteria that must be met. Salafism distinguishes itself from non-Salafi Islamism, particularly in the *aqida* (doctrine) and the *manhaj* (method, praxis). The current refuses to submit to the authority of one of the four schools of jurisprudence in Islam[263] and claims to take Islam directly from the Qur'an and the Sunna. The method is largely based on the principle of the imitation of the Prophet. The Salafi doctrine relies extensively on memorising and citing the Prophetic tradition and refuses the use of human reasoning of logics.[264] It is sometimes

[260] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[261] See Lacroix's article "Les nouveaux intellectuels religieux saoudiens: le wahhabisme en question", *op.cit.*, for a systematic analysis of how different actors in the religious field in Saudi Arabia compete for how to interpret "Salafism" and "Islam".
[262] Even so-called purist Salafists can be counted as political Islamists. They are political in the sense that they call for the establishment of an Islamic state and organise themselves in movements to achieve this aim. For more on purist Salafists, see Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", *op.cit.*, pp. 218, 220, 232.
[263] That is, the Hanafi, Hanbali, Ashari, and Maliki schools of jurisprudence.
[264] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *op.cit.*, p. 212; Bernard Rougier, "Introduction", in Bernard Rougier (ed.) "Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?", (Paris, PUF, 2008), p. 21; and

held that there are certain criteria that define a Salafi. If we accept that most identities are formed in contrast to a specific "other", that "the self" is created as a result of alterity,[265] we could suggest that the Salafis primarily identified by their anti-Shiite, anti-Sufi, and anti-Muslim Brotherhood stance. Yet these basic criteria do not free Salafism from the contradictions inherent in its ideology, nor make of the general thought one unambiguous school of thought. Salafism remains a field of dispute, defined by negative criteria, by what it is not.

Some people speak about Salafism as if it is something very concrete and refer to it as "Salafism in itself", *al-manhaj illy heyya.*[266] But the fact is that "true Salafism" (*illy heyya)* does not really exist, apart from the rivalling meaning that the actors give to the title "Salafi". As long as there is no institution to impose an hegemonic view on the matter of dispute, there seems to be for Salafism no discernable objectivised *das Ding an sich*, which bypasses *das Ding far mich*.

This individualisation of the religious doctrine facilitated the fragmentation of the field. Most specialists in the Islamist field in Tripoli, at least those who are not Salafists themselves, argue that the contradictions inherent in Salafi doctrine are to blame for the internal competition among Salafists. According to Tawhid leader Bilal Sha'ban, one of the greatest rivals of the Salafists within the field, in an interview with the author in April 2008,

> [t]here are two reasons for the fragmentation of the Salafi field in Tripoli. The philosophical reason is that Salafists do not adhere to any of the four schools of jurisprudence but they take the religion directly from the Qur'an and the Sunna. Every individual can institute a new Salafi school! There are tens of Salafi currents in Tripoli. I do not even know all these schools, so many are they! The Salafists only agree on four or five things! They agree that the Shias are infidels (*kuffar*), that there is a Syrian-Iranian axis, they agree on the danger of the *bid'a*, on the hate towards the Sufis, and they all take much interest in superficial things, such as the beard (*lihya*) and the clothes. The second reason is the effervescence of aid and foreign financing. [267]

The ambiguity inherent in the term "Salafi" is not only the result of the lack of a centralised authority. It is also due to the fact that it is a positively connoted characterisation (it means those true to the practices of the forefathers). Therefore, the term is a matter of dispute between a variety of actors, who have an interest in calling themselves Salafists and stripping others of "Salafi credentials". Salafists themselves generally refuse to be called Wahhabis[268] and prefer the (mostly) positively connoted term "Salafi". They tend to see the term "Wahhabi" as negatively

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Stéphane Lacroix, "L'apport de Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani", in Bernard Rougier (ed.) "Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?", *op.cit.*, p. 53.

[265] According to Bruno Latour, "it is always in comparison with other competing ties that any tie is emphasized. So for any group to be defined, a list of anti-groups is set up as well". Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit.*, p. 32. See also Patricia M. Goff and Kevin C. Dunn: *Identity and Global Politics*: *Theoretical and Empirical Elaborations*, (Basingstoke, Macmillian Palgrave, 2004).

[266] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 2008.

[267] Interview with Bilal Sha'ban, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.

[268] Stéphane Lacroix defines Wahhabism as "the religious tradition developed since the middle of the 18th century by the ulama' of the religious institution founded by the inheritors of Muhammad bin Adbul Wahhab (1703-1972), an institution which, in turn, considers itself as the guardian of this tradition" [my translation]. See Stéphane Lacroix, "Les nouveaux intellectuels religieux saoudiens: le wahhabisme en question", *op.cit.*, p. 2.

loaded, because it refers to a person (Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab). *Wahhabi* (lit.: those following the doctrines of Ibn Abdul Wahhab) implies that Wahhabis are venerating Ibn Abdul Wahhab, and therefore violate the essential principle of the Unity of God (tawhid) and the ban on worshipping saints.[269]

Some preachers, without necessarily adhering to these "objective" criteria for defining "Salafi method", call themselves Salafists, because they have an interest in doing so. According to a one of the clerics in Tripoli:

> Many of those who call themselves Salafists are not really Salafists. They are benefiting from calling themselves Salafists, in order to achieve fast money and to rapidly advance in their careers. But that's not Salafism – Salafism is the historical period which corresponds to the first two centuries of Islam. Real Salafism is the line of the prophets (*khatt al-anbia'*). But today, the irresponsible usage (*al-istikhdam al-la'mas'ul*) is making it seem as if Salafism is a political party (*hizb*).

According to the observer, the Saudi regime is the one responsible for perverting the image of Salafism. By publishing works of medieval scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya and labelling them *in posteriori* as Salafists, the Kingdom appropriates and re-invents the Islamic heritage and, opponents would say, even distorts it.

> Salafism is not wrong in itself but the way it is used is not correct. It was a way of using (*istikhdam*) it, or rather, exploiting it (*istighlal*), one hundred per cent channelled by the Saudi regime. The problem is with the irresponsible usage in Saudi Arabia of the word "Salafism". The Kingdom uses Islamic references, which are already present, and represent them as Salafists. The Kingdom "invaded" these people, publishing their books. Look, Ibn Taymiyya is from the 8th century [hijri, i.e. according to the Islamic calendar] he cannot be among the pious ancestors, not from the angle we see "Salafism". The Saudi regime is intent on invading all thoughts in order to obtain loyalty and to spread them (the thoughts) to other countries. They give money in return for loyalty, that is how this doctrine works. This school is based on a vanguard towered over by the ruler.[270]

It is pertinent that some actors, who follow the *manhaj*, refuse to call themselves Salafists, because they see the word as being too closely connoted with the Saudi regime. In Tripoli, many actors, such as Bilal Baroudi and Raed Hlayhel refuse to call themselves Salafists, but insist that the world "Islam" and "Muslim" be used in stead. Bilal Baroudi, often associated with Salafism by outside observers, stressed that:

> The name is: "Muslim" (*al-ism "muslim*"). Don't put names on us that we don't have. "Islam" is not a method (*manhaj*). I am not Salafi (*ana ma'andi salafiy*). I don't have any material or ideological connections to Salafists (*ma fi irtibat maddi, ma fi irtibat fikri m'a al-salafiyya*). People use different names because they are trying to divide us. When you say Salafi, people think of material shaykh-s like Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza. The regime tries to conquer us.[271]

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[269] Yet, the Kingdom used the word "Wahhabism" until the 1940s. It was only after the 1940s that the regime began insisting that the term "Salafism" be used. See Pascal Ménoret, *l'Énigme Saoudienne. Les saoudiens et le monde* 1744-2003), (Paris, La Découverte, 2003), p. 69. For a more detailed analysis of the principle of Tawhid, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", *op.cit*.

[270] Interview with an observer of the Islamic field in Tripoli, Spring, 2008.

[271] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.

Many non-Salafists therefore disagree with the use of the term "Salafi", preferring to call the ones who fit the objective criteria we presented Wahhabis. According to one shaykh,

> One can easily recognise those who call themselves Salafis because they do not follow any of the four schools of Jurisprudence. This is why they are "Salafists". They are not "Salafists" because of their true or authentic understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Those who claim to be Salafis are in fact Wahhabis. All other Muslims (i.e. the non-Wahhabi) are the true Salafists.[272]

Hence, the term Salafism can be defined on several levels. For some, it simply is a title of authenticity, which Muslims dispute among themselves. Certain religious leaders emphasize that "those who call themselves Salafists tend to do it because they have to (*salafiyya hasab haja*)".[273] They claim that it is the current situation of a crisis and the perception of imminent threats to their community, which make youth return to the origins, in search of authenticity".[274] On the other hand, calling oneself "Salafist" can also facilitate the creation of new channels of funding from actors in the world of petro-Islam. Yet, Salafism can also mean a specific doctrine, subject to internal variations, but which has certain "common elements". It defines itself against doctrinal "enemies" such as Sufis or the Muslim Brotherhood. It implies a certain method, i.e., the imitation of the Prophet, and avoiding human reasoning. Yet, as we shall see, the ideological competition on the Salafi field between pro-Saudi conservative Wahhabis, on the one hand, and anti-regime socio-revolutionary Salafists, on the other, grew increasingly exasperated during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.[275] This led the conservative Wahhabis approach actors outside the Salafi field, such as members of the Muslim Brotherhood, to gather support for a collective campaign where they try to mobilise against Salafi Jihadism.

4.2 Jihadi Salafism emerges as a rival within the Salafi field

4.2.1 Radicalisation as a consequence of fragmentation?

The individualisation of the Salafi doctrine and the lack of a sovereign authority in Sunni Islam and particularly, in the Salafi school (studied in the previous chapter), not only led to the fragmentation of the field, it also facilitated its radicalisation, especially in times of crises. The

[272] Interview with Fadi Adra, Tripoli, May 9, 2008.
[273] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[274] *Ibid.*
[275] In his article "Anatomy of the Salafi movement" (*op.cit.*), Quintan Wiktorowicz, argues that three trends can be identified within what he calls the Salafi movement: first, the apolitical purists or scientific Salafists, secondly, the politicos, who are politicised and embrace regular political channels, and, lastly, the Jihadis, who are politicised and who in addition justify the use of violent means. Wiktorowicz's thesis is that the three currents within contemporary Salafism all share the same doctrine (*aqida*) and that their reading of reality and the ideological conflict over what constitutes the legitimate means is the only factor behind the divisions. Yet, in this study, based on a reading of the field in Tripoli, it is argued that, at least in Tripoli, the picture is somewhat more complex, as the actors frequently make use of different ideological registers, depending on public and on the concrete situation. On a general basis, it can also be argued that the Jihadis in fact have more in common with the purists than with the politicos. Both the Jihadis and the purists condemn Muslim's engaging in regular political activities, claiming that it will only lead to a division of the Umma, along partisan lines (*hizbiyya*). See "The Salafi-Jihadi's efforts to discredit those participating in the "Lebanese entity"", 5.3.4, p. 128.

characteristic "Salafi" is in fact appropriated by a generation of young, politicised Salafists, who are less preoccupied with theological studies than with the political crises and menaces threatening their community. These zealous youngsters want to respond to what they have learned about the doctrinal and political dangers posed by Crusaders or Shiites, by action.

The wish to "pass to action", what is often referred to as a result of a "radicalisation process", should be seen in light of the broader economic and cultural crisis in the region. The educational system in many countries in Levant region, as a result of institutional decline and corruption, is going though severe challenges. Another reason is that the state system becomes complimented by an alternative, informal system of "private tutoring" (*durus khususiyya*). Reading books becomes less and less widespread as an occupation in the younger populations. The youth, especially in the poor neighbourhoods, grow more and more impatient to their perceived "intolerable situation". Many want to emigrate or seek other sorts of "radical solutions" to finish off with their frustration.[276]

For some religiously engaged youth, the only solution to the overarching menaces threatening the Sunnis in Lebanon is violent Jihad. This group of religious activists, often referred to as Salafi Jihadis, has fusioned the theological rigidity of the "old generation" of the Salafists, with the political revolutionism of the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Syrian in the 1970s. The dispute between Salafi Jihadis and scientific Salafists over what Salafism really consists of is far from solved. As we will see in part four of this study, the ideological competition from the Jihadis creates a dilemma for Salafi clerics over how to attract zealous youth at the same time as not jeopardising their official resources (recognition, public and private financing, and access to media).

Non-Salafi Islamists often argue that it is the ambiguity of Salafi theorising, which is to blame for the radicalisation of some Salafists.

> The individualisation of religious beliefs inherent in Salafi doctrine is why the incidents happened in Diniyyeh, in Ashrafiyyeh and in Nahr al-Barid. In Tawhid, we do not focus our battle on the internal scene. Rather we focus on fighting Israel, the real enemy. The Salafists, focusing on the interior scene, bring about explosion, such as what happened with Fatah al-Islam. They breed elements that are against Hezbollah, but who also are against the Lebanese army. This is why Fatah al-Islam happened.[277]

In general, studies of violent Islamism show that violence is often carried out by small circles of individuals who were previously part of larger non-violent activist networks, but who for various reasons lost hope in achieving their aims through regular non-violent means. For instance, the group, which mounted the assault on the Great mosque in Mecca in 1979, the group of Juhayman al-Utaybi, called *al-Ikwan*, was a radicalised off-shot of *al-Jama'a al-salafiyya al-muhtasiba*, a

[276] See UNDP Human Development report, 2003.
[277] Interview with Bilal Sha'ban, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.

pietistic organisation which rose out of the Islamic University in Medina in the 1960s.[278] Violence is also more likely to occur after efforts of "team builing", which create a "team spirit". Such activities can be trips and journeys or living in secluded areas (*hijra*), group anthems, projection of Jihadi films, and solidarity campaigns with Muslim victims of injustice, etc. The final step on the journey towards radicalisation is military training, often on special training camps, in Afghanistan, for instance.[279]

4.2.2 Tripoli's plug-in with Peshawar and the narratives of the Arab-Afghans

As Jihadism gained influence as a competing force to the scientific approach in the Salafi field towards the latter half of the 1990s, in a multiplicity of places in the Arab and Islamic world, Tripoli witnessed its local dynamics becoming increasingly dependent on developments taking place elsewhere in the Islamic nation.

To understand the development of Jihadi Salafism in Lebanon in the 1990s, we must go back to Peshawar during the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, where Salafi Jihadism as a doctrine was first formulated. Peshawar, a city in Pakistan along the Afghan border, had at the end of the 1980s, become the coordination base of the Afghan resistance and progressively transformed itself into a real "laboratory of Jihad". Located near the Afghan border, the city became the place where millions of Afghan refugees settled and a gateway for international combatants on their way to Jihad in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan had been internationalised with the Soviet invasion on December 27, 1979. The intentions behind this Cold War manoeuvre, which would lead to the Soviet Unions's demise and the disintegration of the communist confederation, had been to assure that the faction of Afghan communists loyal to Moscow (the Parcham) would maintain power in Afghanistan after an uprising in spring the same year. Organised by a rival communist faction (the Khalq), which contested Moscow's hegemony, the revolt ended up spreading throughout the Afghan territory. The Afghan Jihad was an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to regain Islamic credibility in the face of the Khomeinist revolution, which had transformed Iran the same year, and posed a great ideological and political challenge to Riyadh. It was also an occasion to re-orient the attention of anti-establishment Islamists inside Saudi Arabia, after the seizure of the Great Mosque in Mecca, which had severely shaken the monarchy during *Hajj* only months before (see the first part of this study). Jihad in Afghanistan did not only attract massive financial support of the petro-monarchies in the Gulf and the United States of America, who financed the insurgency as a logic dictated by the Cold War. In fact the Afghan Jihad also became a factor, which led to the development of a set of new, non-state actors, because 75 percent of the contributions to the Afghan resistance came from Islamic NGOs.

[278] The group is also mentioned in chapter three in this study. See Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia, the story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi revisited", *op.cit.*, p. 103.

[279] See Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe: a survey of Sunni Islamist terrorism in post millenium Europe*, FFI-report, Kjeller, Norway, 2004 and, by the same author, "How Did Europe's Gobal Jihadis Obtain Training for Their Militant Causes? ", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, No. 2 (2008), pp. 1-23.

Encouraged by the Saudi regime and the ambassador of the Afghan cause, the Palestinian Abdallah Azzam, Arab volunteers began arriving in Peshawar in high numbers to join the resistance from 1986. The number of Arab fighters exceeded 100 only after 1985, 200 fighters in mid-1986.[280] 1986 was the same year the course of the war turned in favour of the Afghan resistance. This was, however, not because of the Arabs, who played a minor role militarily. The first and almost sole notorious success of the Arab mujahideen was the battle of Jaji, in May 1987, where Usama bin Ladin and fifty of his men resisted a contingent of Soviet spetsnaz for one week.[281] The event became a constitutive element of the history of the Arab Afghans and it contributed to creating a myth around the person of bin Ladin, and strenghtened his charismatic legitimacy. The foreign volunteers included young Arab and Asian graduates from the middle classes, but also youth from the working classes. The foreign volunteers included young Arab and Asian graduates from the middle classes, but also youth from the disinherited "Hiittist" classes. In the late 1980s, there were combatants from almost all countries in the Islamic nation, residing in *madafat* (guest houses). There was one guest house for almost each country in the Umma. The impact of the Arab combatants on the "victory over communism" is questionable. At the every most there were 25,000 Arabs participating in the Afghan Jihad, yet other puts the number to 8,000. It is estimated that only half took part in battle, probably even less.[282] The importance of the Arab-Afghans lies more in the role of Peshawar as an "ideological melting pot", or a social space where aims and motives of different groups and directions merged.[283]

In fact, the meeting between young, zealous, politicised Egyptians and pious Saudi youth, who adhered to the rigid Salafi interpretation of Islam, would have great implications for the evolution of contemporary Islamism. In Peshawar during the Afghan Jihad, different schools of Islamism from both the Arab world and from the Indian sub-continent intersected.[284] The *hybridisation* which resulted from this meeting created a new ideology, Salafi Jihadism.[285] The exchange of ideas between Egyptian Muslim brothers, Saudi Salafists, students from the Deobandi School

[280] Kamil al-Tawil, *Al-Qaida and Her Sisters, The Story of the Arab Jihadis* (in Arabic), (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2008).
[281] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. See also Colin Freeman, "Echoes of Afghanistan on the streets of Fallujah", *The New York Times*, November 11, 2004.
[282] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, *op.cit.,* p. 238.
[283] Thomas Hegghammer, "L'imam du jihad" ["the Imam of Jihad"], in Gilles Kepel (ed.), *Al-Qaida dans le texte*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2005), p. 128.
[284] The Deobandi School of Islamic jurisprudence rose out of a network of *madrasas* in Deoband, North of Delhi. The first school dates back to 1867. The school network mainly enrolls youngsters of traditional families, who refuse the state schools. See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, *op.cit.*, p. 100. The Ahl-e Hadith is a school of Islamic thought focusing on memorising the Sunna of the Prophet, which excludes any idea of human reasoning. See Stéphane Lacroix, "L'apport de Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani", *op.cit*., p. 50.
[285] The concept of hybridisation, i.e. vernacularisation, was elaborated by the Birmingham school on cultural studies, based on studies on immigrant identities. See Alain Dieckhoff and Christophe Jaffrelot, "Résistance du nationalisme dans un monde globalisé et régionalisé", in Alain Dieckhoff and Christophe Jaffrelot, *Repenser le nationalisme. Théories et pratiques*, (Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2006), pp. 423-449, p. 430.

[which would later give birth to the Taliban movement] and the Ahl-e Hadith broadened the minds of the various mujahidin.[286]

Abdallah Azzam was the Palestinian former member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, who became known as the "heart and brain of the Afghan Jihad".[287] Leader of the Arab Services Bureau (*maktab al-khidamat*), the co-ordination office for Arab mujahidin in Peshawar, he became the ideologue of the Islamic resistance. His pan-Islamist, "privatised" interpretation of Jihad would be the first step towards the transnationalization of Jihad. Contrary to the conventional interpretation of the holy text, Azzam emphasized in his writings that Jihad was an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) for all Muslims. The idea had already been developed by Abd al-Salam Faraj in 1981, in *The Occulted Imperative*.[288] Azzam argued that every individual was free to proclaim Jihad, without any authorisation from elders or political rulers. He wrote in 1983 that "if a portion of Muslim territory is invaded, Jihad becomes an individual duty for every Muslim man and woman, so that the child can leave for combat without the authorisation of his parents and the wife without that of her husband".[289] Far from seeing Jihad as being accomplished with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Azzam stated "in front of us remain yet Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, South Yemen, Tashkent, and Andalusia…".[290] Azzam's "privatisation" of the concept of Jihad would later emanate in Usama Bin Ladin's declaration of global Jihad in February 1998.[291]

With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar international system was replaced by a new, more poly-valent international society, sustained by an emerging American hegemony over large parts of the world. This transformed the dynamics and stakes in global politics. As the new means of communications drew the continents closer together, warfare became partly "de-territorialised". With the globe increasingly being seen as a "global village", the concept of "security" took a new, more immaterial, "globalised" meaning in the Western world.[292] Transnational ecological disasters, or even severe human rights abuses inside what were formerly seen as sovereign states, could now become defined as a threat to "international peace and security" and could therefore legitimise the new phenomenon of international military "humanitarian intervention" or "stability operations".[293] At the same time, the concept of "Jihad" underwent a transformation. From a socio-revolutionary Jihad at home or classical Jihad against a foreign occupier, a new meaning

[286] See Bernard Rougier, "Le jihad en Afghanistan et l'émergence du salafisme-jihadisme", in Bernard Rougier (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?, op.cit.,* p. 81.
[287] Thomas Hegghammer, "L'imam du jihad", *op.cit*., p. 131.
[288] See Gilles Kepel, *Prophète et pharaon, op.cit.*, p. 144-145.
[289] See Abdallah Azzam, "Défendre la terre des musulmans est le plus important devoir de chacun" ["Defending the territory of Muslims is the most important duty of every Muslim"], in Gilles Kepel (ed.), *Al-Qaida dans le texte*, *op.cit.*, p. 141.
[290] See Thomas Hegghammer "L'imam du jihad", *op.cit.*, p. 136.
[291] See "Usama bin Ladin", in Gilles Kepel, *Al-Qaida dans le texte*, *op.cit.*, pp. 62-67.
[292] See Jan Aart Scholte, "The Globalization of world politics", in John Baylis and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World politics*, (Oxford Oxford University press, 2001), pp. 17-19.
[293] See UN Charter, Chapter VII, article 39, 41, and 42.

became assigned to the term, focusing on a global Jihad defending the "honour of the Umma", against the United States and its allies.[294]

Already in Afghanistan, Azzam had been a proponent of Jihad as a transnational, identity-based project. A former member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, Azzam seems to have internalised the failures of the Islamist projects in Egypt and Syria in the 1970s and 1980s. This had probably led him to renounce the idea of a revolutionary battle for territory in the heart of the Umma (as the one in which he was implicated in Jordan in the end of the 1960s, which had aimed for the liberation of Palestinian territory).[295] Azzam's departure for Afghanistan, at the end of 1981, can be interpreted in the light of this transformation of the stakes of the Jihad, from insurgencies against the central state to a more transnational kind of warfare.[296] Azzam differed from Faraj and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood ideologues in his insistence that the top priority for Jihad had to be the liberation of Muslim Land, which was usurped from non-Muslims, rather than a socio-revolutionary Jihad at home.[297] Controlling small pockets of territory (*al-ard*) became more important than seizing political power (*al-dawla*). The idea was later developed by the Jihadi strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.[298] For Azzam, controlling small pockets of territory, what he called a "solid base" (*qa'ida sulba*), was necessary in order to re-conquer what he perceived as "Muslim territory usurped by the enemy" (as he affirmed in his writings).

Insisting on controlling spaces of "liberated territory" was also a step towards a more immaterial, identitarian kind of warfare. In addition to its function as a "solid base" for further liberation of Muslim land, Azzam wanted, with the liberation of Afghanistan to establish a base from which to project a specifically Islamic identity and "return the Umma to Islam". This change of paradigm, from local, socio-revolutionary Jihad to a pan-Islamist struggle for the liberation of the Umma, in both its material and its immaterial sense, would be projected throughout the Umma and it would find an echo on the Salafi field in Lebanon.

4.2.3 Abu A'isha: Azzam's legacy in Lebanon

When many of the Arab Afghans returned to their homes, with international contact networks, they contributed to disseminate the myths of Peshawar and spreading the spirit of the Afghan Jihad in their native countries. About two hundred Lebanese youngsters altogether participated in the Afghan Jihad.[299] Although the direct transfer of ideology from Peshawar to Lebanon might

[294] For a discussion of the distinctions between classic, revolutionary, and global Jihad, see introductory chapter in Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Power and Perils of Pan-Islamic Nationalism* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, PhD thesis, 2007).
[295] Thomas Hegghammer, "L'imam du jihad", *op.cit.*, p. 121.
[296] *Ibid.*, p. 126
[297] Azzam joined the Fedayyin and participated in the guerrilla against Israel for one and a half year sometime between the beginning of 1968 and the beginning of 1970, as leader of a paramilitary base Bayt al-Maqdis, in a village called al-Marw, next to Irbid. The base was part of a network of camps linked to Fatah, called the Bases of the shaykh-s (*qawa'id al-shuyukh)*. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 135.
[298] For an excellent biography of al-Suri, see Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2008).
[299] Interview with Sahar Atrache, Tripoli, April 9, 2008.

therefore be limited, the "victory of Islam over Communism" was a source of pride for the whole Umma.

A large number of Islamic organisations had established relays in Afghanistan in the 1980s. From the late 1980s, an Islamic group established in Lebanon in the late 1950s, the *Ittihad al-Talaba al-Muslimin* ("Muslim Student Union"), coordinated its activities with Abdallah Azzam's *Maktab al-Khidamat* ("Arab Services Bureau"). The organisation had opened branches in all Pakistani universities and functioned as a mediator between the Arab Afghans and the Sunnis in Lebanon.[300] Their magazine, *al-Hidaya* ["Guidance"], distributed on Lebanese university campuses and in Palestinian refugee camps in 1990 and 1991, featured articles conveying the narratives of the Arab-Afghans' fight for the universal cause of Islam. The magazine featured a series of portraits of Abdallah Azzam, through which, the Muslim student union proposed a new hero, a professional of Jihad, to the Sunnis in the cedar country.[301] With this reference, Azzam crystallised the passage to a new, transnational "schemata of interpretation", which was partly disconnected from that of the more "Lebanised" Islamist groups in the country, such as the JI. The "Imam of Jihad" was represented as a "synecdoche", an object or a person "bringing into sharp relief and symbolising the larger frame or movement of which it is part".[302] Through the biography of Azzam, the Lebanese Sunnis were able to connect with a new "master frame" of a global Jihad uniting the entire Umma. When the wall of Berlin was torn down on November 12, 1989, it was believed by certain groups of the pious populations in the Umma that "Islam had won over communism". The plug-in with the rest of the Umma would materialise during the following decade, when segments of the pious youth in Lebanon opened their eyes to the outside world of Salafi-Jihadism, as they expanded their network and established the first close contact with actors belonging to al-Qaida and the global Jihadi movement.

A key person linking Tripoli to the global Jihadi movement was Bassam Kanj, perhaps better known by his *nom de guerre,* Abu A'isha. Kanj was born in 1965 in Tripoli, to a middle class family. He left Lebanon in the late 1980s with a scholarship from the Hariri foundation enabling him to pursue his further studies in Boston in the United States. Networking through the al-Farook mosque in New York, he became inspired by Jihad in Afghanistan and departed for Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1989.[303] He stayed in Peshawar, where he became acquainted with leading personalities in the landscape of global Jihadism, including Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the important Palestinian Salafi-Jihadi cleric Abu Qatada al-Filastini (whose real name is Umar Mahmud Uthman Abu Umar), as well as the leading strategic thinker Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.[304] Kanj was later injured and returned to the United States. Sometime before 1995, he left for Bosnia, where he reportedly fought with the Arab mujahidin legion allied with Muslim

[300] Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, *op.cit.,* p. 232.
[301] *Ibid.*, p. 75. For a biography of Azzam, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, l'imam du jihad", *op.cit*., pp. 115-137.
[302] Robert D. Benford and David Snow, "Framing processes and social movements: an overview and assessment", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000) (pp. 611-639), p. 623.
[303] Gary C. Gambill and Bassam Endrawos, "Bin Laden's Network in Lebanon", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, September 2001, www.meib.org/articles/0109_l1.htm, accessed July 2007.
[304] For more on al-Suri, see Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, *op.cit.*

Bosnian forces. Subsequently, he tried to go to Chechnya, but the director of the Service Bureau for Arab Combatants in Chechnya, in Azerbaijan, refused to grant him a permit.[305]

In 1996, Kanj moved back to his native Lebanon, bringing along his global network of contacts. He proceeded to set up solidarity networks in Ain al-Helweh, and the poor neighbourhoods in Tripoli.[306] In a style reminiscent of that of the Tawhid in 1982, he divided the city of Tripoli into five core mobilising zones. At the time Kanj returned to Tripoli, the Syrian repression and the rise of the al-Ahbash, pro-Syrian Islamist movement, had weakened most other Lebanese Islamic movements and institutions. In addition to dismantling the Guidance and Well-doing institute Institute in 1996, the Syrians had closed the Tawhid radio in 1997.[307] This created a vacuum that Kanj could exploit for his mobilising purposes.

Expanding his network in Tripoli, Abu A'isha drew on his contacts amongst militants and financers from Afghanistan and the United States. One of these was Qasim Dahir, a fundraiser for Bosnia, Kashmir, and Afghanistan. Dahir had left his native Lebanon for Colombia in 1984, where he had learned about Islam from a shaykh close to al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya.[308] He had joined Sa'id Sha'ban's Tawhid in 1987, after meeting a member of the movement during a sojourn in his native country. Subsequently, he lived in Canada, before leaving for Peshawar in 1993. Dahir's funds were collected from donations of Lebanese expatriates in Canada, Panama, and Brazil.[309] Kanj had met Dahir at the 1995 International Islamic Conference in Chicago, and managed to elicit the latter's support.[310]

Kanj and his men eventually retreated to a property in the countryside outside of Tripoli, close to Sir al-Diniyyeh, Akkar, and established a training base there. The parcel of land was owned by one of the members in the network, Abdul-Hakim Jazzar, an Islamic activist wanted by the Syrian secret services.[311] Jazzar was one of Abu A'isha's key aids.[312]

Abu A'isha's mobilisation in Tripoli and Ain al-Helweh was thus built upon an already existing local Salafi Jihadi nucleus. Kanj was the "man of the situation", who succeeded in connecting local sympathisers of Jihad with his own network of contacts in the greater Umma. His person was the key force enabling the transnationalisation of the more radical faction of Lebanese Islamic activists.

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[305] Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, *op.cit.*, p. 232.
[306] Gambill and Endrawos, "Bin Laden's Network in Lebanon".
[307] Interview with Majida al-Hassan, engaged in voluntary activities in Tripoli and close to Dar al-Fatwa, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[308] Zuhayr Hawwari, "Broad journey into the Currents of the Sunni Islamic Political Movement (Part 5)", *al-Safir*, February 13, 2003, via FBIS.
[309] *Ibid.*
[310] Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, *op.cit.*, p. 233.
[311] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[312] Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

4.3 "Imaginary exits" connecting Cyber-Tripoli to the "Global Village of Islam"

4.3.1 New transnational myths in the Umma standardising matters of concern

Salafism as a social theory has, since it entered Tripoli at the beginning of the 1980s and during the 1990s, transformed much of the face of the city. Islamism, and particularly Salafism, can be seen as being reminiscent of what the American sociologist David A. Snow would call a "movement with world-transforming goals".[313] The course of the last century, sometimes characterised as the "century of ideologies" or the "age of extremes", is a clear illustration that theories of what a society is or should become play an enormous role in helping actors to define where they stand, who they are, whom they should take into account, how they should justify themselves, and to which sort of forces they are allowed to bend.[314] This is also very true for Salafism, which completely changes the perceptions of the self and the other.

As Salafism was internationalised during the encounter between Saudi Wahhabism and Egyptian socio-revolutionary Jihadism in Peshawar, the Arab and Islamic world also witnessed a series of transformations, with the development of the new means of communication, new satellite TV channels first, and soon afterwards, the development of the Internet. These channels, or "imaginary exits", created a common virtual space and facilitated the Umma's growing together into one small "global village of Islam". In this "common ground", the matters of concern of Muslims worldwide would become homogenised and the words used to express these concerns standardised. As we shall see below, this facilitated the Lebanese Sunnis in identifying themselves and their situation with that of other marginalised Muslims elsewhere in the Umma. In addition, common broadcasts help the development of common references and standards for the populations in the different countries across the regions.

Of particular importance is, of course, al-Jazeera, which started its first broadcasting in Qatar in 1996, with funding from its émir, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa. With its "hands-on" style message, the new satellite channel gained notoriety as a controversial and independent alternative to the traditional state-censored Arab television stations. Its most watched programs, such as "The opposite direction" (*al-ittijah al-mu'akis*) and "More than one opinion" (*akthar min ra'i*), have become tantamount to "nodal points" structuring and homogenising large parts of the political discourse among the populations in the Arab world.[315] Contrary to Western media, which depicts wars and catastrophes as "exceptions" of a rule of stability, close-up shots of human suffering constitutes one of the bearing narratives of most of al-Jazeera's programs.[316] The satellite channel broadcasting throughout the Arab world has become a medium through which to express

[313] Movements with world-transforming goals seek total change and are comparatively greedy in terms of time, energy, and orientation. David Snow, "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation", *op.cit.*, p. 476.
[314] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit.*, p. 230.
[315] For a definition of Ernesto Laclau's concept of a "nodal point", see footnote 223, p. 68.
[316] See Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et Martyre. Relever le défi de la civilisation*, (Paris, Flammarion, 2008), p. 111.

grievances, reminiscent of what Albert O. Hirschman would call "voice.[317] With its style based on antagonisms stretched to the extremes, the channel leaves its spectators exhausted with intense impressions of having witnessed the very moment of the last downfall in the region's Manichean struggle for survival. In addition, its images of war rapidly passing over the screen more easily makes the spectators create parallels between the different historically situated conflicts in various countries. Images of children injured in war and their crying mothers do after all resemble each other regardless of whether the interviewee speaks a Palestinian, Iraqi, or Lebanese dialect of Arabic.

The increased availability of satellite broadcasts, and later, of Internet facilities, in the Arab world therefore had an important role in uniformising the matters of concern among the otherwise very different populations in the Arab world. With its use of the image, portraying the crises witnessed by the various populations in the region, the pan-Arab al-Jazeera provides cognitive openings which enable individuals in one place to identify with causes geographically far away from themselves.

4.3.2 Tripoli and its surrounding areas as "liberated spaces" for global Jihadism

As a consequence of globalisation, Lebanon drew closer to Islamic activists operating on the transnational level. Because of Lebanon's geographic location between Europe and central Asia, neighbouring important strategic places such as the occupied Palestinian territories and Iraq, the city could easily be used as a site of transit for fluxes of Salafi-Jihadi militants. In fact Lebanon, and especially its camps for Palestinian refugees, which lie outside Lebanese jurisdiction consequent to the Cairo Agreement, attracted the attention of individuals who we could call professional Jihadi militants. The Cairo Agreement concluded between the Lebanese government and the PLO in 1969, under the auspices of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, denies the Lebanese army and police a right of entry into the Palestinian refugee camps.[318]

The famous Jihadi strategic thinker Abu Mus'ab al-Suri argued that military training in Palestinian refugee camps had clear advantages compared to training in Afghanistan. First, it was far cheaper and easier for Europeans to travel to these "liberated spaces" in Lebanon than to Afghanistan, where one had to sneak in from either Pakistan or Iran. Secondly, a Lebanese stamp carried far less suspicion than that of a Pakistani one:

[317] See Albert O. Hirschmann, *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997).

[318] The 1969 Cairo Agreement was concluded under the auspices of the Egyptian president Gamal Abd al-Nasser, between General Émile Boustani, the chief general of the Lebanese army at the time, and Yassir Arafat. The agreement legalised the presence of armed Palestinian factions in Lebanon. It was concluded in the context of the severe governmental crisis in Lebanon, which culminated in the civil war the following decade. See Georges Corm, *Le Liban contemporain*, (Paris, La Découverte, 2003), pp. 114-115; and Nadine Picaudou, *La déchirire libanaise*, (Paris, Les éditions complexe, 1989), pp. 117-118.

> For those brothers wanting to go for Jihad in Afghanistan, the cost of training is very high; it amounts to almost 2,000 dollars. Protection of the recruits after they have returned from Afghanistan is indeed a very difficult and complicated task, since everyone who goes to Afghanistan becomes a suspect. Hence, a high-level decision was taken to train the brothers in Ain al-Helweh, because costs there are lower and their activities will not arouse suspicion.[319]

When Abu A'isha set up a global network in Tripoli in the end of the 1990s, he utilized pockets of land, owned by private individuals of land in Lebanon to train foreign Jihadi militants. These "privatised spaces" were disconnected from Lebanese political time, as foreign Jihadi fighters, teaching material, and weapons from other places in the Umma entered. The spaces provided fertile soil for the new myths dispatched from other countries in the Umma, transmitted through the Internet and satellite TV. Through such fluxes or persons, material, and ideas, segments of youth in Lebanon began identifying themselves and their cause with that of fellow Islamic militants located in places geographically far away from themselves.

4.3.3 Jihad in Diniyyeh as the culmination of a process of transnationalisation?

On 31st December 1999, an uprising broke out in the Sir al-Diniyyeh region in Akkar in North Lebanon as a "pre-emptive attack" on a Lebanese army patrol. It was launched by Bassam Kanj, who had returned to Tripoli some years earlier (see previous sub-chapter). The militants also seized a radio station, and took two Lebanese mediators hostage. Clashes with the Lebanese army lasted for six days, and ended with the killing of fifteen rebels, including Kanj himself, as well as the arrest of fifty-five others. Eleven soldiers and five civilians were also killed during fighting.[320]

The exact reasons for Kanj's decision to launch an uprising remain unclear. For other Jihadi militants acquaintanced with the logics of Islamist insurgencies, a fight against the Lebanese army on Lebanese territory seemed counter-productive.[321] Although Kanj and his militants officially claimed to be trying to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon, it seems more probable that the group primarily aimed to control a piece of territory in Lebanon, which would enable them to train volunteers to fight at various "Jihadi battlefronts", especially in Chechnya.[322] Prior to the year 2000, Chechens had received military training in Lebanon, inside the Ain al-Helweh refugee camp close to Saida, and on private parcels of land outside of Tripoli, owned by Abu A'isha's comrades in arm (see previous sub-chapter). One of the motivations for fighting against the Lebanese security forces in December 1999 and January 2000 was to defend their training camp where they hosted foreign fighters.

In addition to the wish to safeguard the training camps in Akkar, Abu A'isha and his men had also come to identify with the Chechen militants, fighting against the Russian army. Salafi-Jihadi

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[319] Interview with Abu Mus'ab al-Suri by Badi' Farqani in Kabul prior to 2001. See Badi' Farqani, "al-Qaida in Lebanon: A Painting of the 2007 Goals" (in Arabic), *al-mu'tamar*, January 21, 2007, http://www.almotamar.net/news/39293.htm, accessed June 2007.

[320] Gambill, "Syrian, Lebanese Security Forces Crush Sunni Islamist Opposition", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No 1 (January 2000),

[321] See the Jihadi strategic thinker Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's analysis of the Diniyyeh fighting. Umar Abd al-Hakim, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, *op.cit.*, p. 784.

[322] Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, *op.cit.*, p. 242.

organisations in Lebanon had engaged in solidarity campaigns, prior to the clashes in Sir al-Diniyyeh transmitting the narratives of the sufferings of Chechen civilians. Their correspondence with Chechen militants had facilitated Lebanese and Palestinian identification with the Chechen cause to the extent that it had had an impact on their very self-perception and their perception of their own cause. It had of course also been facilitated by al-Jazeera's daily broadcast from Chechnya, showing close-up images which projected to the entire Umma the intense suffering of Chechen civilians.[323]

The familiarisation of the Lebanese and Palestinian Islamists with the Chechen cause facilitated their adoption of slogans similar to those of the Chechens. The dispossessed Palestinians living in refugee camps in Lebanon with dire living conditions began comparing their own situation with that of the Chechens.[324] This is an example of how "imaginary exits" help "standardising" the perceived stakes of different local Islamist projects geographically very far away from each other. The process of transnationalisation puts local Islamist groups at odds with the central state, increasingly perceiving their own struggle in the light of a new "master frame" of a transnational battle for the "honour of Muslims world-wide". The process of identification with the Chechens seems to have reached its peak when another militant Islamist, Ahmed Abu Kharrub, attacked the Russian embassy in Beirut, in solidarity with his "Chechen brothers" simultaneously with the fighting taking place in North Lebanon.[325]

Bassam Kanj's contacts and their "Pakistani version" of radical Islam, which was crystallised in the fight against the Lebanese army in Sir al-Diniyyeh, which broke out on New Year's Eve 1999, could therefore be viewed as a concrete manifestation of the coming of age of global Jihadism in Lebanon. It marked the culmination of a process of transnationalisation through which Lebanon's impoverished Sunnis still limited by the material capabilities of the local world around them, had connected with an "imagined universe" of global Islamist militancy.[326]

4.3.4 Tripoli as a hub for foreign Jihadis on their way to Iraq

Since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Tripoli and its hinterland functioned as a hub for volunteers, coming from a number of Asian, African, and European countries, on their way to join the resistance movement in Iraq through Syria.[327] The training of foreign Jihadi militants in Tripoli had already been initiated in the end of the 1990s. It was the work of Abu A'isha and his

[323] *Ibid.*, p. 224.
[324] *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.
[325] *Ibid.*, p. 246
[326] *Ibid.*, p. 245.
[327] Syria claimed to have toughened its stance towards fighters crossing over to Iraq from northern Syria in early 2005, following US pressure. However, given the length of the Syrian-Iraqi border, and the remoteness of the areas in question, it has proved practically impossible fully to seal borders. In addition, commercial incentives for smuggling are great, a factor that further complicates the task of closing off the borders between the two countries. See Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Outside Iraq but Deep in the Fight A Smuggler of Insurgents Reveals Syria's Influential, Changing Role", *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2005; Matt Brown, "US pressures Syria over Iraq border infiltrations", *ABC*, February 14, 2006, http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1570021.htm, accessed August 2007; and Ferry Biedermann, "Alleged transit of fighters from Syria to Iraq slows", *Financial Times*, February 8, 2006.

men, who established, as shown in the preceding chapter, training camps on private parcels of land, owned by members of their network. Training of foreign Jihadis also took place in Ain al-Helweh, a Palestinian refugee camp next to Saida, in South Lebanon. As shown in the preceding chapter, Abu A'isha organised for Chechen militants to come to Lebanon, in order to receive military training inside Ain al-Helweh refugee and at the parcel of land owned by one of Abu Aysha's comrades in arm.[328]

Arrests and seizures of materials by Lebanese security forces highlight the extent of the international networks of the Salafi-Jihadi militants in Tripoli's hinterland and in the Palestinian camps. For instance, in April 2002, a Swede of Palestinian descent was arrested at the Beirut International Airport while trying to enter Lebanese territory, in possession of a large sum of money. He had travelled repeatedly to Europe to collect money, and each time he returned to Lebanon, he had gone to the Ain al-Helweh camp to meet with a well-known Jihadi shaykh, Shaykh Jamal Khattab of al-Nur mosque.[329] In the north, the Lebanese police have made seizures of weapons, ammunition and other military equipment in ships travelling past the coast bordering the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Barid. The importance of this transfer is illustrated by the fact that during the on-going reconstruction, Lebanese authorities have demanded the building of a "security fence" cutting the camp off from its coastline, in order to avoid the smuggling of weapons into the camp.

In September 2005, French intelligence services dismantled a network said to be planning attacks on targets in France. The cell, which called itself *Ansar al-Fath* (lit. "Partisans of Islamic Conquest"), consisted of 15 North Africans and French militants, and was led by an Algerian called Safé Bourada, who had been imprisoned in 1998 for his involvement in the 1995 GIA bombings of the Paris metro. The French police investigation found links between the group and individuals who had been part of Abu A'isha's network in Lebanon. In January 2005, French militants, close to individuals in the Algerian *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC), left their residences, close to the French capital, for Tripoli. The militants sojourned in what they described as "discrete houses" outside of Tripoli and learned how to handle arms, and to fabricate explosives, which could be lit through a mobile phone.[330]

The training in Tripoli had been organised by Lebanese, Saudi, and Egyptian individuals living in Lebanon with bonds to "gatekeepers in the Iraqi Jihad", primarily to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's *al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers*.[331] Although Islamist youth, from a multitude of different

[328] A variety of sources have repeated the claim that Chechens were trained in Ain al-Helweh. According to the Lebanese weekly *al-Kifah al-Arabi,* the Ukrainian government informed Lebanese officials in 1999 of Chechen fighters being trained in Ain al-Helweh. See Gary Gambill, "Syrian, Lebanese Security Forces Crush Sunni Islamist Opposition", *op.cit.*

[329] Cited in Gambill, "Ain al-Hilweh: Lebanon's 'Zone of Unlaw'", *op.cit.*

[330] Jean Chichizola, "Des Français entrainés par al-Qaida au Liban", *le Figaro*, October 15, 2007.

[331] See Clara Beyler, "The Jihadist Threat in France", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 3, February 16, 2006, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/pubID.44/pub_detail.asp#, accessed August 2007; John Ward Anderson, "France Says Extremists Are Enlisting Its Citizens Police Assert Some Trained in Mideast Could Attack", *Washington Post*, October 19, 2005; and Olivier Guitta, "Updated Details on the possible biological attack foiled in Paris", *Counter-Terrorism Blog*, October 14, 2005,

nationalities, were training in the hinterland of Tripoli at the same time, the large bulk of militants were from Tripoli. A former MP, close to the MBs, Khaled Daher, visited the facilities where the training took place in January 2000 and met with "the shebab, who had covered their faces with the kafiyya". He reported that "they were so young, they were children!"[332]

Many of these Lebanese and foreign youth were preparing for fighting in Iraq. The French militants, however, were instructed to return to France and to carry out attacks there.[333] The global nature of the recruitment to the training course, uniting militants from different countries in the Umma, is in itself an indication of the transnationalisation of Lebanese Islamism. These "pockets of territory" in north Lebanon, owned by private individuals sympathising with the global Jihadi cause, are transformed into "spaces" where a truly international combating force is able to unite for the "victory of Islam".

The existence of international training and financing networks suggests that private spaces in the crowded neighbourhoods in Tripoli and in the countryside outside of the site, as well as the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, have become more global in their nature and identity. They are no longer controlled solely by local Palestinian or Lebanese Islamist militants. Owned and governed by Lebanese individuals sympathising with the Jihadi cause, these pockets of "liberated land" are also a vehicle for promoting a *global* Islamist militancy and the Umma-Oriented Islamic identity outlined by Azzam.[334]

4.3.5 Networking with the Iraqi Jihad

In November 2006, followers of *bayt al-maqdas* Jihadi web forum could read the story of Abu Shihab al-Maqdisi and thirteen other Lebanese youngsters, who had lost their lives as "martyrs" in Iraq. A picture of Abu Shihab showed that he was a young, fairly handsome man, with green eyes, short hair, and a trimmed beard. He had died in what they called the "second struggle of Fallujah".[335] The young boy was in fact part of a greater tendency of Lebanese Sunni youngster, who had decided to go for Jihad, to defend "their Iraqi brothers".[336] One of his Lebanese peers, Hassan Suleiman Abu Thabit, died during a battle in Tal'afar, a Northern Turkmen city located 400 kilometres north of Baghdad; while Ahmed Muhammad al-Maqdisi a.k.a. Abu Haroun died

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http://counterterror.typepad.com/the_counterterrorism_blog/2005/10/details_on_the_.html, accessed August 2007.

[332] Interview with Khaled Daher, Tripoli, May, 2009.

[333] Jean Chichizola, "Des Français entrainés par al-Qaida au Liban", *le Figaro*, December 11, 2006. See also the article with the same title, also published by *le Figaro*, dated October 15, 2007.

[334] These findings confirm and amplify Rougier's argument that the camps have ceased to be part of Palestinian society and have been transformed into "only spaces open to all the influences running through the Islamic world." See Bernard Rougier in Wilson, "Splinter Groups Rise in Refugee Camps", *op.cit.*

[335] Posting by "al-Mujahid al-Islami" [Abu 'Abdallah al-Maqdisi], "Pictures of the Caravan of Martyrs from *Bilad al-Sham* Who Lost their Lives in Iraq. May God Strengthen Them with a Swift Victory", *muntada al-bayt al-maqdas*, February 11 2006, www.albaytalmaqdas.com, accessed February 2006.

[336] See, for example, posting by "Abu Mojen", "One of 'Usbat al-Ansar's Cadres in Iraq has Become a Martyr" (in Arabic), *shabakat filistin lil-hiwar*, January 29, 2006, www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=48799, accessed July 2007.

fighting in the city of al-Qa'im, adjacent to the Syrian border.[337] Another Lebanese martyr in Iraq, Mustafa Ramadan, a.k.a. Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani, was allegedly recruited in Denmark, but spent time in Lebanon before going to Iraq.[338] Before his death, he functioned as a key aid to the infamous Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who wrote his martyr biography.

Why should a Lebanese youngster, who is already struggling to make ends meet in his home country, choose to travel all the way to Iraq, and knowingly lose his life there as a suicide bomber? One Tripoli-based cleric gives the rationale for participating in Jihad in Iraq:

> The youth in Tripoli want to go to Iraq because Muslims are invaded (*al-muslimin inghaza*). Resistance is legitimate (*al-muqawama mashru'*) in Islam. People from our mosque have left. There are no exact numbers, but very many have left from Diniyyeh and the [Palestinian refugee] camps. We see them on *al-Jazeera*. Mashallah... They come from a multitude of backgrounds.[339]

As we shall see, the banner of "Jihad in Iraq" and resistance against "US imperialism" has become a very important theme for mobilising zealous youth, and it finds sympathisers among the youth, far beyond the core circles of underground Jihadi militants. The "Iraqi cause" is a reason for the militarising a segment of the pious youth in the city.

The banner is also a common standard facilitating the co-ordination of the militant agendas of pious, zealous youth in a variety of countries. The US invasion of Iraq was perceived as a "last straw" of "the US imperialist agenda". In addition to fertilising the anti-Americanism in many populations in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and creating a divide between the EU and the US "neo-cons", the invasion alienated large groups of Muslims, who had not been especially anti-American prior to that time. The subsequent US mismanagement of the occupation in Iraq, which led to massive influxes of refugees to Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, naturally created a lot of anger in the populations, which would be exploited by "gatekeepers" at home. Some of this anger would subsequently be let out against the Lebanese army during the Nahr al-Barid crisis in the summer 2007.

4.3.6 Imaginary exits, connections in real time, and radicalisation through the Internet

Since Internet became widely available in Tripoli in the 2000s, the city has also become connected in "real time" to other sites through e-mail, web forums, and Internet sites. These interactions, which to some extent replace the much more expensive long-distance phone conversations, increase the speed with which ideology and ideas, in addition to news and political positions, are exchanged.[340] Such "imaginary exits" through the Internet are tantamount to physical visits and permit individuals living in Tripoli to connect more easily their cause with that

[337] Posting by "al-Mujahid al-Islami" [Abu 'Abdallah al-Maqdisi], "Pictures of the Caravan of Martyrs from *Bilad al-Sham* Who Lost their Lives in Iraq. May God Strengthen Them with a Swift Victory", *muntada al-bayt al-maqdas*, February 11 2006, www.albaytalmaqdas.com, accessed February 2006.
[338] Hazeem Amin, "The Path to the Threefold Lebanese-Syrian-Iraqi Jihad [...]" (in Arabic), *al-Hayat* (London), June 10, 2007.
[339] Interview with one Tripoli-based cleric, April, 2008.
[340] For an analysis of the impact of the communications revolution on the internationalization of local Jihadi movements, see Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia* […], *op.cit.*, p. 216.

of other movements in the Arab and Islamic world. It contributes to the uniformisation of Islamist ideologies throughout the Umma.

This technological invention in fact represents a new opportunity for grassroots militants, without official resources (recognition, public financing, access to media) and a contact network (*wasata*) to get their opinions heard (voice). Yet this popularisation of the ideologies also makes its control more difficult, especially because, as we learned in the Introduction, there is not one sovereign authority defining the rules of the dogma in Sunni Islam. The new arena of the web, and particularly the blogs, seems to give a triumph card that the young generation of Islamists, without formal education, can pose in the face of the more established, well-reputed scholars with extensive contact networks and prestigious university diplomas and titles.

For the inhabitants of Tripoli, incidents such as the fighting in Nahr al-Barid are caused by uncontrolled toying with Jihadi websites. For the city's population, radicalisation of the youth emanates not so much from potential virulent discourses of the traditional ulama' themselves, as from the fact that the traditional clerics are losing their traditional hegemony over the field, and, by extension, the control of its youth.

According to Umar Bakri, a religious leader who openly asserts that he sympathises with Bin Laden, the traditional clerics, with formal education, no longer play a central role in influencing the city's youth. According to shaykh Umar, who indicates that Lebanon could turn into a new Londonistan, "youth do not respect anyone, they embrace shaykh Google and shaykh Yahoo, not the traditional shaykh-s. The real Salafi culture today is what one can find on the Internet".[341]

Many of the shaykh-s in the old generation seem to share a concern that youth who has lost its traditional references can be radicalised through inflammatory writings on the Internet. Because of the myriad of different sites, they are difficult to control or even keep a track of for the established religious institutions. Networking through the web, youngsters in Tripoli can easily "disconnect" themselves from the social and political time in their native city. Participating on Jihadi web forums – for instance – could for some reduce the threshold necessary before agreeing to participate in violent operations against the state, especially if they do not fear police repressions, deeming that they have little to lose.

More than only an arena for mobilisation, the Internet is also a tool through which grass root militants can directly prepare activities of political challenge. A whole library of "Jihadi instruction videos", ranging from courses in urban guerrilla warfare to explicit bomb recipes are downloadable in only a few clicks on the Internet. More importantly, during times of crises, militants can call for outside support (*nusra*) and media attention through Jihadi web forums. An example is the Fatah al-Islam group, which heavily relied on the Internet for recruitment and proselytising, before and during the Nahr al-Barid confrontation.[342] It is telling that during the

[341] Interview with Umar Bakri, Tripoli, April 11, 2008.
[342] See Tine Gade, "Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Between local and global Jihad", *FFI-report*, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-53.

fighting in Nahr al-Barid, Lebanese authorities made demands for Internet cafés to close, so that youngsters living in the camp could not correspond via the Internet or receive ideological impulses from other sites. Also, the neighbouring Syrian regime has realised the potential of participation-based social networks on the Internet for political challenge and has in the recent years attempted to make both You-tube and Facebook inaccessible in the country. The importance of the Internet for homogenising the ideology of militant Islamist movements throughout the world was also highlighted in a pioneering study, by Bernard Rougier, who showed that in the Ain al-Helweh camp in South Lebanon, Palestinian refugees began identifying themselves with other "dispossessed Muslims" worldwide by means of such "imaginary exits".[343]

Fatah al-Islam, deprived of a specifically Levant focused forum after the death of the webmaster of a the *al-nusra* forum in Nahr al-Barid last summer, has recently established a proper website on two different URL addresses, www.fateh-alislam.com, established in the first months of 2008, and www.land-alsham.com, established a few months later. While the latter is a password-protected forum, the former features links which transfer the visitor directly to the www.land-alsham.com forum. The forum features communiqués and audio messages from Fatah al-Islam in Gaza and Lebanon, in addition to discussions between the participants. Many of the prominent nicknames on the forum (such as *muhibb ru'yat al-rahman*) are the same as those used in discussions between Fatah al-Islam sympathisers on the *al-ekhlaas* and *majadaden* forum during and subsequent to the Nahr al-Barid clashes. Like other forums, it is participatory, that is, potential recruits "participate" in collective action events on Jihadi online forums by commenting, uploading messages and images from other fora, or by transferring the messages posted on the website to other Jihadi web forums, which are not specifically focused on the Levant or Fatah al-Islam. Grassroots militants have uploaded homemade videos on You-tube, especially after the Nahr al-Barid crisis and the successive arrests that took place. Some (probably film taken with mobile phones) show the arrest and interrogation of youth suspected to be members of Fatah al-Islam. The communicative dimension of such forums for conveying support and homogenising ideas between different groups spread over many countries seems crucial. For instance, in a video released by Fatah al-Islam in Gaza showing the launching of rockets against "the Jewish state", the listener suddenly hears the voice of Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon leader Shakir al-Absi, in a clip from an audio message released in January, where he yields support to "our brothers in the Holy country, Palestine".[344] By integrating Absi's praise for the Jihadi movement in Palestine into its own message, Fatah al-Islam in Gaza seeks to extend its legitimacy and highlight its ties to its mother organisation in Lebanon.

Yet, the Internet is not only an arena favoured by the "new religious intellectuals", without formal education nor confined to the most extremist, Jihadi writings. The formally educated clerics, especially those of the younger generation, are also among those participating actively on the web. In fact, the religious leaders in Tripoli assert influence among young Internet users by

[343] See Bernard Rougier, *op.cit.*, p. 230.
[344] See Fatah al-Islam in Gaza, "The Islamic office, the Fatah al-Islam movement, Shakir al-Absi blesses Fatah al-Islam in Gaza and the launching of 'al-Zarwaqi rockets'" (in Arabic), You-tube, (undated), http://video.aol.com/video-detail/---fate7-alislam-gaza/3983667557, accessed June 2008.

engaging in a parallel struggle for influence – or "air time" – in cyberspace or on the radio or TV. Many, such as Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal,[345] Fathy Yakan,[346] Hashim Minqara,[347] Bilal Baroudi,[348] Raid Hlayhel[349], and HT,[350] have their own websites. Some of the shaykh-s are also active on Islamic web forums. Umar Bakri seems to be very active on Jihadi web forums, such as *muntada al-hisba.* All seem to use hotmail addresses for contact with the outer world. Their use of the Internet could be an indication that the formally trained religious scholars go far in accommodating political and social change and yield much more influence than many observers believe.[351]

It therefore seems inaccurate to claim that the battle for hegemony waged between religious leaders in Tripoli is being replaced by a new form of battle waged by "global actors" on the Internet. Rather, the Internet seems to have become a new channel through which many of the same actors fight for influence among themselves. Yet the Internet, because it is de-territorialised, is a channel which favours globally oriented (or what Thomas Hegghammer calls Umma-oriented) campaigns, with simplified, easily resumed ideological messages, rather than long, historically situated theological arguments.[352]

4.3.7 Campaigning for the honour of the Umma in Ashrafiyyeh

On February 5, 2006, an initially peaceful demonstration against the Danish caricatures of the Prophet was transformed into a mob assault storming the Danish consulate in Ashrafiyyeh, Beirut, and setting it on fire. Demonstrators also burned one nearby Maronite church, the Mar Maroun Church, in addition to private cars and houses. The episode, which had become known as the "Ashrafiyyeh events", has been the object of a controversy between actors who read the event very differently. For many non-Muslis and secularists, it created fears in Lebanon of renewed sectarian strife. Even in the days of the civil war, Muslim protestors had never touched the Christian sanctuary of Ashrafiyyeh. What is significant is that in Damascus, where the Danish and Norwegian embassies in Abu Romané were vandalised and burned, the neighbouring John the Baptist church remained untouched. Leader of the Future movement, MP Sa'd Hariri, was quick to denounce the acts of violence, stressing that "those responsible for these acts are taking advantage of the noble sentiments of believers for purposes that have nothing to do with Islam in order to inflict harm on Lebanon, on its national unity, and also the image of the Lebanese in general and that of the Lebanese Muslims in particular".[353] Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya also condemned the riots. The organisation had initially taken part in the peaceful demonstrations, but

[345] www.daiielislam.net and www.hedayaonline.net
[346] www.Daawa.net.
[347] www.attawhed.org.
[348] www.masjedsalam.com.
[349] http://www.islamudeni.net.
[350] www.tahrir.info.
[351] See the debate in the introduction chapter.
[352] For a discussion around different Islamist projects, such as state-oriented, nation-oriented, Umma-oriented, morality-oriented, and sectarian Islamism, see introduction chapter in Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia*, *op.cit.,* p. 63.
[353] See "Lebanese Politicians, Officials React to Rioting in Beirut, Some Blame Syria", *OSC report,* February 5, 2006, via FBIS Beirut National News Agency.

had decided to withdraw from it when "the peaceful protest deviated from its track, and after the organisers of the protests failed to control the demagoguery of certain elements, inserted among the protestors".[354] The scientific Salafists maintained almost the same thing. In a joint statement, the directors of the Da'wa Institute (Hassan al-Shahhal), the Bokhari Institute (Sa'd al-Din Kabbi), the Tripoli Institute, and the Amin Institute (Raed Hlayhel, at that time Bilal Haddara) denounced the riots as "sabotage acts", while at the same time stressing their condemnation of the caricatures".[355]

A significant part of the two hundred zealous demonstrators arrested by the Lebanese police, in connection with the demonstrations were of Syrian nationality, something which led to a belief that the demonstration had been "staged by Syria", in order to create chaos and sectarian strife in Lebanon.[356] Yet, the police investigation of the event also showed that most of the demonstrators in fact had been transported to Ashrafiyyeh from Tripoli and Akkar by initiatives emanating from Salafi mosques and teaching institutes in Abi Samra. One of the young demonstrators who was arrested, Umar Muhammad Wurur, said he had gone to Ashrafiyyeh, along with his brothers: "Just like everyone else that was there, I took a mini van with ten others, from Beddawi. I did not have to pay, because there was somebody donating".[357]

Young Umar told the police that, altogether, there had been four mini vans, each taking eleven passengers, which had come to pick up residents in Qubbeh, Tripoli. He was sentenced to three months in prison. Another young, zealous man, Abdallah Mahmud Abad, told the police investigators that he had decided to participate in the demonstration after a call from a shaykh in his municipality in Akkar. In fact, buses were bringing people from most of the neighbourhoods in Tripoli and from the nearby Palestinian refugee camps. The JI had also mobilised prior to the demonstrations and had arranged buses, allegedly in coordination with the Future movement, in a new bid of the secular Sunni party to mobilise a new, broader constituency on religious slogans. Most of those interviewed in the media coverage subsequent to the events, say that they had gone to campaign in Ashrafiyyeh, because they "wanted to defend the prophet" and were called upon to participate by local clerics.[358]

The slogan of "defence of the Prophet" was exported to Tripoli from Denmark through a campaign driven by a group of Muslim clerics from the Egyptian and Lebanese Diaspora, living in Denmark. The group had taken the name *The European Committee for Honouring of the Prophet* (ECFHP) and founded and presided by Raed Hlayhel, who had left Tripoli in 2000 in

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[354] *Ibid.*
[355] See "The Salafi associations met and criticised the Ashrafiyyeh incidents" (in Arabic), *al-Nahar*, February 9, 2006.
[356] See "Lebanese Politicians, Officials React to Rioting in Beirut, Some Blame Syria", *OSC report,* April 2, 2006, via FBIS Beirut National News Agency.
[357] Interview in al-Nahar, See coverage of the investigation subsequent to the Ashrafiyyeh incidents in al-Nahar (Lebanon), April 2, 2006.
[358] See coverage of the investigation subsequent to the Ashrafiyyeh incidents in al-Nahar (Lebanon), April 16, 2006.

connection with the Diniyyeh clashes to install himself in Denmark.[359] Hlayhel was the one signing the petition letters of the group and in charge of the delegation which toured Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. Imam Ahmad Abu Laban, also a resident in Denamrk at the time, publicly played an important role in the campaign against the caricatures, until his death in February 2007 from lung cancer, yet, because of a record of Islamic activism in his student years, he was banned from travel to the Emirates and his native Egypt, and therefore Hlayhel was appointed in charge of the delegations. During the visit to Egypt, in December 2005, the delegation of Danish imams met with Muhammad Tantawi, grand shaykh of al-Azhar, representatives of the Egyptian Ministery of Foreign Affairs, and Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa. The delegation, led by Hlayhel, visited Lebanon few months later and was received by the Mufti of Lebanon, Rashid Qabbani, Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, and Grand Shiite Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. In Syria, a commissioner sent by Raed Hlayhel arguably succeeded in convincing the Alawi leaders of the benefits of engaging in joint actions with Sunni Islamist movements. The Syrian regime, and subsequently the Iranian leadership, would later successfully appropriate the slogan of "Prophet honouring" in order to mobilise the zeal of Muslim youth to their own political advantage, only to further blur the lines between the religious and the political spheres of Sunnism in Lebanon.[360] As for the "Prophet honouring commitee", other individuals travelled to Turkey, Qatar, Algeria, and Sudan, mobilising support for the protest campaign.

In Tripoli, the message was well received, especially after Raed Hlayhel chose to install himself in Abi Samra in November 2006, as a protest gesture against the Danish Legal system finding the publication of the Prophets as within the acceptable borders defined by Danish Law.[361] Most of the clerics in the city are today actively involved in the campaign against the caricatures. A visit to the city in March 2008 revealed that almost all Islamic Institutes or associations in the city, from Dar al-Fatwa to the scientific Salafists via the Hizb ut-Tahrir had put up posters calling for a boycott of Danish products, with the slogan "boycott those who mocked Him". The continuous campaign seems to be partly driven by shaykh Hlayhel's private initiative. Since the beginning o 2006, he has attended Islamic conferences throughout the Arab and Islamic world, calling for the "support to the Prophet and (the people of) Gaza" (*nusrat al-nabi wa'ghazza*).[362]

The linking of the condemnation of the caricatures against the Prophet with that of Israeli or American civil rights abuses is rhetorically very efficient, because it creates a parallels between Israeli policies towards the Palestinians and the Danish difficulties to find an equilibrium between the freedom of press and the respect for the rights of minority groups. It seems reminiscent of what the Canadian sociologist Ervin Goffmann calls "keying", i.e., re-defining activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful from the standpoint of some primary framework, in

[359] Raed Hlayhel describes himself as the founder of the ECFHP. See "Communiqué concerning the new offences in denmark, form the founder of the European committee for honouring the Prophet (SAW)", shaykh Raed Shafiq Hlayhel", posted on *Sayd al-Fawa'id* web forum, undated (probably from 2007), http://www.saaid.net/Muhammad/246.htm, accessed September 2008.
[360] Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et martyre*, (Paris, Flammarion, 2008), pp. 255-256.
[361] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[362] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, February 18, 2009.

terms of another framework, such that they are now "seen by the participants to be something quite else".[363] As a result of the "keying" process, the experience of prospective participants of what is going on is "radically reconstituted".[364] The "keying" between the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza (re-identified as "Muslims") and the mocking of a prophet make the believers more prone to resort to simplified, uniform interpretations of the two events, and to believe that there is a plot against Muslims world-wide organised by the West and Israel. And in fact, an organization which calls itself *The Lebanese campaign to confront the Danish Caricatures* issued a statement in connection with the demonstration in Ashrafiyyeh, where they indicated there was evidence that Israel was behind the publication of the caricatures.[365] They called on the Lebanese government to sever diplomatic ties with Denmark and all the other countries that supported it.

This shows how the banner of "defending the Prophet" (or the even stronger one, "Prophet honouring") turned out to be extremely mobilising. No zealous Muslim can refuse taking part in campaigns organised to "restore the honour of the Prophet". Such a slogan can be seen as similar to what Bruno Latour would call a "collecting statement". Bruno Latour argues that groupings have constantly to be made, or re-made.[366] For Latour, a grouping needs to have a spokesperson, as well as a clear banner laying out the priorities of the group. A social grouping is for Latour no more than a collection of individuals gathered around one such slogan. In the case of the protest of the caricatures, we could say that it contributes to mobilizing various strands of Muslims, who would not, save this collective action event, have found much in common, in a campaign where the very honour of Muslims (*karamat al-muslimin*) is depicted to be at stake.

Collective statements, such as "Prophet honouring" and "Jihad in Iraq" are crucial to the self-definition of a social group because even a tiny change in the way of talking about groups changes the performance of those groups.[367] This seems also to be the case for the mobilization against the Danish caricatures, which contributes to spreading a perception that Muslims are targeted specifically because of their Islamic doctrine. It facilitated a change of register where what is targeted is no longer defined as "civilians" or "Muslim civilians", but "the Qur'an", "the "Prophet", or "Islam". When describing "Fatah al-Islam's version of the fight against the Lebanese army", the leader of the group, Shakir al-Absi drew upon a similar vocabulary. Describing the violation of "civilians", in stead of saying mocking of "Palestinian refugees", or

[363] Cited in David A. Snow *et. al.,* "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation", *the American Sociological Review*, 1986, Vol. 51 (August: pp. 464-481), p. 474.
[363] *Ibid.*
[363] See "Lebanese Politicians, Officials React to Rioting in Beirut, Some Blame Syria", *op.cit*.
[364] David A. Snow *et. al.*, "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation", *op.cit.,* 476.
[365] See "Lebanese Politicians, Officials React to Rioting in Beirut, Some Blame Syria", April 2, 2006, *OSC report,* via FBIS Beirut National News Agency.
[366] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit.*, p. 34.
[367] *Ibid*., p. 230.

even "Palestinian Sunni Muslims", Absi chose the words "mocking of the Qur'an".[368] Hence, he was able to depict the conflict as one between a "Christian, crusader army" and the Jihadis, "the real representatives of the Sunni community in Lebanon" (and neglect the fact that Lebanese Sunnis are also enrolled in the Lebanese army and that the Palestinians in Nahr al-Barid themselves, were those who suffered the most because of the fighting and had their homes and life-savings devastated).[369]

The "framing" of the caricatures as a campaign "for the defence of the Prophet" therefore seems to have had large impacts on the way those adhering to the campaign perceived themselves and the world around them. The portrayal of the campaign as a Manichean struggle, where the stake was simply "the honour of the Prophet", was a rhetorical trick that could subsequently be exploited by a variety of other actors.

5 The constitution of a politico-religious field in Tripoli in the aftermath of the Syrian withdrawal

As shown in the introduction chapter, Tripoli lies at the heart of the national and regional contradictions and that the one who holds the Sunni community at large holds Tripoli. In chapter four it was shown that Islamic leaders in the city were able to escape Lebanese political time by connecting and creating "plug-ins" with Islamic institutions in other Islamic centres outside of Lebanon. Yet, as discussed in chapter three, the dynamics within the religious field in Tripoli were shaped initially by local and regional dynamics.

In this fifth chapter, light will be shed on the question of how the religious field in Tripoli returned to Lebanese political time after the political upheavals in Lebanon in the aftermath of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri (February 14, 2005) and the subsequent Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon the same spring. Local, national, regional, and international actors all returned their focus on Tripoli, in search of a share of its constituency. The effervescence of foreign aid made the religious leaders in Tripoli proxies for a confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The rivalry between the two countries, which both claim to be the most legitimate leader of the Islamic world, has structured much of the regional dynamics since the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), yet it has been exasperated since Mahmud Ahmadinejad's coming to power in Iran in 2005.[370]

Tripoli has to many extents become a resonance chamber echoing this exacerbated rivalry. Most of the religious teaching institutes and mosques receive financial support from a country in the region, in exchange for their compliance with the interests of the sponsor country. The Anti-

[368] Fatah al-Islam media office, "Warning and Evasion, message from the shaykh Shakir al-'Absi" (in Arabic) (*nazir wa'tafir lil-shaykh shakir al-'absi*), posted on majaden forum (muntada al-mujahidin, January 7, 2008, http://majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2919, accessed January 2008.
[369] See "Displaced, again", *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* Report, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Geneva, July 23, 2008.
[370] See Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et martyre*, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

Imperialist Islamists, such as the Tawhid and the Islamic Action Front, are supported by Iran (and to a lesser extent, Syria) and the Wahhabis by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or Qatar. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is thus translated into the religious field in Tripoli by the ideological competition between pro-Saudi Wahhabi religious leaders and pro-Iranian Anti-Imperialist religious leaders. At the same time, local issues, inherent to the city, divide across blocks and make both the pro-Iranian camp and the pro-Saudi camp suffer from serious "framing disputes" within their ranks.

The Islamist field in Tripoli, at least since the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, is drawn between two different sets of religious and political mobilisations. The first mobilisation within the Islamist field in Tripoli is inclusive. It focuses on topics such as Islamic morality or identity and on the rights of Muslims to freely practice their religion. Such mobilisations unite most religious leaders in Tripoli and create a common group feeling *(asabiyya*), defined in opposition to Lebanon's French-influenced or Americanised secularists. Collective action events[371] in defence of Islamic morality have taken place regularly in Tripoli since the creation of the first Islamist movements in the 1940s.[372] Such mobilisations create common ideologies or what David A. Snow calls "collective action frames".[373]

The second type of mobilisation amongst religious leaders is centred on political themes, in response to events taking place within the political field in Lebanon or to regional political crises. Such mobilisations create divisions amongst the religious leaders, as they descend into different political trenches to become pro-Iranian Anti Imperialist Islamists, pro-Saudi Wahhabis, or Rejectionist Populist Islamism. Political mobilisations draw the Islamist field towards fragmentation. The push and pull between fragmentation and unity explain possible sudden shifts in the power equilibrium within the religious field at different given political opportunity structures.

The chapter offers an analysis of the Islamist field in Tripoli since 2005. First the impact of external factors on the Islamist field in Tripoli, and particularly the importance of the variable political opportunity structure, will be discussed. In recent years, the political field in Lebanon has become increasingly polarised around two specific political and ideological universes, the pro-Iranian and the pro-Saudi one. Both Lebanese political streets increasingly solicit and impose themselves on the religious field, in order to naturalise their profane agendas, what Bourdieu calls

[371] A collective action event is a mobilisation, or collective action, which contributes to uphold or re-affirm the group's initial ideological universe or what David A. Snow calls the group's "collective action frame". See Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing and social movements, An Overview and Assessment", *op.cit.*, p. 627. For an analysis of how new types of mobilisations led to a change in the identities of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, see Bernard Rougier, *Le jihad au quotidien*, *op.cit.*, 76. See also Stephen Ellingson, "Understanding the dialectic between discourse and collective action: public debate and rioting in antebellum Cincinnati", *American Journal of Sociology*, 1995. Vol. 101 (pp. 100-144).

[372] See pp. 40-41 in this study.

[373] A "collective action frame" is a schemata of interpretation which enables individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label seemingly infinite numbers of concrete occurrences defined in its terms". Ervin Goffmann, *Frame Analysis*, (Norwich, Fletcher & son Ltd, 1974), p. 21.

the "absolutisation of the relative".[374] This provided new incentives for mobilisation within the religious field in Tripoli.

Secondly, inherent qualities of the religious field in Tripoli will be analysed and, particularly, the dialectics between fragmentation and unity within the field. The increasing inroads of the political field into the religious field make the specifically religious actors internalise diametrically opposing political agendas. Religious leaders in Tripoli, approached from different political camps at the same time, must chose between remaining loyal to their local Sunni *asabiyya*, represented by pro-independence actors, actors opposed to Syrian influence in Lebanon, mainly the Future movement, or shifting their focus to the regional power struggles and maintaining the agenda of the resistance against Israel, thus allying the Hezbollah. Approaching anti-Syrian political actors such as the Future movement implies aligning with an ally of America; yet not doing it would suggest turning one's back to the local *asabiyya*. In Lebanon, therefore, designating the main enemy or the main threat to the Sunni community poses a real dilemma. How can religious leaders remain the "guardian of the authenticity of their community", if seized between what one perceives as two equally hostile enemies, and one has to choose the lesser evil?

It will be shown that the merging of the national political ideological universe of the Future Movement with the inherent characteristics of the local-transnationalised religious field in Tripoli, gives rise to a distinct, Lebanised politico-religious field, where pro-Iranian Anti-Imperialists are pitted against pro-Saudi Wahhabis. The fragmentation on the religious field is upheld through a series of political collective action events, which re-affirm the political divisions and personal rivalry between the religious leaders.

Third, it will be shown how certain actors refuse to take part in politics and locate themselves without the political frame of the nation state. These rejectionists are not only jihadists, there are also non-violent actors propagating the same idea of a refusal of politics. Hence, the findings within the field strengthen and amplify Thomas Hegghammer's argument that most Islamist political projects can have a violent and a non-violent embodiment.[375]

5.1 The contemporary disputes within the Islamist field in Tripoli

The period since 2005 has seen an exacerbated rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran over control in the Arab world. This has had important reverberations on the Islamist field in Tripoli, which has seen a rapid influx of foreign support. Many religious leaders have in the recent years become increasingly immersed in a political struggle for the ideological and strategic future of Lebanon, where they only play subordinate roles. They internalise the political ideologies of their sponsors and find verses in the Holy script so as to justify their political positions, what Pierre Bourdieu would call to render the relative absolute.[376] Because of the non-existence of one supreme authority in Sunni Islam, there is no "judge" or non-interest-specific mediator to settle

[374] Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.*, p. 329.
[375] See Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia*, *op.cit.*, p. 63.
[376] Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.*, p. 329.

between these differences of interpretation.[377] The Qur'an was revealed over a period of 33 years and the different verses were revealed as a response to specific circumstances and controversies between the followers of Muhammad and other groups in Mecca or Medina. Depending on which criterion is chosen to settle these contradictions inherent in the holy script, the divine revelation can be interpreted in a variety of ways.[378]

Since the Syrian withdrawal, the Future Movement, as the main Sunni force within the political field in Lebanon, has made inroads into the Salafi field, the Dar al-Fatwa institution, and parts of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and with other "moderate Islamist" figures. By allying actors operating in the religious field, the political decision makers in Beirut obtain many advantages. First, they are able to mobilise a potential pool of constituents that they would not have had access to otherwise. Secondly, the religious field in Tripoli fills an important function of legitimising the political and ideological universe of the political alliances at odds in Lebanon. Thirdly, aligned with political decision makers, religious leaders engage with what Bourdieu calls the clerics' own "symbolic authority" to combat attempts of subverting the symbolic order by "heretic forces".[379]

5.1.1 How to analyse the ideological disputes within the Islamist field in Tripoli

Where exactly is it that the different Islamic projects disagree? As mentioned in the introduction chapter, John Wilson decomposed the concept of an ideology into three different components, *diagnosis* (problem identification and attribution of blame), *prognosis*, and a *rationale*.[380]
Most Islamic groups in Tripoli more or less agree on the nature of the problem ("what is going on"), i.e., that zealous Muslim youth in the city are repressed by the intelligence services, neglected by the central state welfare institutions, and mocked by the Westernised elite.[381] The most dividing question on the Islamist field in Tripoli is that of how to attribute blame ("problem identification" or "diagnosis"). Attributing blame to political decision makers is difficult for religious leaders in Lebanon because it implies indirectly endorsing one of the rival political streets in Lebanon, each equally profane. The question pits the political Islamists aligned with Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement, against those aligned with Hezbollah. For the Islamists close to the Hariri family and the embassies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, the greatest dangers to the Sunni community in present-day Lebanon are Hezbollah and the "Persian" invasion of Lebanon.[382] They believe that Iran is attempting to create a "Shiite crescent" of influence, from Lebanon to Bahrain, passing through the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia and southern Iraq.[383] The threat of Iran lies in both Shiite ideology and in Iran's expansionism in the

[377] See introduction chapter for a discussion of the problem of authority in Sunni Islam.
[378] This criterion is referred to in Islamic studies as the principle of *al-nasikh wa'l-mansukh,* i.e. "the abrogative and the abrogated". An abrogative verse (*aya nasikha*) is a Qur'anic verse which abrogates and supercedes another verse (abrogated verse). See Nasr Abou Zeid, *Critique du discours religieux*, (Paris, Sinbad, 1999), p. 122.
[379] Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.*, pp. 328-329.
[380] John Wilson, *Introduction to Social Movements*, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
[381] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008. See also Fathy Yakan, *The Islamic world and the international plots during the 14th century of the Hegire*, (Beirut, al-Risala, 1981).
[382] Interview with Safwan al-Zu'abi, Tripoli, April 15, 2008.
[383] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Tripoli, April 23, 2008. The fear of a Shiite crescent is strong among many of the informants, Salafists and non-Salafists alike, such as Khaled Daher, Moustapha Allouche,

Arab world.[384] Many of the pro-Saudi Islamists call themselves Salafists and are deeply anti-Shiite. Their sectarian stance has made them important allies for the cause of the Future Movement in Lebanon.[385] Yet, the Future Movement, who mainly see the Hezbollah as a political menace, has a different "problem identification" than the sectarians.[386] The pro-Saudi sectarian Islamists bridge the political frame of the Future Movement with the theological frame of the Wahhabi doctrine. This process of *hybridisation* or vernacularisation results in the creation of a distinct politico-religious field in Tripoli.[387]

5.1.2 Conflicting political frames within the field

Those religious leaders, who end up choosing to align themselves more or less openly with one political street in Lebanon, have to internalise certain political projects into their religious ideologies. Each politically aligned religious leader somehow merges his transnational, "glocalised" Islamist injustice frame, which makes up the conditions for being part of the Islamist field initially, with a certain Lebanese political frame, either that of the pro-Lebanists or that of the Hezbollah-led "Resistance". The linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames, such as the injustice frame with the Lebanese political frame, is what Snow and Benford call "frame bridging".[388] Frame bridging is a strategic process that enables the social movement to link its interest and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual prospective resource providers.[389]

It is, according to the American sociologist John Wilson, specifically the role of ideologies to *place new meanings on old concepts*, pin new labels, and impose fresh meanings on familiar events and traditional institutions.[390] Yet, in Tripoli, because the religious field has become immersed in the political field, and because politics are highly polarised in the current situation, the religious leaders end up appropriating one of two very different political "frames". Drawing upon Wilson, Robert D. Benford calls the ideological competition for attributing blame within a social movement a "diagnostic frame dispute".[391]

The religious leaders in Tripoli, who have aligned with either of the two opposed political streets, distributes blames very differently: The pro-Iranian Anti-Imperialists blames difficult living conditions of Muslims in Lebanon on the United States and Israel, while the pro-Saudi Wahhabis

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Toufic Allouche, and Ahmad Ayoubi. Already in autumn 2004, King Abdallah II of Jordan warned against a "Shiite crescent" spreading from Iran to Lebanon via Bahrain, Kuwait, and Eastern Saudi Arabia. See Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et martyre*, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

[384] Interview with Hassan al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

[385] See Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists – A rising force", *op.cit.*

[386] Interview with Ahmad Ayoubi, Tripoli, May 8, 2008; Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Beirut, April 20, 2008; Interview with Toufic Allouche, Tripoli, April 10, 2008.

[387] As mentioned above, the concept of hybridisation, i.e. vernacularisation, was elaborated by the Birmingham school on cultural studies, based on studies on immigrant identities. See note 286, p. 83.

[388] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing processes and social movements: an overview and assessment", *op.cit.*, p. 618.

[389] *Ibid.,* p. 624

[390] John Wilson, *Introduction to Social Movements*, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

[391] *Ibid.,* p. 95.

blame Iran and the Hezbollah. Departing from their political alignments, the two sides elaborate a coherent universe of meaning, which they anchor in the religious scripts.[392] The source of "injustice" is conveniently identified as their own political enemies, who they depict, at the same time, as the ally of "Israel, the United States, and the Jews". This is why all religious leaders in Tripoli hold the basic Islamic references as their point of departure, yet end up with opposing political strategies.

5.1.3 Wahhabis: Pro-Saudi Sectarian Islamists

The pro-Saudi Islamists maintain that Israel remains an enemy to the Sunnis in Lebanon. Yet, aligned with the Hariri family and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, they assert that the realities on the ground have changed since the civil war (1975-1990). Muslim groups in Tripoli must adapt to this new situation.[393] The danger posed by Iran is for the pro-Saudi Islamists so imminent that the Sunni community in Lebanon has common interests with the US at present. In some cases, the US is even seen as a "guardian" that protects the Sunnis against Iran.[394] Their diagnostic frame is therefore based on the state of events within Lebanon and the menaces to the Sunnis in Lebanon, to the extent that they almost neglect the crises witnessed by Sunnis in the entire Arab world, such as by the Palestinians and the Iraqi Sunnis. These are ideals that concur perfectly with pro-Saudi official Wahhabism, to which many of the actors in this group also publicly claim to adhere.

> Iran is striving to rule the world in the name of exporting the revolution. This is not an option! These (the Shias in Iran) are not religious! They sacralise men! The Shias do not represent more than ten percent of the Muslims in the world. Iran cannot rule the Islamic world. Never! The country really qualified for ruling the Islamic world, is Saudi Arabia. It is the country of the two Holy places. It is where the Prophet was born! Saudi Arabia has the Ka'aba (the Holiest place in Mecca) and it has oil. How can Iran rule the Islamic world in the language of the Persians?[395]

Hassan al-Shahhal is one of the most eminent pro-Saudi Islamists. As shown in the second part of this study, many of his "comrades in arms" are "baby boomers" from the wave of petro-dollars, who established themselves in the city from the late 1980s. Others are children of the communications revolution in the 1990s. For instance, Safwan al-Zu'abi established his institute with funding from Kuwait only a few years ago.[396]

5.1.4 The Anti-Imperialists: Pro-Iranian Islamists

At the other extreme of the political spectrum in the field and therefore of the political "framing dispute" we find the pro-Iranian Islamists. Much older to the field, most of them are heirs of the "cause of the Tawhid" of the late 1980s, still members of the Tawhid or of Yakan's Islamic Action Front. Sa'id Sha'ban's Tawhid internalised its defeat at the hands of the Syrian regime in 1985 and turned to realpolitik and alignment with the Syrians after that time.[397] Children of the

[392] See Nasr Abou Zeid, *Critique du discours religieux*, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15, 57, 59.
[393] Interview with Hassan al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[394] *Ibid.*
[395] *Ibid.*
[396] Interview with Safwan al-Zu'abi, Tripoli, April 15, 2008.
[397] See chapter three of this study.

Lebanese civil war, the pro-Iranian Islamists maintain that the main enemy of the Sunnis in Lebanon will always be the state of Israel and its allies. There is widespread agreement and support for the agenda of Hamas and Hezbollah. The stated political goal of the group is the liberation of the entire mandatory Palestine.[398] They believe that those Sunnis who are now aligned with the Future Movement, and therefore by extension with the United States government, have transgressed from the "true path of Sunnism".[399] A former high-level Tawhid member, who remains close to the movement, stressed in an interview in April 2008 that "There is a difference between an adversary or opponent (*khasm*) and an enemy (*'aduw*). For me the Shias constitute (doctrinal) adversaries, but it is the Jews who are the real enemies! If Lebanon were to be attacked, should I then stand with Israel against my own brothers?"[400]

Depending on how one considers the ultimate goal and the nature of the Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Anti-imperialist Islamist agenda can be seen as either what Thomas Hegghammer calls nation-oriented or state-oriented Islamism.[401] According to its proponents, Tawhid's agenda is nation-oriented (acting according to a desire to liberate land, which is perceived as occupied by non-Muslims) and has as its main goal the maintenance of the resistance towards the Imperialist projects of Israel and the US.[402] According to many of its opponents, though, it is state-oriented, i.e., attempting to seize political power. They claim that what the Tawhid and Hezbollah call the agenda of the "Resistance" is only a cover for their "real projects", i.e., the overthrow of the Lebanese regime and a "Shiitisation of Lebanon".[403]

Because of their alignment with the Hezbollah and the Islamic Resistance, the pro-Iranian Islamists need to downplay the importance of sectarian cleavages. In order to mobilise among the zealous Muslim youth in Bab Tebbaneh and other Sunni popular areas in the city, they have framed their cause as a universal Anti-imperialist cause.[404] The "real cause" of the deprivation and police repression of the Muslim youth in Tripoli is not the ambitions of Iran and the Hezbollah in the region, nor the Shiitisation of Lebanon, but US and Israeli imperialism.[405] In order to ease living conditions in Tripoli, one must first confront the US and their allies in the country. In an interview with the author in April 2008, Tawhid leader Bilal Sha'ban shrugged off the importance of doctrinal differences.

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[398] Interview with Hashim Minqara, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[399] Interview with Fathy Yakan, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[400] Interview with a religious leader in Tripoli, close to the Tawhid, April 22, 2008.
[401] Nation-oriented Islamism is, according to Hegghammer, defined by a desire to establish sovereignty on a specific territory perceived as occupied or dominated by non-Muslims. Conversely, state-oriented Islamism is defined by a desire to change the social and political organisation of the state. See Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia*, *op.cit.*, p. 62.
[402] Interview with Hashim Minqara, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[403] Interview with Zakaria al-Masri, Tripoli, April 23, 2008; Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Beirut, April 20, 2008.
[404] "Anti-imperialist" ideology was first used as a concept by Fidel Castro in his confrontations with the United States starting from the time of the Cuban revolution, January 1, 1959.
[405] Interview with Bilal Sha'ban, Tripoli, April 23, 2008; Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.

> I see myself, first as a human, then as a Muslim, and then as a Hanafi Muslim. It is important to be open-minded towards others. I support the idea of a dialogue between civilisations. It is important to have good relations with Christians. The problem is that such good relations became more difficult with George Bush as president of the United States.[406]

Because the pro-Iranian Islamists stick to the agenda of the resistance, despite the US inroads in Lebanon, they claim to be "supporters of the weak and oppressed against the oppressor".[407] They see Iran, and alongside, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Bolivia's Evo Moralez, as defenders of "the oppressed everywhere" and claim to have great respect for the "nation building project in Iran under Ahmadinejad".[408]

It is interesting to note how Tawhid leader Bilal Sha'ban inherited his "revolutionary discourse" from his father, and that of the Popular Resistance of the 1980s. Popular Resistance leader Khalil Akkawi, when presenting the shebab of his movement as being the "legitimate heirs of Tripoli", had in 1981 also stated that "we are an ally to all oppressed peoples, no matter which confession they belong to".[409]

Contrary to Akkawi, who was a leader of a broad social movement, Tawhid is believed by its opponents to be pure agents of Iran and "traitors" to the Sunni community. The opponents see them as those responsible for the increasing confessional tensions in Lebanon. It is often said that "the resistance against Israel and US imperialism" is just a pretext for Iranian hegemony over Lebanon. Some believe that Hezbollah is using the Tawhid in order to move the theatre of the confrontation between March 14 and March 8 forces from Beirut to Tripoli.[410]

The decline of the Tawhid can only be understood as a function of a new, regional political climate – a transformed political opportunity structure. In fact, Tawhid's Anti-Imperialist ideology has lost much of its "frame resonance" because it runs contrary to the Sunni community in Tripoli's new cultural narration or myths, which increasingly are being forged by the Future Movement.[411] Far from static, the collective action frame needs to be congruent or resonant with the personal, every day experiences of the targets of mobilisation in order to survive the attacks of other "counter-frames". Snow and Benford's hypothesis is that "the more experimentally commensurate the framings, the greater their salience".[412] Although those who remain as Tawhid

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[406] Interview with Bilal Sha'ban, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[407] *Ibid.*
[408] *Ibid.* As noted by Gilles Kepel, Iran has in recent years mounted a diplomatic campaign "to assure support throughout the world (…), promoting the third world countries' claim for access to nuclear energy, presenting it as an inalienable right of Humanity not to be limited to the dominating powers. This green-red alliance against the West, between Shiite Islamists and youth with solidarity towards the third world, inspires them to unite behind the oriflamme of the Islamic republic of the "disinherited" in the face of the West. See Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et Martyre*, *op.cit.*, p. 78.
[409] See chapter three,. Cited in Michel Seurat, *op.cit.*, p. 152.
[410] Interview with Zakaria al-Masri, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[411] Snow and Benford explain the success of some "frames" and the failures of others as a function of "frame resonance". See David Snow *et. al.*. "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation", *op.cit.*, p. 477; and Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing processes and social movements: an overview and assessment", *op.cit.*, p. 619.
[412] *Ibid.*, p. 621.

leaders play on historical themes, and attempt to create a parallel between themselves and historical heroes of the civil war in Tripoli, such as Sa'id Sha'ban and Khalil Akkawi, their historical legitimacy is running out.

5.1.5 The Wasatis: "Moderation" in the midst of the political polarisation

In addition to the religious leaders aligned with the Future Movement or with Hezbollah, there are also those who try to present themselves as "politically moderate" and in favour of compromise, such as the religious leaders currently financed by former Prime Minister Najib Miqati. Miqati, who was formerly and still remains close to the Syrian regime, has, at least until recently, chosen a policy of "non-alignment" with either of the two opposing "political streets" in Lebanon. A man claiming to be a pious Muslim, Miqati is also playing on religious slogans and trying to promote the slogan of "religious moderation". He organised a conference in Tripoli on the topic of religious moderation in early April 2008. During this conference he attempted to create a parallel between political and religious moderation (*wasatiyya diniyya).*[413]

Yet the political time in Lebanon is not ripe for those trying to project such a position of a middle-way to solve the current political crisis. Mustapha Allouche, who is perceived as one of the "hawks" in the Future Movement, frequently appears on Lebanese television. With the help of his brother, Toufic Allouche, he has mobilised a large crowd of followers in Tripoli. Allouche stresses that one cannot be "moderate" (*wasati*) in a situation "where there is a conflict between murder and murdered".[414] "How can one be in the middle with the current ambitions of the Hezbollah?" he asked during an interview with this author in May 2008.[415] Because of the intensities of the menaces currently felt by the Sunni community in Tripoli, in light of the political crisis in the country, even many religious leaders who associated themselves with "religious moderation" (*wasatiyya diniyya*) agreed that Miqati and his idea of "non-alignment" was "not the right form of political moderation".[416] The religious leaders financed by Miqati, such as Muhammad Khodr, are, in the current situation, therefore perceived as part of the March 8 Alliance and depicted as "just the other face of the Tawhid".[417]

The polarisation and narrowing of the space to those not aligned with any of the hegemonic forces in the political field can of course be explained by the intensification of the political stakes during times of crisis. For Bruno Latour, any grouping of individuals, or a social movement, must front a limited number of "core questions", or what Latour calls *collecting statements*.[418] These

[413] Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Member of Parliament from Tripoli, Future Movement, Beirut, April 20, 2008; interview with Omayma Abdel-Latif, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Beirut, April 14, 2008.
[414] Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Member of Parliament from Tripoli, Future Movement, Beirut, April 20, 2008.
[415] *Ibid*.
[416] See interview with Azzam al-Ayoubi, Tripoli, April 15, 2006.
[417] Interview with a religious leader in Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[418] A "collecting statement" traces new connections between the actors and offers new highly elaborated theories of what it is to connect. It performs the social in practical ways […] and allows people to rank themselves as well as the objects in issue. It not only formats the social but also provides a second order

collecting statements tend to become sharpened and almost "canonical" because of the political tension, creating a dichotomised political space in Tripoli, to which many of the religious leaders adhere. Pierre Bourdieu reminds us that during times when ideological institutions need to fight against competing forces (which they see as heretic), this contributes to favouring the production of banalised religious practices. Canonical writings are also accelerated when the content of the tradition perceives itself as being at stake. Bourdieu's observation that difficulites of defining the distinctiove character's of one's community in the face of competing doctrines makes actors inclined to cherish simplified, distinctive signs and even discriminate ideas, is very present in Tripoli. Political actors fighting against Syrian influence in Lebanon seem to have adopted this strategy in order to awaken the part of the population who is still indifferent or who have not taken a clear stance. In addition, the adoption of clear, banalised slogans such as "the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon" and "creating a state in stead of keeping Lebanon an an arena" [for proxy wars] contributes to making the passage over to the competing ideology harder.[419]

The high stakes in the political conflict in Lebanon (depicted as a conflict over the "future of Lebanon") can explain why the political themes overshadow the religious ones in the discourses of the religious leaders in Tripoli. The "religious" messages are transformed into politico-confessional ones, and positions are sharpened to the extent that they are almost caricatural. Between the actors in the religious field, it even amounts to there being a conflict over what it means to be a "real Muslim". According to Tawhid leader Hashim Minqara, "the real Muslims are those who fight America". In an interview with this author in early May, he stated "if there is a confession for us, then it is one that is against America".[420] Yet, for the pro-Saudis, being a "real Muslim" is the exact opposite, it implies "being true to the Sunnis" and fighting the Iranian and Shiite expansion in the Arab world.[421] This shows how the political and ideological universes of the political decision makers are internalised by the religious leaders, who find justifications in the Holy script so as to assert that the political project in question truly is the "one authentic Muslim project".

5.2 The political factors behind the competition within the religious field

5.2.1 The Future Movement as a player within the politico-religious field

In the face of a growing Iranian assertiveness under the president of the Islamic republic Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Lebanon and in the region as a whole, the Future Movement intends to profile itself as the sole defender of the Sunni community in Lebanon. The sensation of vulnerability of the Lebanese third republic was exasperated in the aftermath of the 33-day war in July 2006. In November 2006, a few months after Nasrallah's proclaimed "divine victory" over the Hebrew state, the ministers linked to the opposition walked out of the national unity

description of how the social world should be formatted. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social, op.cit.*, pp. 231-232.

[419] See Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.,* p. 327.

[420] Interview with Hashim Minqara, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.

[421] Interview with Hassal al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

government and Hezbollah began transporting their sympathisers from south Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs to participate in a camp-like sit-in protest in front of the Lebanese Parliament in central Beirut. The mobilisation blocked large parts of the city centre and did not disappear before June 2008, when a new national unity government coalition was formed in the aftermath of the Doha accords. Voices in the Sunni-led parliament majority, characterised it as "an attempt to make a coup d'État against Siniora" and the Lebanese democratic institutions.[422] In the face of the growing internal challenges, the Future Movement and its leader Sa'd Hariri, have been forced to begin relying on the assistance of private military companies, such as the Tripoli resistance.[423] They have also been mobilising increasingly on a sectarian rhetoric, trying to promote the political party as the "defender of the Sunni community in Lebanon".

In these times of elections and political struggle, the support of Tripoli's local leaders becomes crucial for the Hariri family. Tripoli is, as pointed out in the introduction, known as the country's "Sunni reservoir". Mobilising Islamic groups becomes necessary for the Future Movement, a political party grown out of the secularised "cultural Muslims" in industrialist circles in Beirut, Saida, and in the Lebanese Diaspora, if they are to mobilise the more traditionalist groups of population among the Sunnis in Tripoli. The city, located only half an hour drive from the Syrian border in the north, is of course known by all to be more conservative than Beirut, especially the impoverished neighbourhoods such as Abi Samra, Qubbeh, and Bab Tebbaneh. Parts of the population in the city want politicians who can guarantee that it will preserve what is perceived as Tripoli's Islamic identity, and who are ready to defend zealous Muslim youth.

The increased stakes in the Lebanese crisis has forced the Future Movement to "adjust" their image, in order to be better fitted to suit a potential pool of sympathisers among the politically un-mobilised Sunni youth in Tripoli. Education Minister Bahia Hariri, the sister of late Rafiq Hariri and Sa'd's aunt, who is also a Saida MP and a UNESCO good will ambassador, now wears the veil in Parliament and has recently made efforts to embellish the Islamic credentials of the Hariri family. In Tripoli, the Future Movement has begun organising religious celebrations, and mobilises in poor neighbourhoods using banners with Qur'anic verses.[424] This has gained them the sympathy of some much more religiously engaged political activists in Tripoli, some of whom have taken medium-level offices. These medium-leaders and grassroots activists have another rationale for their engagement in a political struggle with the Hezbollah and see the Future Movement as "the leading defender of the Sunni community in Lebanon". Many of these religious members of the Future Movement have a political identity where they hardly distinguish between the political (the Iranian influence) and the doctrinal (Shia doctrine) dangers, respectively, represented by the Hezbollah. Some members of the Future Movement, who are not Salafists, appropriate the rhetoric of the Salafists to speak of the Shias and the Alawis (who are

[422] Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Beirut, April 20, 2008.
[423] Interview with Patrick Haenni, International Crisis Group (ICG), Beirut, April 1, 2008.
[424] Observation of political banners during a "guided tour" with Toufic Allouche in Quebbé, Tripoli, April 7, 2008.

more numerous in Tripoli) as infidel "nusayriyyin" and to state that Hezbollah is not the "Party of God", but the "Party of the Devil" (*hizb al-shaytan*).[425]

Most residents and political experts assert that the traditionalist youth in poor neighbourhoods, such as Bab Tebbaneh now "massively support" the Parliamentary majority and the cause of the Hariri family. Yet, it could seem that the political support for Sa'd Hariri is conditional on his ability to "deliver" in Tripoli. The Hariri family has taken many steps to buy the loyalty of the Sunni Muslim population in North Lebanon by giving away money to different welfare programs. Sa'd Hariri travelled for instance to Tripoli (the second time since he took office) in January 2008 to personally distribute 52 million dollars.[426] At the same time, he encouraged all to participate in the upcoming three years commemoration of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri on the 14th February - the next month.[427] Many youth, who were pro-Syrian in the days of the Syrian occupation, are now riding the wave of the Future Movement. Grosso modo, the support of the Hariris can be seen in light of the precarious political situation in which Lebanon today finds itself, a crisis where danger has taken a far more imminent turn since the July war in 2006.

5.2.2 A transformed political opportunity structure: from pan-Islamism to Sectarianism

Fuelled by the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and exacerbated by the local power struggles between Hezbollah and the March 14 movement, which comprises most of the Sunni politicians, antagonisms between Shiites and Sunnis, have reached a peak never observed before in the Middle East region. Empirical observation indicates that spiritual matters of "faith and doctrine" are being temporarily put aside in the public space, to the benefit of sheer political arguments. The social identity of many youth seems to become more shaped by political sectarianism (*ta'ifiyya*), than by religiosity (*tadayyun*). To be a Sunni or Shiite is becoming defined primarily in political terms, as an indication of whether one favours the Iranian or the Saudi and US project of "nation building" for Lebanon. The tendency away from religiosity and towards politico-sectarian identities is very clear, according to one Future Movement MP in Tripoli, Mustapha Allouche, himself a secularist.

> The Islamists are losing grounds. Tripoli has become Future [movement] territory. The youth have become more Lebanese than Islamists. And notably very sectarian [anti-Shia], that's a tendency, which had been accented recently, it is new. In Tripoli, we did not use to feel the cleavage between Sunnis and Shiites, not even after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. It came afterwards, with Hezbollah's behaviour after the July war and the attempt to make a coup d'état against Siniora. It is really very difficult to find equilibrium between creating solidarity in the community and not exaggerating the solidarity. [428]

The Islamists themselves admit that Islamic works are difficult in the present situation. The youth seem to be more fascinated by politics than the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of faith. Riyadh Rifa'i Islamist leader in Tripoli, close to the Tawhid, point out that:

[425] Interview with an employee in Future TV, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[426] Interview with Patrick Haenni, Beirut, April 1, 2008.
[427] Interview with Omayma Abdel-Latif, Beirut, April 14, 2008.
[428] Interview with Moustapha Allouche, Beirut, April 20, 2008.

> The political crisis in the country has subjugated the Islamic scene. Muslims have strained their relations between themselves. It is limited what the Da'wa can achieve in the present situation. The Islamic scene is in need of calm and security; it is presently in a state that is not natural.[429]

The changed political opportunity structure could be why some of the Islamic groups are increasingly betting on one political agenda.[430] Support is more easily available while at the same time the youth are turning away from religious studies (and studies in general), because of the imminent turn of the Lebanese political crisis. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu notes that "everything" can be said "in the conjuncture of the crisis, just because everything might happen". The actor on the religious field, needs to succeed in "saying what needs to be said", "in those situations which seem to call for and refuse language, because such situations impose the discovery of the inadequacy of all schematas of interpretation".[431]

5.2.3 Absolutisation of the relative: the political field's quest for religious legitimation

The Future Movement, as the main Sunni force on the political field, is dependent on religious leaders in the city to uphold and re-affirm its own political and ideological universe. According the French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, upholding the symbolic order contributes directly to maintain the political order. The religious institutions contribute to giving relative and sometimes random power alliances an impression of being absolute (*absolutisation or naturalisation of the relative*) by imposing schematas of perception, thinking, and actions, objectively according to the political structures.[432]

Yet, the resistance of the Salafists to the Shias is based on another rationale than that of the Future Movement, which sees Hezbollah as being a purely political rival. The Salafist, in contrario, base their condemnation of the Party of God on its Shiite doctrine, which they see as being more heretic than that of the Christians and the Jews. By mobilising the Salafists, "lebanising" their agenda, and giving them channels through which to convey their ideological messages, the political elites would be able to spread fear and distance to Hezbollah in the population, without being accused themselves of "wanting to spark a sectarian war".[433]

The instrumentalisation of religious groups is nothing new or specific to Lebanon. Eric Hobsbawm, describing the role of the lay activist [the *Popolino*] in a series of different political mobilizations in the 19th and 20th centuries emphasized that "nothing is easier than to identify

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[429] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008.
[430] "Political opportunity structure" refers to the organisational or structural factors, which affect movement mobilisation. The term is used to describe the relationship between changes in the structure of the political opportunities, such as changes in the institutional structure and/or informal relations of a political system, and movement mobilisation. It has been one of the main foci of the research literature on social movements over the past 25 years. See Rober D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing and social movements: An Overview and Assessment", *op.cit.*, p. 628; and David A. Snow et. al., "Frame alignment processes, micromobilizaiton, and movement participation", *op.cit.*, p. 464.
[431] Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux", *op.cit.*, p. 332.
[432] *Ibid.,* pp. 328-329.
[433] Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists – A Growing Force", *Carnegie Papers*, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* Number 6, January 2008, p. 15.

with the prince of the city-state".[434] The Syrian regime has, since the 1970s instrumentalised Palestinian leftist groups, in the same way that some Islamists today are being mobilised for political purposes. The large families in Lebanon have always been dependent on patronage systems and grassroots strong-arms (*qabadi'*) for mobilising support. Because of the strategic importance of Lebanon to regional and international actors, it is one of the countries in the world where political campaigns are the most expensive. In fact, obtaining an office in Parliament is often linked to political immorality or illegal actions. According to Ghassan Salamé, former minster of Culture in Lebanon, the strive to obtain the money needed to win a seat "pushes the political elites to make money fast".[435] As an example, Khalil Akkawi, who we met as leader of the Popular Resistance in part one of this study, met eye-to-eye with the cold logic of *realpolitik* when he was forced to ally with the Iran-sponsored Tawhid movement in 1982-1983, because of the pressure from Fatah and the Iranian regime in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion in Lebanon in July 1982:

> The goal of my activities has always been the unity of Tripoli, and from there, to work within the Syrian framework of the Bilad al-Sham [Greater Syria]. But, following this logic, I end up finding myself one day with Farouq al-Muqaddem and the Lebanese state against the Syrians, another day with the Syrians and Esmad Mrad[436] …The games reach far beyond us… And I will definitely be no more than the army of Karami (December 1983).[437]

We can therefore conclude that the high stakes in Lebanese politics combined with the archaic nature of the Lebanese political confessionalism, has made political clientilism and "political money" (*al-mal al-siyasi)* a key element in political mobilisation processes in the country. Interest-based alliances between political actors, regardless of ideological motivations, have changed rapidly in Lebanon ever since idenpendence in 1943. It is therefore interesting to note that the religious leaders find themselves, to a greater extent in Lebanon than elsewhere in the Umma, constrained by the unchanging rules of the games in Lebanese confessional politics, i.e. the imperative of alliances based on *realpolitik*, for political and financial survival.

5.2.4 The Future's appropriation of the Wahhabis and the "moderate Islamists"

Many of the so-called Scientific Salafists end up accepting the rules of the political game and the "Lebanese entity" and enter into the confessional logic of the Lebanese system. Once they accept

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[434] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive rebels: studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 133.

[435] Ghassan Salamé, *The Society and the State in the Arab Machreq*, (in Arabic) (*al-dawla wa'l-mujtam'a fi'l-masriq al-'arabi*) (Beirut, Press of the Arab Unity, 1987 (Second print, 1999), p. 139.

[436] Farouq al-Muqaddem was leader of a local, socialist party in Tripoli, called the 24 October Democratic Party. The movement, close to the Lebanese communist party and the Nasserists, was defeated by the Tawhid in 1983. Esmad Mrad was, as mentioned previously, leader of the movement of Arab Lebanon, close the the PLO, who joined the Tawhid umbrella group in 1982. He was assassinated in August 1984. Interview with Bilal Muhammad Sha'ban, Tripoli, . Interview with Bilal Muhammad Sha'ban, Tripoli, February 18, 2009. See also Michel Seurat, op.cit., pp. 133, 135, 159 and chapter three in this study.

[437] Cited in Michel Seurat, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Rashid Karami is a Tripoli-born Lebanese statesman. Son of Abdel Hamid Karami, the hero in the independence from France in 1943, Rashid Karami was until his assassination in 1987 *the* Tripoli politician. He was Prime Minister in Lebanon eight times, 1955 to 1956, 1958 to 1960, 1961 to 1964, 1965 to 1966, 1966 to 1968, 1969 to 1970, 1975 to 1976, and from 1984 until his death.

the political patronage, such state-sponsored ulama' (such as the Wahhabi shaykh-s who are at the service of the Saudi regime), find many immediate material benefits. Yet, they risk being discredited in the long run by the youth, who rather search for more "genuine" preachers, who they sense protect their interests.

Yet, far from all those religious leaders who align themselves with the Future Movement call themselves Salafists. Many other Sunni religious leaders are currently afraid of the Iranian expansion in Lebanon. The official guardian of Islam in Lebanon, Dar al-Fatwa, is considered close to the Future Movement. Secretary of the Cabinet, Muhammad Nokkari, points out that "Muslims must remain free and independent from the political actors. The global interests of Muslims must come before political alignment".[438] Yet, many employees of Dar al-Fatwa have in recent years come to see the Future Movement currently as a safeguard against the Hezbollah.[439] Mufti Rashid Qabbani condemned the recent Hezbollah occupation of West Beirut in very harsh terms, stating that "We thought Hezbollah was concerned with resisting Israeli occupation, and yet it (Hezbollah) has begun to occupy Beirut. We look to the Arab world to tell them that Lebanon is being subjected to the domination of the party with external support, under the pretext of resistance".[440] It is interesting to note, in addition to the exasperation of the situation, that Dar al-Fatwa is fully adapting to the transformed political opportunity structure, because the institution was very close to the Syrian regime until the withdrawal of Syrian troops in spring 2005.

There are also other Islamist movements "riding the wave" of the new power equilibrium in the country. The past two years have also seen the creation of "liberal Islamic parties", which are mostly pro-Hariri. For instance, one well-known journalist in the Future Movement's television channel and a former member of the Lebanese JI, Ahmad Ayoubi, has recently created an Islamic movement, called Freedom and Growth (*al-hurriyya wa'l-tanmiyya*). Ayoubi characterises the movement as a "liberal democratic movement", which adheres to the principle of "Lebanese citisenship".[441] Its pragmatism towards the interpretation of the holy text and its willingness to co-operate with Lebanese state institutions makes it reminiscent to al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya. Yet, contrary to the JI, it is funded by actors close to the Future Movement.[442]

Also the JI itself has turned increasingly supportive of the Future Movement, after the beginning of the sit-in and after Hezbollah ministers walked out of the government in November 2006. As shown in the first part of this study, its founder Fathy Yakan set up an organization of his own, the Islamic Action Front in 2005, and was eventually expelled from the JI in 2006. Both factions

[438] Interview with Muhammad Nokkari, Dar al-Fatwa, Beirut, April 14, 2008.
[439] Interview with Fadi Adra, Dar al-Fatwa, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[440] The Grand Mufti of Lebanon Rashid Qabbani held a public address live on Lebanese television on May 7, 2008, in the aftermath of Hezbollah's seizure of West Beirut. See "Mufti Qabbani fears civil disobedience", *Nowlebanon*, May 7, 2008, http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=41364, last accessed March 2009.
[441] Interview with Ahmad Ayoubi, Tripoli, May 8, 2008.
[442] *Ibid*.; Interview with Toufic Allouche, Tripoli, May 8, 2008; Interview with Imad Issa, journalist in the Tawhid radio, Tripoli, May 9, 2008.

of the JI claim that they further the initial agenda of the JI and that they have the support of the youth. There are rumours that Yakan's organisation recently lost large parts of its constituency after he arranged for some youth to be sent for military training in the south, under the supervision of the Hezbollah. At the end of the training, the Party of God allegedly would not let the Sunni youth join the Islamic resistance in its fight against Israel, but told them to go fight the "allies of America" (i.e. the Lebanese Sunnis) in Beirut instead.[443] Because of this, Yakan is accused of sparking a fitna within the Sunni community. Yakan himself denies the validity of this claim, yet most pro-Hariri supporters speak of it as a fact.

In Tripoli, spokespersons of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya deem that they have common interests with the Wahhabi Salafists, close to the Saudi establishment, in their mobilisation against Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiites. In fact, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya is a driving force for the unification of the Salafi field, under the leadership of pro-Saudi Wahhabi leaders, such as Safwan al-Zu'abi.

> In fact, in the past, the Salafi field was closed more that it is now. But recently, as a result of the interaction in the Gulf between Salafi thought and Ikhwani [i.e. inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood] thought, with the participation of Kuwaiti Salafists in the Parliamentary elections, and positive interaction in Afghanistan during the liberation from the Soviets, the Salafi field has become less closed. Many Salafists accept cooperation, even in Tripoli. Safwan contacts me, asks for cooperation. In the JI, we are happy that this happened. We like to interact with them, we can influence them and it helps the Da'wa as a whole. We meet with most of the Salafi references, but most of all with Safwan. We want the Salafi field to be unified. They ask for cooperation, especially with our welfare associations. Until very recently they did not have anything else than religious (teaching) institutes. Now they are launching projects in social welfare. They are making schools, hospital, social welfare to the orphans, and sports centres. They ask [us] for coordination between all social institutions in Tripoli.[444]

5.2.5 A Saudi – Syrian proxy conflict in Lebanon? Attempts to conquer the Salafi field

Simultaneously to some of the Islamist movements' appropriation by actors in the political field, the Salafi field has undergone a process of change, leaning towards unification. The attempts to unify the teaching institutes in the field (*tajamm'u al-ma'ahid*) under one umbrella organisation, and to disseminate one coherent ideology is nothing new. A variety of actors have tried to speak on behalf of "all of the Salafists" in the past. Yet, they have never succeeded because of discords over how its ideological orientation should be and who should be its leader in Tripoli. Should the umbrella association be under the Saudi tutelage and hence led by Safwan or Hassan al-Shahhal, considered close to the Gulf regimes, or should it be an umbrella association promoting a more "private version" of what Salafism is?

Contrary to the tentatity of the past, the co-operation on the Salafi field has now reached an organisational stage, never witnessed before. Most Salafists speak openly, yet with discretion about the new organization. According to Hassan al-Shahhal,

[443] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamous, Akkar, April 23, 2008.
[444] Interview with Azzam Ayoubi, Head of Political affairs in Tripoli and the North, JI, Tripoli, April 15, 2008.

> The first ceremony or colloquia of this association was recently held, in the name of the associations and Institutes of noble deeds and religious endowments in Lebanon (*jama'iyyat makarim wal-awqaf al-salafiyya fi'lubnan*). Although it is an old idea, this cooperation, or the activation of it, is new.[445]

The attempt seems to have succeeded because of life support from the Gulf countries, eager to export Wahhabi petro-Islam. It is an umbrella organisation closely patronaged by the Saudi Kingdom. Only the religious leaders, who identify with state-sponsored Wahhabism, seem to take part in the coordination meetings.

> There is currently a tentative effort to unify all the Salafist associations in Lebanon, and to create coordination. The first meeting has taken place. 19 associations participated. We agreed upon a complete charter. We do not want to exploit the zeal of the youth.[446]

One of the goals of the coordination is to impose a hegemonic understanding of Salafism on the local field, an understanding which would define Salafism just like it is defined by the Gulf regimes. The idea is that the lack of clear guidelines defining what Salafism is and what it is not, facilitates the appropriation of the doctrine by individuals who adhere to more radical, "private" versions of Salafism. Because it is not controlled by an institution, "private Salafism" could more easily evolve into Jihadi Salafism. The developments in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s illustrated that Saudi Arabia, the guardian of Wahhabism (or state-sponsored Salafism) needed to tread on a thin line between safeguarding religious legitimacy to its political agenda and making sure that the "youth" are not being carried away by religious zeal. The Kingdom therefore has a direct interest in laying obstacles in the path of the expansion of "private" Salafism in the field in Tripoli.

Supported by the Saudi establishment after September 11, 2001, the state-sponsored Wahhabis (or "Salafists") have engaged in a campaign where they seek to represent Salafi-Jihadism as contrary to the "ideals of moderation" (*wasatiyya*) that they perceive as inherent in the Qur'an. This is an attempt to strip the Jihadis of "Salafi legitimacy". For instance, after the outbreak of clashes between youth in Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese army in late May 2007, many so-called "scientific Salafists", including the director of the Bokhari Institute, Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, participated in a conference at the Crystal hotel in Beirut. It provided the occasion to state-sponsored Wahhabis in Lebanon for denouncing more generally acts of violence carried out in the name of Islam and reaffirming the creed of Wahhabism as the only "moderate" and "just" position within the Islamic field.[447]

Sometimes referred to as the "most important representative of scientific Salafism" in Lebanon, Sa'd al-Din Kabbi contributes to fighting what he calls "extremist thought" (*fikr al-ghuluw*) though publishing books, television statements and by operating an Internet page. The Institute has also recently begun publishing a magazine, called "The Scientific Research" (*al-bahth al-'ilmi*). One issue of the magazine is devoted to the question of whether there is a "right to revolt"

[445] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[446] Interview with Safwan al-Zu'abi, Tripoli, April 15, 2008.
[447] Interview with Sa'd al-Din Kabbi, Wadi al-Jamous, Akkar, April 23, 2008.

against the rulers in the Sharia.[448] Inspired by the *Ahl-e Hadith* School on the Indian sub-continent, the "scientific Salafi" analysis of the question does not imply logical reasoning or evaluation of the political situation, only citing relevant rules from the Qur'an or the Sunna.

Hassan al-Shahhal, the nephew of the "Great shaykh" also publishes a magazine, *al-Nasiha* [Lit. "The Advice"], featuring Islamic poetry extolling the Saud regime, in addition to communiqués (*bayanat*) condemning Jihadi Salafism.[449] For instance, al-Shahhal issued in late June 2007 a communiqué entitled "advice to doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri and the al-Qaida organization". In the communiqué, issued after a month of exasperated confrontation between the Fatah al-Islam group and the Lebanese army, al-Shahhal condemned the al-Qaida leader speaking in the name of the Sunnis in Lebanon, without having asked their opinion (*istishara*). He concluded that the incident re-affirmed the need of Muslims to follow the lines of the rulers.[450]

Its state-sponsored character is the reason why other actors in the Salafi field, promoting a more "private" version of what Salafism is, refuse to enter into the new umbrella association. The old "symbol" of the Salafi field, which previously functioned as a nodal point for Salafism in Tripoli, Da'i al-Shahhal, sees the co-operation between state-sponsored Salafists as a threat to his traditional dominance over the field:

> There are no really radiant efforts to unify the Salafi field. We don't have that. But there are alliances between a group of parties who lean towards one opinion to overcome a fragmentation, which is often based on ideology or on personal interests. These parties are very few.[451]

The unification of parts of the actors in the Salafi field in Tripoli into an umbrella organisation is therefore less an end to all rivalry in the field, than an indication that the stakes within the field are so high, that other actors are trying to direct it towards their political benefits. For actors in the political field, controlling the religious field becomes a central part of their political strategies. In a regional and global arena, where the nation states are at odds with both other regimes or with transnational non-state actors, the political decision makers are increasingly soliciting the aid of actors in the religious field. Obtaining the praise of the guardians of the divine revelation, the political decision makers attempt to win the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the populations.

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[448] "A right to revolt against the rulers in the Sharia?" ("al-khurj 'ala al-hukkam wa'mawqif al-shari'a minhu"), *Scientific Islamic Research* (*al-bahz al-'ilmi al-islami*). *Monthly Islamic magazine specializing in Islamic research and studies (majella islamiyya shahriyya tubanni bi'l-buhuz wa'l-darasat al-islamiyya*), 11th Issue, *al-jumada al-ahkhira*, 1428 hijri.

[449] Hassan al-Shahhal, "Are We really Muslims…? Doctor Hassan al-Shahhal said:" ("hal nahnu haqqan muslimun…? Qala al-doktor Hassan al-shahhal qal"), undated poem.

[450] Hassan al-Shahhal, "Advice to doctor Ayman al-Zawahri and al-Qa'ida" ("Nasiha ila dukur ayman al-zawahiri wa'tanthim al-qa'ida'"), *News brief number 429 ('alam wa'khabar 429*), the Da'wa and Belief and Charity association (*da'wat al-iman wa'l-'adl wa'l-ihsan)*, Tripoli, June 26, 2007.

[451] Interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16, 2008.

5.3 Umma-oriented rhetoric within the Islamist field in Tripoli

5.3.1 A transnational master frame of suffering and repression

What gathers all Islamic movements in Tripoli is one common narrative that there is a repression against Muslims, a campaign being waged by dictatorial regimes or police states, with oppression being directed against religiously engaged youth.

The different Islamists, despite all their differences on topics such as political alignment and autonomy, all seem to see themselves as victims of injustice perpetrated by "the other". Many seem to share an idea of a Manichean struggle between "good and evil", i.e., between "true Muslims", on the one side, and "forces of kufr", on the other. A recurrent theme is that there is some external force inflicting harm on Muslims, and a campaign being waged against Islam.[452] The shared feeling of suffering and repression can be seen as similar to what Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow would call a master frame.[453] Shared by most political Islamist movements in Tripoli, the sentiment of being neglected by the central state welfare services, repressed by the intelligence services, and mocked by secularists, colors and constrains much of their orientation and activities. The grievances (arrests, repression) have given rise to one core grievance interpretation, where the sufferings are seen no longer as a set of unfortunate events, but as *injustice* for which someone else should be held responsible.[454] This process is often called "cognitive liberation" or "cognitive openings".[455]

5.3.2 Feelings of alterity and victimisation in Tripoli

The feelings of alterity and victimisation have been somewhat present among Islamist movements ever since the Islamic awakening in Lebanon in the 1940s. For example JI founding father Fathy Yakan's writings warned against a conspiracy against Muslims, waged by Crusaders, Jews, and Communists.[456] Much of the same ideas are presented in much of Zakaria al-Masri's work.[457] The narrative has, however, been re-affirmed and given new meanings over the years through a series of collective action events. Because group identities are not fixed, they need to be

[452] See, for instance, Fathy Yakan's work *The Islamic world and the international plots during the 14th century of the Hegire*, (Beirut, al-Risala, 1981). The same topic is developed by Hizb ut-Tahrir, and notably by HT Tripoli's media officer Ahmad Qassas. See HT Lebanon's website, www.tahrir.info. Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

[453] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing processes and social movements: an overview and assessment", *op.cit.*, pp. 611-639, p. 618.

[454] David A. Snow *et. al.*, "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation", *op.cit.*, p. 266.

[455] *Ibid.* See also Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[456] See Fathy Yakan, *The Islamic world and the international plots during the 14th century of the Hegire*, *op.cit.*

[457] The Tripoli-based shaykh Zakaria al-Masri has written extensively about the existence of a "Shiite-Communist" axis in the recent years. His first book on the issue was published in 1989. Interview with Zakari al-Masri, Tripoli, April 23, 2008. See, for instance, Zakaria al-Masri, *The Islamic Reviwal. The global forces of tomorrow* (*al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya. Quwwat al-ghad al-'alamiyya*), (Beirut, Mu'assassat al-Risala, 2000).

constantly re-affirmed by actions.[458] This is what Snow calls a dialectic tension between *collective action frames* and *collective action events.*[459] Through the gradual transnationalisation of the Islamist field in Tripoli in the 1990s, the ideas of "victimisation" and "alterity" have taken on new significance.[460] The increased connectedness between the Islamic field in Tripoli and Islamic centres in other places in the Umma, facilitates the uniformisation of agendas and the rise of a "common consciousness", i.e., that zealous Muslim youth in Tripoli more easily identify their situation with that of Muslims in other countries. They also elaborate a common terminology to express their shared matters of concerns.[461] The feeling of being repressed, for instance, is increasingly seen in connection with the restricted liberties of Islamic groups in many places in the world after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Although much of the rage is directed towards the Syro-Lebanese intelligence services and the police, the United States and the West more broadly are increasingly being held responsible.

The arrests after the fighting in Nahr al-Barid over the summer, 2007, contributed to intensifying the feeling of repression and created a distance between the zealous Muslim youth and the Sunni-led government.[462] Around a total of 350 youngsters were arrested, starting from the beginning in March 2007.[463] A grievance of the Islamist militants and their spokespersons is that, contrary to the Diniyyeh crisis, in the Nahr al-Barid case the Lebanese prosecutors created one common file of accusation for both Nahr al-Barid and the mujahidin training for going to Iraq.[464] The city, and especially the Abi Samra neighbourhood, has witnessed several waves of arrests. The latest, at the time of writing (late August 2008) was when Nabil Rahim and eleven others were arrested in an apartment in Abi Samra in January 2008, accused of being leaders of Fatah al-Islam and al-Qaida in Lebanon.[465] According to a former leader of JI in Tripoli, Salim Allouche, 56 youngsters were arrested already prior to the fighting in Nahr al-Barid, accused of having connections to Nabil Rahim.[466] Many Islamic activists in the city argue that the security services took advantage of the tense situation after Nahr al-Barid and the despair in the local population, to arrest what they see as "all youth involved in Islamic activities".[467] Hizb ut-Tahrir media officer Ahmad Qassas, in an interview with this author in April 2008 argued that "the Nahr al-Barid events showed once again that Muslims are always those accused". The HT was itself accused of having supported Fatah al-Islam. Ahmad Qassas interpreted the wave of arrests after Nahr al-Barid as "a chance for the

[458] Because groups are constantly re-formed, based on collective action, Bruno Latour calls for a performative definition of social gorups. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembing the social*, *op.cit.,* p. 34.
[459] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, *op.cit.*, p. 627.
[460] This topic is dealt with in chapter four of this study.
[461] See chapter four of this study.
[462] For more on the fighting in Nahr al-Barid, see introduction and note 5, p. 11, and 99, p. 35 in this study.
[463] Interview with Khaled Daher, Former MP, Justice and Growth, Tripoli, May 6, 2008.
[464] Interview with Riyadh Rifa'i, Tripoli, April 22, 2008. For more on the crisis in Diniyyeh in 2000, see pp. 88-90 in this study.
[465] See "The Second in command in al-Qaida is arrested" (in Arabic) ("dahamathu al-shurat fi shaqa fi trablus, heithu tawara 11 shahran. Tawqi' al-rajul al-thani li'l-qa'ida fi'lubnan"), *al-Hayat* (London), January 11, 1008, http://www.alhayat.com/arab_news/levant_news/01-2008/Item-20080110-653d0b38-c0a8-10ed-01ae-81ab43198e43/story.html, accessed April 2008.
[466] Interview with Salim Allouche, Tripoli, May 6, 2008.
[467] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

security services to accuse Muslims. Suddenly it was permissible to arrest everybody that had any links to Islam", he deplored.[468]

The theme of the arrests features currently in the common narrative that there is an oppression of Muslims. The sensation of injustice is exasperated because some Islamist groups argue that "Muslims are not allowed to practice their religion in the jails in Lebanon".[469] The arrests, creating rage against the government among the youth, was the origin of a conflict between certain representatives of "private Salafism" and the Future Movement. Radical preachers such as Umar Bakri became more popular for a while among the youth, gathering more than a hundred followers during Friday prayers.[470] In order to remain the central spokesman of the zealous Muslim youth, Da'i also distanced himself from the Future Movement after the arrests.[471]

Subsequent to the arrests, in October 2007, the HT staged a campaign against torture in the Romiyyeh prison.[472] This joint venture in which the majority of the Islamist movements in Tripoli, from the JI to the Salafists, took part, contributed to creating a feeling of a common agenda, beyond political cleavages. A remake of this campaign took place in August 2008, when family members of those arrested in the Nahr al-Barid case protested in front of the prison and the detainees went on a hunger strike to protest against the delay in their case hearing.[473] According to Bilal Baroudi, one of those Islamic preachers in Tripoli who has succeeded the most in presenting himself as a spokesperson for the zealous Muslim youth:

> Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria are police states (lit.: the countries of strength, *duwal al-tawq*). The Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian armies do not allow their soldiers to practice Islam. It is illegal to pray in the army. There is no freedom in this country! Why is it illegal to show pictures of the *mujahidin* in Iraq while it is legal to show sex scenes and violence on films? What is the justice in this? It is illegal for me to go to Syria and Jordan. They believe that I am dangerous. Where is the danger? You have more justice in the West than we have. Lebanon is just like a big prison. I cannot go anywhere! There is no difference between being in jail and being inside Lebanon! The difference is just in the size of the closed off territory. The youngsters are just like a volcano. And then Iran and the US are trying to make it explode.[474]

Islamist intellectuals in Tripoli, especially those with links to the Diaspora in the West, are currently extremely concerned about how Islam is depicted by Western media. Similarly to many Islamist figures in Europe, Raed Hlayhel sees a long line from the Rushdie affair to the

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[468] *Ibid.*
[469] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[470] Interview with Imad Issa, Tripoli, August 15, 2008.
[471] See "Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal: To finish off with Fatah al-Islam is not easy" ("al-qada' 'ala fath al-islam laysa sehlan"), *al-Akhbar*, May 22, 2007, http://www.islamicnews.net/Document/ShowDoc01.asp?DocID=95868&TypeID=1&TabIndex=1, accessed November 2007. Da'i al-Islam repeated the same idea in an interview with this author in Tripoli, April 16, 2008.
[472] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[473] See "Islamist suspects stage hunger strike in Lebanon jail", *AFP*, August 5, 2008.
[474] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.

publication of the caricatures via the interdiction of the veil in France.[475] Convinced that they are part of a long series of humiliation inflicted on Islam in Europe, these intellectuals strongly condemn the recent re-publications of the Danish caricatures and the Dutch film "Fitna," publications which they claim insult the Prophet and dishonour Islam.[476]

These collective action events, i.e. the campaigns against the arrests and the "insults" against the Prophet, were based on a "glocalised" narrative of suffering and repression. Such mobilisations contribute to maintaining the *asabiyya* of the Islamist field in Tripoli. This is also how the Islamists themselves comprehend the religious field in Tripoli. Raed Hlayhel, a prominent Salafi leader, and the synecdoche of the transnationalisation of the Islamist field, and who recently returned from Denmark to his native Tripoli argued in an interview with this author in April 2008 that "the Islamist field in Tripoli is divided because there is no institution to unite them. All groups have their own rooms. But in times of crisis, it stands together, it has an *asabiyya*".[477]

Perhaps Raed Hlayhel has an interest in depicting the Islamist field in the city as less dependent on the political field than it sometimes can be, because he is one of those religious leaders who remains rejectionist (i.e., unaligned) towards the issue of the current political crisis. The shared *asabiyya* is maintained, yet re-invented by a set of actors who descend into the trenches with the political decision makers, to form a distinct politico-religious field in Tripoli.

5.3.3 Political alignment vs. Rejectionism

Jean Paul Sartre wrote in *l'Etre et le néant* that "even when you decide not to make a choice, you have also taken a choice".[478] This is applicable also for those actors in the religious field in Tripoli, who reject entering into the trenches with political decision makers in the Lebanese crisis, in the manner that their peers engage themselves in the political rivalries and become subordinate to the political field. Faced with the emergence of a new, nationalised politico-religious field in Tripoli, they choose seemingly to only operate within the transnational Islamist field. The non-aligned political leaders reject the notion that the politico-religious field, where the pro-Saudi Wahhabis (and their political allies) are pitted against the pro-Iranian Anti-Imperialist Islamists, have any religious character at all. Yet, the choice of rejectionism is also a choice of position towards the political struggle and it manifests a willingness to both transnationalise and autonomise the Islamist field.

Among the actors who insist on a pan-Islamist agenda, we find the Lebanese branch of the transnational Hizb ut-Tahrir movement, the diasporised intellectual Raed Hlayhel, and to some

[475] The idea is developed by Gilles Kepel *Terreur et martyre*, *op.cit.*, p. 262. Raed al-Hlayhel presented the same line of argument in an interview with this author in Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[476] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008; interview with Ahmad Qassas, HT, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.
[477] Interview with Raed Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008.
[478] In French: "Ne pas choisir c'est encore choisir".

extent also the populist preachers Bilal Baroudi and Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal.[479] Of course, profiling oneself as neutral and above profane matters such as politics, does not mean that one cannot be perceived by others as being politically aligned. Rejectionism is an argument, which centres around the "corrupted nature of politics". It is expressed by shaykh Bilal Baroudi, who we met in the first part of this study as a young graduate of the prestigious al-Azhar university in Cairo. In an interview with the author in April 2008, he stressed that "Salafism is a school of thought (*fikra*). It has been corrupted by politics (*afsad bil siyasa*)".[480]

Yet, the rejectionist ideologues are also concerned with politics. It is only they do not operate solely within the paradigm of the nation state. The rejectionists gain benefits from the weakness of the Lebanese state in order to further their proselytizing agenda. At the same time as they refuse to locate themselves within the politico-religious field, the rejectionists draw resources from existing power struggles on national scenes, which they in turn use to strengthen their own ideological positions in the transnational Islamist field. In fact, the current Lebanese political crisis provides an occasion to claim that it is just an illustration that "politics corrupts" and that "Islam is unifying".

The HT, for instance, tries to distance itself from the Lebanese crisis and rather frame it to its constituency in the terms that this is what is bound to happen when Muslims engage in "un-Islamic politics". The HT aims to distance itself from the corruption of the politicians, as the defenders of Islamic unity.[481] This is of course a manner of presenting their ultimate goal, to unite all Muslims and re-establish the historical Caliphate, in an even more favourable light. According to HT media officer Ahmad Qassas:

> HT does not support sectarianism. We are not among those who fight for the right of the Sunnis at the expense of the Shias. Our movement has members from the Shia community. We aim to address our speech to the whole population of Muslims. It is hard in the present situation; there is no doubt about that. But we conduct meetings with other shaykh-s to try to deal with the situation.[482]

One of the reasons why the rejectionists do not bet on any of the two political streets in Lebanon is also strategic: they feel that neither of the two will last and that they would lose support from the youth, if they aligned themselves (openly) with any of them. Bilal Baroudi, an articulate religious leader in Tripoli, very popular among the city's youth, characterises the two March alliances as temporary political alliances only fit for one month of the year:

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[479] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008; Interview with Raed al-Hlayhel, Tripoli, April 23, 2008; Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008; interview with Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, April 16 and May 9, 2008.
[480] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[481] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008. See also Hizb ut-Tahrir Lebanon, "O People of Lebanon: Reject the leaders of the sectarian parties and those who trade in war", *Hizb ut-Tahrir website Khilafa.com*, May 8, 2008, http://www.khilafah.com/kcom/activism/middle-east/o-people-of-lebanon-reject-the-leaders-of-the-sectarian-parties-and-those-who-trade-in-war.html, accessed May 2008.
[482] Interview with Ahmad Qassas, Tripoli, April 24, 2008.

> March 14 and March 8 are temporary political movements. We need politicians who are fit for all months of the year, not only for the month of March. The March alliances are the result of an emergency situation (*hala tari'a*). What will happen to the March 8 alliance if Syria is to sign a peace agreement with Israel? They will no longer have a banner that they can call March 8, they will become the February 8 instead. And then, after the international tribunal? March 14 must change its name, become April 14! Politically, I see myself as an independent. March 14 and 8 are momentary phenomena.[483]

Through the "collective action events" they organise, the rejectionists play an important role on the Islamist field in Tripoli, safeguarding and re-inventing the core values within the field. Although the short-term strategy and the means regarded as "legitimate" differ, the much more transnational and autonomous agenda, furthered by the rejectionists, is shared by the Jihadi Salafists.

5.3.4 The Salafi-Jihadi's efforts to discredit those participating in the "Lebanese entity"

Rejectionism is somewhat a characteristic of the Jihadi-Salafists, who long ago began competing for influence in the Salafi field. Seeing all political interactions in the status quo as corrupt, the Jihadists refuse the notion of politics altogether. The Jihadis in Tripoli, for instance, allege that the Future Movement is made up by Westernised individuals, with no Islamic credibility. The Hariri family, for instance, is depicted by the Jihadis as enemy of Islam.[484]

Attacking their leniency towards the rulers and especially their participation in elections, the Jihadis try to strip Salafists who participate in politics of "Salafi legitimacy". Umar Bakri is an Islamic cleric who openly sympathises with Usama bin Laden and the global Jihadi movement. He claims that there are no "real Salafists" among the formally educated clerics in Tripoli and that what he calls independent Salafi thoughts can only be found on the Internet:

> Safar al-Hawwali and Salman al-Awda are not real Salafists, they are crooks and do not respect all parts of the doctrine. Only those who pronounce the *takfir* (excommunication) are real Salafists. The real Salafists are those who support Usama bin Laden. Real Salafists are jinn (demons or Djinn), they would not respect governments.[485]

The same rhetoric was used by the Jihadi group Fatah al-Islam (FAI) as a strategy for mobilisation.[486] FAI leader Shakir al-Absi (or the person claiming to be him), in an message published on Jihadi web forums in January 2008, tried his best to depict those Sunnis agreeing to play a part in the Lebanese political institutions as a bunch of corrupt, racist cowards.[487] Legitimising its armed confrontation against the Lebanese army (LAF), the group sought to show how the army did not represent the Lebanese people. Playing on historical themes, Fatah al-Islam in fact characterised the LAF as a Crusader army, "the army of Sulayman" (*jund sulayman*).

[483] Interview with Bilal Baroudi, Tripoli, May 7, 2008.
[484] See Fatah al-Islam media office, "Warning and Evasion", message from shaykh Shakir al-Absi (in Arabic), (*nazir wa'tafir lil-shaykh shakir al-'absi*), *muntada al-mujahidin*, January 7, 2008, http://majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2919, accessed January 2008.
[485] Interview with Umar Bakri, Tripoli, April 4, 2008.

[487] Fatah al-Islam media office, "Warning and Evasion", message from shaykh Shakir al-Absi, *op.cit.*

According to its narrative of the events, innocent Muslims were arrested and tortured at the hands of the Army of the Cross (*jaysh al-salib*), which throughout the battle in Nahr al-Barid had sought to humiliate the Qur'an (*ihanat al-qur'an*, meaning by that *ihanat al-muslimin*, i.e., a humiliation of the Palestinian Muslims in the camp).[488] Absi attempted to portray the army as a Christian Crusader army, which had only succeeded in crushing Fatah al-Islam because of the military help from the United States.[489] In addition, the Army, when penetrating the Nahr al-Barid camp, aimed purposely at children and women and at destroying mosques. He claimed that, because of its cowardliness, the army relied on a disproportional use of force.

> The number of rockets launched by Sulayman's army on the (Nahr al-Barid) camp during three hours was as high as the total number of rockets launched on Lebanon during the whole of the 33-day war in July 2006 (*harb tamuz*) by the Jewish country. They have acknowledged that the camp was bombarded with 20 rockets a minute, which equals 1200 rockets an hour, while the bombing did not last less than ten hours every day.[490]

The speaker attempted to condemn the corruption of the politicians, the state institutions, and the army, in order to compare it to the honour (*karamat*), courage (*rujula*), and good morals (*al-akhlaq al-husna*) of what he called the Jihadi movement in Lebanon. The intention is of course to make Fatah al-Islam stand out as the one defender of the Sunni, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Arab people alike.

> We do not work in the interest of any (other) party; we work for the interest of Islam and Muslims. We are not part of the internal (power) struggles in Lebanon and we support all those who stand by our side helping us to obtain our goals, which are the goals of the whole Umma […].[491]

Presenting the Siniora government as the "agents of America", the spokesperson of FAI represented the struggle inside Lebanon as an extension of global Jihad, against the global "forces of infidelity", materialised by the US government.[492] Doing this, the spokesperson condemned all Lebanese sectarian political groups, claiming they represent in reality only one "communal group", the "one and same community" (*milla wahida*), all corrupt. This is why Salafi Jihadism can be seen as an extension of rejectionist Islamism, as a utopian Islamist ideology, which refuses the political idea of compromise and negotiation.

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[488] *Ibid.*

[489] The US government in fact gave substantial military aid to LAF after the outbreak of fighting in Nahr al-Barid. See Tine Gade, "Fatah al-Islam in Lebanosn: Between local and global Jihad", *op.cit.*

[490] Fatah al-Islam media office, "Warning and Evasion, message from the shaykh Shakir al-Absi", *op.cit.*

[491] *Ibid*.

[492] While FAI attempts to depict itself as a proponent of global Jihadism, the fight against the Sunni-led government also suits other regional parties, such as the Syrian regime. The existence of an alleged Syrian-led nucleus of the FAI group, which exploited global Jihadi ideology for mobilisation purposes, has created many controversies around the "real nature of the group". See Bernard Rougier, "Les leçons de FAI", *ICG-report*, Brussels/Beirut, 2007, unpublished.

6 Conclusion

In the introduction to this study, the question of why the religious field in Tripoli is so fragmented was raised. The degree of fragmentation of the religious field was found puzzling because social movement theory has found that the existence of close social circles is a variable positively correlated with united collective action, rather than internal discord. It was argued that the question was not adequately dealt with in the existing literature on Islamism in Tripoli. Most of the studies had analyzed the Islamist field in Tripoli either within the framework of Lebanese politics or within the framework of transnationalism.

In order to shed light on the ideological competition between religious leaders in Tripoli, analytical tools were borrowed from both field theory and from mobilisation theories, notably the concept of "collective action frames". It was stressed that Islamism in Tripoli constitutes a religious field, a space of ideological struggle, because there is no sole overarching authority in Sunni Islam, to settle conflicts in interpretation. The religious leaders in Tripoli also share a certain common identity that makes them constitute a united social movement, in opposition to the country's Westernised secularists.

Aiming to shed light on the dialectics between unity (social movement) and fragmentation (field), one central question was posed: in which ways does the religious field in Tripoli constitute a microcosm, or a resonance chamber, reflecting the matters of dispute taking place in other centra in the Islamic nation (*Umma*)? Several sub-questions were raised: In order to analyse the dynamics within the religious field, the factors behind the high degree of fragmentation were explored. Secondly, the question of fragmentation provided an occasion to study the degree of the autonomisation of Islamist field in Tripoli. This led to an assessment of the various forms that the possible relationships between the religious leaders and the political decision makers in the city, can take. Thirdly, an analysis of the most salient debates within the Islamist field, given the different political opportunity structures, was provided.

It was argued that the field was closely related to transnational Islamist fields, such as the Islamist field in Saudi Arabia, on the one side, and to the national, political field, on the other. It was stressed that the key to understanding the Islamist field in Tripoli, and particularly its fragmentation, was to analyse how the field related simultaneously to the two other types of fields.

The dynamics within the Islamist field in Tripoli were explored through three separate parts. The study proposed an analysis of three distinct political temporalities in Lebanon: the period preceding September 1985 (civil war), the period between September 1985 and February/March 2005 (Syrian hegemony in Tripoli), and the period subsequent to February/March 2005 (the period following the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon the same spring).

The first period analysed the period from the Islamic awakening in Tripoli in the 1940s to the fall of the Tawhid *combating city-state* and the entry of Syrian troops to Tripoli. It was shown that the Islamist field was unified because of an effervescence of foreign aid, especially from Iran and the PLO. Religious leaders were able to ascend political power because of the lack of a strong central state in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion in Lebanon (July 1982). Yet, as Arafat and his followers were forced to leave Tripoli in December 1983 and the state returned as a legal entity in 1984 (with Rashid Karami as Prime Minister), discord re-emerged among the religious leaders. Regional intervention and the imposition of a "common agenda" were therefore variables favouring unity on the field. As soon as this variable was diminished, the Islamist field returned to fragmentation. Subsequent to the entry of Syrian troops into Tripoli and the fall of the *combating city-state*, dynamics on the Islamist field slowed down. Under the firm Syrian hand, the religious leaders lost most of their freedom of movement, and many decided to flee from the city.

The vitality in Islamist field in Tripoli did not return before the withdrawal of Syrian troops in Spring 2005. In the meantime, the religious leaders invested in "international capital" and knitted bonds to external, often transnational Islamic networks. They escaped from Lebanese political time by tying bonds with other Islamic centra in the Umma, with the help of the new means of communication. These "imaginary exits" or *plug-ins* facilitated the uniformisation of the agenda of the religious leaders in Tripoli, with that of Islamic movements elsewhere in the Umma. Hence, many collective action events would have origins in places far away. For instance, developments in Chechnya and in Denmark would find reverberations in mobilisations within the Islamist field in Tripoli.

In the period subsequent to February/March 2005, in the aftermath of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, the Islamic works experienced a new vigour. In light of the new power equilibrium within the political field in Lebanon, religious leaders were allowed significant new freedoms. Tripoli became a proxy arena for the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia on the regional level, and between Hezbollah and the Future Movement on the national level. An influx of foreign and domestic aid contributed to revitalizing the Islamist field. The religious leaders in Tripoli benefited from the effervescence of patronage networks because they were able to autonomise themselves from their principals. Multiplying their donors, they improved their negotiation position towards the principal. At the same time as they benefited financially from the client-patron relationships, they mobilised local crowds of followers by relying on their charismatic legitimacy and their symbolic capital, pertinent to the religious field.

The transpositions of transnational Islamist centra and the national political field on the Islamist field in Tripoli render the Islamist field in the city united in some respects, while engaged in internal battles between different Islamist agendas in others. At the same time as it is *over-taken* by dynamics on the political field, Tripoli's religious field maintains certain characteristics that justify analysing the field at a proper value. Even if some religious leaders chose to enter into "one of the sides" on the highly polarised national political field, they safeguard certain characteristics that make them properly connected to the religious field. There are certain

unwritten rules that all Sunni religious leaders must abide by, and which constitute sort of "entry requirements" to the Islamist field. The field has a properly genuine local *asabiyya* (espirit de corps or "group feeling", as analysed by Michel Seurat in 1985),[493] inherited from the civil war, later transnationalised with the new "imaginary exits" of the 1990s.

The dialectical process between "transnationalisation" ("plug-in" with the rest of the Umma) and "nationalisation" ("plug-in" with the national Lebanese political field) is still ongoing in the religious field in Tripoli. The field is dually influenced by the Islamic centres in the transnational Umma and from national political field. The dialectics between the national and the transnational levels explain the unity on the entire field around certain "transnational collecting statements" at times, while a parallel force, political in character, draws the field towards its fragmentation or even polarisation.

The recent exacerbation of violence in the city (notably the bombing of an army bus in August 2008) is a manifestation that the theatre of the confrontations between the Future Movement with their Saudi allies and the Hezbollah-led opposition has been moved from Beirut to Tripoli. The interconnection between the religious leaders in Tripoli and the Lebanese political field indicate that the Islamic field in Tripoli will remain a pertinent object of study also in the years to come.

An increased weakening of the Future Movement could imply that many of the religious leaders who today sympathise with it, with a change of the given political circumstances, could turn their back agaisnt the Sunni-led majority in the country. It could also mean that the religious leaders, who even today position themselves somewhat independently of the political polarisation in Lebanon, are those ideological actors who are to gain (or survive) in the long run. As we have seen, these hold different types of resources which enable to exploit different ideological registers at the same time, dependent on the channel through which they convey their message. These are first and foremost the rejectionist Populists, the politically unaligned religious leaders, who can exploit both official rhetoric and underground language, because they are situated on the margins of official Islam in Tripoli. Yet, it is also those religious leaders, who hold new resources collected through long sojourns abroad or through close networking with sympathising movements through the Internet. Depending on the paths chosen by the new Lebanese government, and on whether it succeeds in disarming the different political groups in Lebanon and gain legitimacy with different layers of the population, Salafi Jihadism could also get a stronger hold of the country. As shown by Seurat, the Popolino, described in Hobsbawm, can easily turn themselves against their protectors.[494]

An area for further study of the Islamist field in Tripoli could be to analyze how the dialectic process between fragmentation and return to a "shared *asabiyya*" is set in motion on the field in Tripoli, through different sets of "collective action events". One approach could be to assess to what extent and how each episode contributed to fragmenting or to uniting the religious field. More extensive data from the field could provide a more in-dept analysis of the set of different

[493] See Michel Seurat, "Le quartier de Bab Tebbané à Tripoli", *op.cit.*, pp. 110-11
[494] Michel Seurat, *op.cit.,* p. 135.

collective action frames and events, which have resulted from previous and on-going mobilization processes in Tripoli.

Beyond the case of Tripoli, a study of the unity and the fragmentation within the Islamist field has implications for the conceptualization of ideologies and ideological competition. On the theoretical level, it sheds light on the similarities and differences between Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a "field" and the social movement theoreticians' concept of "frame disputes". Further research could contribute to building theoretical bridges and improve our conceptualisation of the study of ideologies and, particularly, how ideological competition is driven within the ranks of one social movement. Further studies on "frame resonance" could also contribute to demonstrating how "collective action framing" occurs in light of a given political opportunity structure.

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