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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE IN NAHR EL BARED PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP

THE STATE'S TECHNOLOGIES OF CONTROL AND SHIFTS IN UNRWA PRACTICES

A Thesis submitted to

The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies

By Sheeraz Moujally

Under the supervision of Dr. Ann Lesch

May, 2012

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ACRONYMS

CEP	Committee for the Employment of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
ECT	Emergency Coordination Team
FAI	Fatah Al Islam
ICIP	Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program
ISF	Internal Security Forces
Khatib & Alami	K&A
LA	Lebanese Army
LRSC	League of Red Cross Societies
LPDC	Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBC	Nahr El Bared Camp
NBRC	Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PMU	Nahr El Bared Project Management Unit
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UNCCP	United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

ABSTRACT

On the fifth anniversary of the Nahr El Bared War, this thesis seeks to historicize the re-establishment mechanisms of the post-conflict governance of the Nahr El Bared Palestinian refugee camp, almost razed to the ground following a fierce battle between the Lebanese Army and the Salafi multinational militia Fatah Al Islam in May-September 2007. In Lebanon, Palestinian camps are deprived of classical state-like governance, as Palestinian refugees are excluded from legal protection and civil rights and their spaces have been de-domesticated since 1969. In this context, this thesis captures the interplay of the competing sovereignties, each trying to impose its own definition of “governance” in post-conflict Nahr Al Bared, as the future refugee regime is more likely to be a mosaic created by this interaction. As the Lebanese state struggled to establish itself as the only sovereign in the camp by militarizing the reconstruction process, Nahr El Bared refugees altered the state’s project by developing a grassroots planning initiative and lobbied for its implementation through UNRWA. Inspired by Foucault’s concept of power, Arendt’s and Agamben’s political theories on refugee identities and spaces and the logic of humanitarian aid in camps, and building on field research conducted in Nahr El Bared Camp in March-April 2012, this thesis analyzes the various technologies of control employed by the Lebanese state in the post-2007 camp and its refugees’ acts of resistance countering the state’s project. Also discussed is the role of UNRWA in the reconstruction of the camp and the genuineness of its support of refugees’ political activism, considered as an exception to its solely humanitarian mandate.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In May 2007, the Nahr El Bared Palestinian refugee camp (NBC) became the battlefield of a fierce war between the Lebanese Army and a Salafi militia Fatah Al Islam. The 105-day conflict ended with the heavy destruction of the camp's infrastructure and the forced displacement of 27,000 Palestinian refugees. With the fifth anniversary of the Nahr El Bared crisis approaching, this thesis is an attempt to draw a comprehensive picture of the founding elements shaping the post-conflict society of NBC.

Looking at the NBC 2007 crisis as another decisive moment of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, this case study explores the transformations affected and catalyzed by this event: Although the Lebanese authority seems determined to reinstate its sovereignty in Palestinian camps by re-adopting pre-1969 security arrangements in NBC, it looks as if UNRWA is re-thinking its apolitical mandate when handling the "NBC file". In the NBC community, refugees resist any imposition of a regime governing their space and lives and they have developed unique tools to challenge the securitization of NBC, of which the most distinctive is the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC).

The conflict has even influenced the research agenda on Palestinians in Lebanon. While available literature previously focused on the history of bloodshed and the protection gap of this refugee community, researchers have recently shifted focus to explore camps' governance and processes that produce refugee spaces and identities. The literature on the NBC conflict has obviously benefited from this new trend and inspired research on camp governance. This thesis examines both the causes and effects of these transformations resulting from the NBC crisis. Seeking to historicize and de-naturalize the new reality of NBC, this paper captures the interplay between the different actors and factors constructing the future refugee regime of Nahr El Bared.

Rationale:

Although one finds extensive literature examining the Palestinian factor in the Lebanese political scene in earlier volatile periods, little scholarly effort has been devoted to the study of the NBC War as another turning point for the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. While available research focuses on investigating the conditions that turned NBC into a "space of exception" in 2007, this paper is interested in the post-conflict society of the camp. The period falling between the destruction of the camp and its recovery is a rich research area that can be best explored now and that can be of great significance for understanding prospective scenarios of governance and power structures in NBC. Before the future refugee regime of NBC takes shape, it is important to record its re-establishment processes, in order to resist the tendency to perceive the outcome as a normal reaction to the conflict.

Though this research project is not a policy paper, it can contribute to the larger debate on the “Palestinian refugee file” by assisting policy makers and the civil society address the root causes of a possible Lebanese-Palestinian social rift following the NBC crisis, and thus serves as a catalyst for refugee-friendly legislations and initiatives aiming to achieve higher social coherence between the two groups. In this context, the evaluation of the role of UNRWA and the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) in responding to the NBC crisis is significant, as the conflict presents a fundamental test of the Palestinian agency’s intention to do more than works and relief and for LPDC’s commitment to affect legal and social reforms in Palestinian camps.

Avoiding the research tendency to portray Palestinians as passive victims, this paper seeks to investigate the potential forms of empowerment observed in the NBC community in reaction to the crisis. Instead of focusing on what they lost during the conflict, this research outlines the maturity of the NBC community’s acts of resistance exemplified by NBRC.

Research Question and Hypotheses

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, this research is interested in both the causes and the effects of changes resulting from the NBC conflict and their impact on the Palestinian presence in Lebanon in general and the NBC community specifically. By highlighting the shifting approaches of the Lebanese government and UNRWA as well as Palestinian and Lebanese popular attitudes resulting from the conflict, this study traces the development of observed transformations and looks at the outcome of their interplay, which is expected to

give form to post-conflict NBC. The purpose of this study is best articulated in the following research question:

How does the NBC crisis constitute a transformative moment for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and what are the factors shaping the new refugee regime in NBC?

Within this broad question, different variables come into play and several hypotheses are put to test. The first section of this paper visits the Lebanese authority's handling of the "NBC crisis file": Which technologies of power/control did the Lebanese government employ in designing the new refugee regime of NBC and what meanings do they carry? Do the physical re-arrangement of the camp and the introduction of proximity policing constitute a new securitization approach or do they simply revive old techniques adopted by the Lebanese state prior to the signing of the Cairo Agreement 1969? Did the Lebanese state succeed to establish itself as the only sovereign in NBC or is it more likely that the future mode of governance will comprise a complex nexus of competing sovereignties? Does the 2007 government's vision of the NBC future differs from how it looks today and why couldn't this initial plan (if it exists) materialize? Does the Lebanese state intend to copy the NBC model in the other eleven Palestinian camps or does it treat NBC as an exceptional case? How did the 2007 Lebanese government utilize the NBC War to meet its political interests and how did the conflict affect the structure of the Lebanese Army and other pending issues in the Palestinian refugee file in Lebanon, namely the right to employment? Is the hostility against Palestinians expressed by the Sunni community in North Lebanon the indicator of a social rift resulting from the conflict's bloodshed or is it

simply a reflection of the development of the Sunni political stance in Lebanon and the region?

In its second part, this study evaluates the role UNRWA is playing in the recovery and reconstruction of NBC. Some have observed major shifts to participatory practices within the Palestinian agency: Was the NBC War an occasion for UNRWA to re-think its apolitical mandate and fulfill its commitment to go beyond works and relief? Is UNRWA's support of NBRC an embracing of refugees' political activism, does it fall under soft disciplining, or is it more of a middle ground between the two? Does NBRC present a unique act of resistance that succeeded to remodel UNRWA's approach to NBC or did it become the new executive arm of the UN Palestinian agency? In relation to this, do the NBC refugees feel weaker after the 2007 conflict or are they experiencing higher levels of solidarity after the crisis?

Methodology

This thesis solely employs qualitative research methods. Starting from secondary literature available on this topic, I then conducted field research in March and April 2012 to resolve any contradictions found in existing research and collect more recent findings on the reconstruction progress. Passing through the Lebanese Army checkpoint, walking by the streets of the New Camp, and visiting the temporary shelters and Package 1 of the rebuilt Old Camp helped me understand the new refugee experience in NBC and develop a sense of their space through live observation and interaction with the camp's community.

After consulting with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the Office of the Associate Provost for Research Administration at the American University in Cairo and following the requirements of IRB's approval letter, I interviewed two Lebanese families living in NBC in their houses in the New Camp. I also interviewed two Palestinian families who have returned in October 2011 to their houses in Package one of the Old Camp. Moreover, I interviewed six displaced refugees in a Palestinian community-based organization located in the New Camp. Before visiting the camp, I interviewed two former members of the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC) who provided me with an overview about the organization's history and the reconstruction progress. After completing my field research, I re-interviewed one of those two members, as it was necessary to clarify the criticisms of NBRC raised by the NBC community during the interviews. Interviews with NBRC members took place in Tripoli. As advised by IRB members and as mentioned in the written consent form signed by participants, all persons participating in the interviews are guaranteed biographical anonymity.

By conducting in-depth interviews with the camp's Lebanese residents, displaced refugees, and returnees to the Old Camp, I tried to get a representative overview of various popular perceptions of recovery mechanisms. Although this research does not draw its conclusions from the conducted interviews; it utilizes participants' statements to exemplify common attitudes towards the conflict and the future of NBC. On a different level, assessing the unique role of NBRC and addressing the different popular perceptions of this role required interviewing some of its founding and active members. At the end of the field research, Communicating with the team of the NBC reconstruction project at UNRWA was

also essential to detect any shifts in practices within the agency that is directly responsible for managing the reconstruction and recovery works. It is worth noting that most of the statements of the interviewed UNRWA staff are kept off-the-record.

Finally, analyzing the content of Lebanese official speeches, documents and plans on the NBC recovery and reconstruction helped expose the logic of securitization in the Lebanese plans and thus de-naturalize the military siege of the camp as well as its physical re-arrangement and community policing. Referring to content analyses conducted by other researchers also served to draw a comprehensive picture of the different political positions of major Palestinian and Lebanese parties.

Challenges and Limitations

A first challenge encountered by researchers studying the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon lies in the contradictions and gaps in relevant figures and statistics. Depending on the different political and aid agendas, varying numbers for the same category (e.g., NBC returnees, registered, resident, and displaced refugees) appear in the available literature, even within UNRWA data.

Aware of the sensitivities around the conflict of NBC, statements of participants might put the researcher and respective persons under authorities' scrutiny, especially if criticisms of the military siege on NBC are interpreted as defaming the Lebanese army or inciting violence between Lebanese and Palestinian communities. These conditions complicated the recruitment process for interviews and led to the elimination of focus

groups as a potential research method. That was because it was difficult to ensure the privacy of the meetings and the confidentiality of participants' statements, knowing that Palestinian informers are recruited by the Lebanese Intelligence and the Internal Security Forces ISF inside the camp.

Moreover, even though participants were assured about the confidentiality of their statements and were guaranteed biographical anonymity, some Palestinian refugees seemed hesitant to express their frustration towards the Lebanese Army in front of a Lebanese researcher, while other Lebanese respondents were not comfortable to speak out their real perceptions of the Palestinian NBC community in the presence of a Palestinian facilitator. To the contrary, some participants have made valuable statements that I choose to keep off-the-record, as disclosing such information makes it possible to learn their identities and thus jeopardize both their safety and that of the researcher. The difficulty to arrange a meeting with UNRWA is another limitation in this study.

Theoretical Framework

The Foucauldian Legacy

Political theories on refugees and camps are indebted to the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault's unique conceptualization of power, the theoretical terms he developed to represent the dynamic relationship between the state and the individual, and the spectrum of control technologies and resistance acts involved in this

relationship, have constituted a point of departure for many philosophers and social scientists theorizing about the refugee figure and refugee regime.

Introducing Foucault's concept of technologies of control is beneficial for the study of the re-establishment mechanisms of post-conflict NBC and the understanding of any academic work that might serve as a theoretical framework for this study. In his work, Foucault talks about the multitude of disciplinary technologies and discursive norms developed by institutions of power to regulate the body and control the behavior of human subjects.¹ This very subjectivity is the nucleus of the state's power that preserves its domination over the self by employing all kinds of practices and knowledge systems to define the bodies and minds of individuals. In Foucault's reflections, power appears as a relation rather a substance, implying that, with every act of domination, an act of resistance arises²: "There is no power without potential refusal or revolt,"³ he writes. Foucault's "subjects" are often mistakenly perceived as passive bodies surrendering to the will of the state⁴, although he stresses their active participation in the crafting and negotiation of their identities and spaces.⁵ Foucault's conceptualization of power and its technologies will serve as the main theoretical framework of this thesis looking at the Lebanese state's securitization approach in NBC and the acts developed by the camp's community to defy the securitization of their space.

¹ Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato, and Jen Webb, *Understanding Foucault* (Great Britain: SAGE Publication Ltd, 2002), 124.

² Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: an Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 37.

³ Danaher et al, 84.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁵ Ibid, 117.

The Refugee as the 'Rightless'

Another leading name in the refugee literature, preceding Foucault, is the German-American political theorist Hannah Arendt. In the famous chapter “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man” of her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt establishes a tight relationship between the fate of the nation-state and that of human rights. With its emergence in post-World War I Europe, the nation-state granted the “right to have rights”⁶ to its citizens/nationals only. This excluded from its normal legal protection any minorities whose presence threatened the homogeneity of the population and its rootedness in the soil⁷, and thus couldn't fulfill the conditions of nationhood. Arendt exposes the reality of the Minority Treaties that served as a law of exception for those who were placed outside the state's jurisdiction. This solution failed with the waves of mass denationalization of undesirable groups and the rise of stateless and refugee people. Arendt concludes:

They thereby admitted – and were quickly given the opportunity to prove it practically with the rise of stateless people – that the transformation of the state from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation had been completed; the nation had conquered the state, national interest had priority over law long before Hitler could pronounce “right is what is good for the German people.”⁸

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 294.

⁷ *Ibid*, 269.

⁸ *Ibid*, 274.

As the nation-state oversteps law, the stateless becomes an “outlaw by definition”⁹ and the refugee figure marks the “radical crisis”¹⁰ of the concepts of human rights, the nation-state, and sovereignty. By exposing the dissociation of the human from the citizen, the refugee figure de-naturalizes this separation and upsets the order of the nation state. Once they find out that they lost their homes and their governments’ protection, the plight of the rightless lies in the impossibility of finding a new home or a surrogate legal protection.¹¹ It becomes absolutely understandable why refugees “cling to their nationality more desperately” once they confront their losses, because their past is the only proof that they “belong to the civilized world”.¹²

The Camp as the ‘Space of Exception’

Building on the reflections of Foucault and Arendt, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben studies the camp as another “biopolitical space”¹³ in which refugees are reduced to “bare lives” and the “state of exception” is the only juridical norm.

The concept of the “state of exception”, meaning the permanent suspension of law, is a development of “the state of emergency” (état d’urgence) first appearing during the

⁹ Ibid, 281.

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 18.

¹¹ Arendt, 291.

¹² Ibid, 293.

¹³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 123.

French Revolution.¹⁴ A “state of exception” resembles a lasting state of emergency, as is the case when states struggle to preserve and normalize an emergency at any price, because it is the only means to legitimize all forms of power.¹⁵ This term has become popular in the literature investigating the inhuman events in camps and other spaces excluded from states’ domestic realms, as is the case in the NBC conflict. What is the political-juridical structure that allows the absolute inhuman condition to prevail and remain uninvestigated? The camp, as defined by Agamben, is “the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule,” and thus any act becomes possible without recourse to legal redress, as the act occurs in a space that is excluded from the normal legal order and whose inhabitants are already de-humanized.

Inside a space of exception, the supremacy of power is impassable as “power confronts nothing other than pure biological life without any mediation”¹⁶. Once stripped of his political character, man becomes a “naked life” surrendering its subjectivity to the sovereign power. He finds itself in an absurd position situated at once inside and outside the political-juridical structure. The paradoxical rapport between Agamben’s “bare life” and the sovereign is best articulated as follows: What has been banned is delivered over to its own separateness, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it – at once included and excluded, removed and at the same time captured.¹⁷

¹⁴ Giorgio Agamben, “The State of Emergency – Lecture at the Center Roland - Barthes.” Generationonline.org. <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpagambenschmitt.htm> (accessed April 21, 2012)

¹⁵ Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*, 6.

¹⁶ Ibid, 41.

¹⁷ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 110.

Robert Davidson exposes this paradox when he defines the “non-place” as a space off the map but of the map.¹⁸ According to Davidson, states constantly remodel their national frontiers to produce and preserve the homogeneity of their peoples, by employing various techniques of expansion or contraction of state territory/authority.¹⁹ De-domestication of territory, according to Davidson, is a state practice that prevents extending national privileges and rights for those who do not fit national boundaries.²⁰ In the context of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, some may argue that the Lebanese state de-domesticates the territory of Palestinian camps to dilute its commitment towards the refugee communities, a practice that continued even after revoking the Cairo Agreement in 1987. While the extra-territoriality of Palestinian camps appears as a Palestinian choice in the late 1960s – materialized by the 1969 Cairo agreement and the self-autonomy it grants for the PLO, the Lebanese state seemed reluctant to re-establish its sovereignty in Palestinian spaces with the departure of the PLO in 1982.

Davidson goes further to notice that the calculated state intervention in the movement of individuals is highly visible in the architecture and spatialization of their spaces. Enforcing a certain architectural design on the “non-place” serves the social order to which a state aspires. Imposing a certain living experience on its inhabitants makes them more manageable subjects and thus renders the exercise of state sovereignty easier. Davidson’s observation is applicable to the re-establishment processes of NBC.

¹⁸ Roberts Davidson, “Spaces of Immigration: ‘Prevention’, Interdiction, and the non-Place,” *Diacritics* 33 (2003): 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

Theorizing about the camp, many scholars criticize Agamben for his simplistic portrayal of power relations prevailing in camps. For Nadia Latif, the “making of refugees” involves “a nexus of different intersecting power-laden social relationships” and cannot be oversimplified to an “encounter between an inhuman sovereign power and dehumanized bare life”²¹. Furthermore, Latif accuses Agamben of exaggerating the sovereign power and overlooking the de-centralized character of Foucault’s power. For her, refugees are not only defined by the sovereign, but rather by the interplay of social relations. This is evident in the case of the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon where nationality was not the only criterion for exclusion from the domestic realm but other factors such as social class, profession and religion played a key role in dividing those who fit national boundaries from those who could only be accommodated in camps. Out of those Palestinians fleeing their occupied lands in 1948 to Lebanon, only the poor, the uneducated, and Muslims remained refugees.

Humanitarianism vs. Politics

In post-conflict NBC, some have spoken of UNRWA as embracing the political activism of NBC refugees. This step - if truly taken by the agency - would be the first of its kind, considering UNRWA’s apolitical character dictated by its humanitarian mission. When attempting to detect similar shifts within UNRWA, it is essential to expose the separation between humanitarianism and politics. This forced divorce between the humanitarian and the political is unquestionably correlated to the classification of the human and the citizen as two separate identities. Consequently, the humanitarian becomes necessarily apolitical.

²¹Nadia Latif, “Making Refugees,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8 (2008): 270.

This separation has been normalized: Organizations working with refugee communities are expected to remain within the humanitarian and the social and never touch the political. This logic, according to Agamben, is directly responsible for the failure of relief organizations in “resolving the problem or even confronting it adequately”²². Agamben’s observation is valid: How can a solely humanitarian and apolitical intervention address problems that were politically-constructed, as is the case in camps and spaces of exception?

Agamben goes further to suggest the existence of a tacit collusion between humanitarian organizations and power institutions. Because they cannot or are not willing to operate beyond the level of the bare life, humanitarian organizations “maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight”²³. In a similar context, Latif points out the parallels between the techniques employed by humanitarian organizations and those used by the police to manage camps. Malkki’s definition of the camp as a “technology of care and control”²⁴ openly articulates the resemblance between the logic of the police and that of humanitarian organizations, facilitating the surveillance and control of refugees.²⁵ The convergence of policing and humanitarian efforts is a recurrent theme in the academic literature that seeks to prove that humanitarian agencies preserve and even reproduce states’ dominance over human subjects.

²²Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 133.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴Liisa Malkki, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,” in *Becoming Nationals*, ed. Geof Eley and Ronald Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 444.

²⁵Latif.

Refugees' 'Acts of Resistance'

As mentioned earlier, Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics and subjectivity never ignored subjects' acts of resistance that continuously challenged the biopower seeking to dominate their natural lives. Power, according to Foucault, is never able to completely rule as it constantly "creates its own 'other', its own opposition"²⁶, a dynamic misunderstood by some scholars inspired by Foucauldian notions.

Agamben is often criticized for making this mistake when referring to Foucault's biopolitics. Engin Isin and Kim Rygiel criticize Agamben's portrayal of the camp as an apolitical space in which subjects are stripped of their political character; instead they define the camp not as "spaces of abjection" but as "spaces of politics"²⁷. Similarly, they strongly disagree with Arendt's representation of stateless persons as those who are deprived of their right to exist as political subjects. According to Isin and Rygiel, refugees and stateless people can never be rendered unpoliticized, because they constantly engage in various acts of resistance in order to reclaim their political subjectivity.²⁸ Isin and Rygiel borrow Jacques Ranciere's argument against Agamben and Arendt, noting that if abjects²⁹ are rendered rightless, this does not necessarily imply their inability to act as political

²⁶ Danaher et al, 95.

²⁷ Engin Isin and Kim Rygiel, "Abject Spaces: Frontiers, Zones, Camps," in *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, ed. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 184.

²⁸ Ibid, 189.

²⁹ Isin and Rygiel use the term "abject" to refer to Foucault's "subject", in order not to present the latter as a passive and unpoliticized person.

subjects.³⁰ Yet Isin and Rygiel and Ranciere's observation does not contradict Arendt's and Agamben's reflections. The latter's description of the practices and logic of the sovereign power is not to be conflated with the effects this power has on refugees. When they expose the state's perception of refugees as biological lives, Arendt and Agamben do not necessarily believe in the transformation of the rightless into a bare life. Even a very fine reading of Agamben's work does not provide evidence of the Italian philosopher perception of the refugee figure as a political or an apolitical figure, Agamben's disinterest in addressing this question remains an essential flaw in his theory and renders his "space of exception" a simplistic concept.

On a different level, Isin and Rygiel refute what they call Agamben's "ahistorical" understanding of the camp. For them, the camp is not a permanent space of exception, but is rather a "transitional space" in which refugees, through acts of resistance, revoke the "strategies and technologies of otherness" invented by the state and remodel the initial nature of their space.³¹ The many acts of defiance developed by the NBC community to counter the state's securitization project, ranging from the utilization of their bodies to the founding of NBRC, exemplify the acts of resistance employed by refugees to resist turning their camps into spaces of exception, as highlighted by Isin and Rygiel. This dialectical argumentation, debating the nature of the camp and refugees' acts of resistance, is valuable for the discussion of the role of NBRC in shaping post-conflict NBC, which will be covered in later chapters.

³⁰Ibid, 186.

³¹Ibid, 189.

CHAPTER 2

PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON

Lebanon: A House of Many Mansions³²

Lebanon, a small country of 10,452 square kilometers, has wielded influence far greater than its size. The geo-political positioning of Lebanon - with Syria and Israel its territorial neighbors - has constantly influenced its history. After the French expanded the borders of Mount Lebanon in 1920, the “State of Greater Lebanon” comprised new sects and ethnicities that had to coexist with the Druze and Maronite Christians of the old Governorate. The 1932 census, the only one in Lebanese history, indicated that Maronite Christians formed then the majority of Lebanon’s population. The politicized findings of the 1932 census have shaped the state-building mechanisms of the newly-independent Lebanon of 1943 and constituted a political tool for the Maronite political elite to preserve its dominance. This was evident in the 1943 National Pact that legitimized Christian

³² Title of kamal Salibi’s book, 1988.

dominance by imposing a ratio of six Christians to five Muslims in the Lebanese government and parliament as well as civil service jobs.³³

Lebanon is a land of paradoxes: the so-called “Switzerland of the East” was also the theater of some of the most violent conflicts in the region, namely the civil war from 1975 to 1990, the successive Israeli aggressions since 1967 and through the July 2006 War. Contradictions also shape the identities of Lebanese groups, who perceive themselves as, e.g., Christian “Lebanists”³⁴, Phoenicians, Arab nationalists, Syrian nationalists, secular leftists, and Islamists. Fearing political and cultural subordination, each group turned to regional and international powers to secure its political and sectarian hegemony. This political logic prevented the Lebanese state from developing on its own, having its political authority compromised by Syrian and western regional interests and its infrastructure repeatedly destroyed by heavy Israeli strikes.

Today, Lebanon is home to eighteen recognized sects³⁵ and over a hundred political parties of uneven political weight and with different religious and political agendas. Although Muslims, who show higher birth rates than other sects, have significantly shifted Lebanon’s demography in favor of Shiite Muslims, the figures of the 1932 census still strongly influence the confessional distribution of political power in Lebanon. The 1932 census, seemed to serve as a “power knowledge” as it was promoted by the Lebanese

³³Rania Maktabi, “The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who are the Lebanese?” *British Journal Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no.2 (1999): 220.

³⁴Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (France: Presses of Universities de France, 2004), 6.

³⁵Four Muslim sects, twelve Christian sects, one Druze and one Jew.

Christian elite as a sacred truth, just like many narratives that are produced and valorized by laws and institutions to reassert the power of the sovereign over its subjects.³⁶ Although the Taef Accords of 1989 –marking the end of the Lebanese civil war -- introduced constitutional amendments that re-divided political representation equally between Muslims and Christians and transferred some of the Maronite Christian privileges to the Sunni Prime Minister,³⁷ the political balance of Lebanon still rested heavily on sectarian considerations and fostered the authority of a Maronite-Sunni-Shiite ruling “troika.”

However, changing and complex political alliances are the norm in Lebanon. Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in February 2005, the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April of the same year, the July 2006 war, the mini-civil war of 2008, and recently the popular uprising in Syria, political alignments have been rapidly shifting and have become even more complex than before. Since then, the Lebanese political scene has been mainly divided into two coalitions, known as the “pro-western” March 14 group led by the Sunni Future movement and the traditional Christian right wing, on the one hand, and the “pro-Syrian” March 8 group led by the Shiite Hezbollah and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, on the other hand. It is important to note that dividing the political spectrum in Lebanon into right-wing and left-wing is difficult, as many leftist

³⁶ Danaher et al, xiii-xiv.

³⁷ Maktabi, 220.

parties seem to carry a right-wing agenda.³⁸ Even within these two camps, cards have been re-shuffled several times and some leaders shift from one to another coalition.

Palestinian refugees, another mansion in the Lebanese home, found themselves at the heart of those contradictions shaping their journey in Lebanon, since their arrival in 1948.

The Palestinian Refugee Problem

Following the communal conflict between the Arab majority and the Jewish minority of historic Palestine, Zionist aspirations materialized in the November 29, 1947, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 181. This “Partition Plan” legitimized the creation of the State of Israel as the national home of Jews in May 1948. From April to December 1948, some 726,000 Arab Palestinians left or were driven from their homes and found themselves internally displaced in West Bank and Gaza or refugees in neighboring Arab countries, mainly Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan.³⁹ In the Six-Day War of June 1967, Israel occupied more territories causing additional flight of refugees.

After further consideration of the situation in Palestine, UNGA Resolution 194 (III), issued in December 1948, acknowledged the right of refugees to return to their homes –as long as they would live in peace with Israelis- or to compensation for their lost or damaged

³⁸ While the Christian Free Patriotic Movement -led by Michel Aoun- labels itself as a secular leftist party, some of the party’s political stances seem motivated by sectarian concerns. The party’s rejection to grant Palestinian civil rights is an evident example.

³⁹ Jaber Suleiman, “Marginalized Community: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” United Kingdom: Development Research Center on Migration, Globalization, and Poverty, 2006.

properties and referred to Israel as the party responsible for making this right possible.⁴⁰ However, the right to return is perceived by Israel as a threat to its Jewish identity.⁴¹ One year later, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was created to carry out “direct relief and works programs”⁴² in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and Gaza for Palestinian refugees defined as those “whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who both lost home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”⁴³. This restricted definition has excluded a lot of groups from registering with UNRWA, including the 1967 refugees.

Responding to the European refugee experience during and after World War II, UNGA adopted the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, thus introducing the first international tool for refugee protection and the foundation of international refugee law. However, Palestinian refugees were excluded from its legal protection, as stated in Article 1D: “This convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] protection or assistance”. While expanding the Convention’s definition of refugees, the 1967 Protocol still does not come across Palestinian refugees. The underprivileged position of Palestinians in refugee law, known as

⁴⁰ UNGA Res 194 (III), December 11, 1948, 11.

⁴¹ UNRWA, “UNRWA Past, Present and Future: A Briefing Document,” (Vienna: UNRWA Headquarters, 1986).

⁴² UNGA Res 302 (IV), December 1949, 7.

⁴³ UNHCR note on applicability of Article 1 D on Palestinian refugees: the UN General Assembly has never explicitly defined the term "Palestine refugees"

the “protection gap”, is often interpreted as the product of the “ideology-charged atmosphere” dominating the thinking of Western drafters,⁴⁴ while others attribute it to the perception of the Palestinian refugee problem as a temporary situation. Are Knudsen believes that the exclusion clause is the direct result of an amendment proposed, in the 1951 Geneva preparation meeting, by some Arab states that host Palestinian refugees in an effort to dilute their long-term commitment to Palestinian refugees⁴⁵. However, others may read this amendment as evidence of Arabs’ concern to treat Palestinian refugees as a special case in need of a unique political intervention, as their inclusion in the 1951 Convention as individual refugees risked excluding their collective plight from the international political agenda.

It can be argued that UNRWA was not given protection and political prerogatives as it was born while the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) was still in operation: while UNCCP was assigned the task of developing a political way out to the refugee problem and solve legal disputes, UNRWA acted merely as a service provider for the Palestinian community in need for relief and assistance. However, some see the creation of UNRWA as a direct result of UNCCP failure, paving the way to the cessation of UNCCP three years later and redefining the Palestinian refugee problem as a problem of poverty rather a political question. ⁴⁶ An interesting parallel can be drawn here between

⁴⁴ James C. Hathaway, *The Law of Refugee Status*, (Toronto: Buttersworth, 1991).

⁴⁵ Are Knudsen, “Widening the Protection Gap: The ‘Politics of Citizenship’ for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948 -2008,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 1 (2009): 3.

⁴⁶ Terry Rempel, “UNRWA and the Palestine Refugees: A Genealogy of ‘Participatory’ Development,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2009): 4.

the function of UNCCP and UNRWA and that of the Minority Treaties, which according to Arendt served as a “law of exception” for those “millions of people (who) lived outside normal legal protection and needed an additional guarantee of their elementary rights from an outside body”.⁴⁷ Like the Minority Treaties, UNCCP and UNRWA were presented as a temporary solution for Palestinian refugees “until or unless they are completely assimilated and divorced from their origin”.⁴⁸

Yet, with the outbreak of the *Intifada* in late 1987, some have spoken of UNRWA becoming what many had long urged. Schiff considers the year 1988 as a turning point for UNRWA, as the agency became “involved in the protection as well as relief of refugees” in Palestine, a step that is according to Schiff “an expanded interpretation” of the agency’s mandate.⁴⁹ However, UNRWA’s “protection” here is very different of the protection provided by UNHCR and remains part of a humanitarian social mission, as long as it does not provide legal safeguards.

By 1959, Palestinian refugees, who fled their homes in 1948 as temporary absentees, were no longer perceived as such, at least by the international community. International refugee law seemed irrelevant in the Palestinian case: repatriation, the only desirable solution for refugees, was not possible, whereas local integration and third-country resettlement contradicted the right to return. The Palestinian refugee problem had become a protracted problem. In 1959, UN Secretary General stated that “de-facto

⁴⁷ Arendt, 274.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Benjamin N. Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN Aid to Palestinians* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 10.

economic integration” was the only route left for Palestinian refugees who “would not voluntarily accept integration into the production life of the host countries unless they had been given freedom of choice between repatriation and compensation”⁵⁰. It is within this context that the UN SG proposed the continuation of UN assistance to Palestinian refugees.⁵¹

The year 1964 marked a transformative moment in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the birth of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (*Muanazamat Al Tahrir Al Falastiniya*). The PLO regarded “Palestine, with the boundaries it had during the British Mandate, (as) an indivisible territorial unit” and assumed responsibility for its liberation through armed struggle. ⁵²At its outset, the PLO – an exceptional ‘act of resistance’ against the denationalization of Palestinians - flourished as an armed guerilla organization. Later on, it grew to gain diplomatic representation as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, recognized by UNGA in November 1974.

After losing faith in the international refugee legal system, Palestinian refugees put their hope in their leadership, represented by the PLO. Yet, the Peace Process failed to fill this lacuna, by focusing efforts on negotiating the establishment of a Palestinian state and overlooking the plight of Palestinian refugees. By signing the Oslo Accords in September

⁵⁰ UNRWA, *UNRWA Past, Present and Future*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, v.

⁵² Lillian Goldman Law Library, “The Palestinian National Charter: Resolutions of the Palestine National Council July 1-17, 1968,” Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/plocov.asp (accessed May 5, 2012).

1993, PLO seemed to neglect the right to return or compensation guaranteed by Resolution 194 (III), by not prioritizing the refugee problem in its negotiation agenda.⁵³

With their fifth generation in refuge, over seven million Palestinian refugees are today scattered worldwide, among them 4,966,664 are registered with UNRWA's five fields of operation as of January 2011, of whom 30 percent live in camps.⁵⁴

Defining Palestine: Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian?

In order to understand Palestinian camps, their history, and power structures, one should look at the many definitions Palestinian refugees have of their socio-political universe. As Bernard Rougier describes it, the camp is "less a marginal area than a site of significant expression, at the intersection of local, regional, and transnational space"⁵⁵. Unlike citizens who generally inherit a conventional territorial sense of identity to their nation-states, Palestinian refugees have developed different mechanisms to cope with the loss of their homeland and restore their sense of collectivity. Below, I highlight three major political lenses through which Palestinian refugees and their leaderships see Palestine. This presentation is essential in this case-study, as it exposes the political logics shaping refugee spaces and the shifting alliances governing camps as well as the political discourses revolving around them.

⁵³ Rebecca Roberts, *Palestinians in Lebanon: Refugees Living with Long-Term Displacement* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 26.

⁵⁴ UNRWA, "Statistics," <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253> (accessed April 21, 2012).

⁵⁵ Rougier, 3.

The first political framework of the Palestinian question is that of Palestinian nationalism which perceives Palestine as a country whose political decision is in the hands of Palestinian leaders only. At first this meant that Palestinians should restore their control over all of historic Palestine. However, in the mid-1970s, the PLO became less ambitious and limited its state project to the territories seized by Israel in 1967, comprised of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. This political logic, adopted by the Fatah-led PLO, gave the latter a free hand in decision-making and peace talks with Israel. Criticized for their Machiavellianism, the PLO's and later the Palestinian Authority's leaders are known for being very practical and pragmatic when forming alliances and making choices, such as giving up armed resistance.

Another perception would be that of Pan-Arabism, which views the Palestinian question as an Arab cause and places it under the larger umbrella of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Sponsored by Nasserist Egypt and then represented by Syria, Arab nationalism treats Palestine as a concern to all Arabs and an influential factor in their political reality, a view that imposes a one-basket diplomacy. This is evident in Syria's efforts to fashion itself as the protector of Arab rights and to reject any negotiations with Israel that are not channeled through the Syrian regime. This is also reflected by Syria's solid stand against the naturalization of refugees in Lebanon, although Palestinian refugees in Syria enjoy many of the rights accorded to Syrian citizens. Accused of using Palestinian refugees as a political card and monopolizing peace talks, Syria is perceived by many key players as playing with Arab sentiments to preserve its hegemony in the region. The ensuing divergence between Syria and the PLO explains the clash over political tutelage between them, starting with the first military Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1975 aiming to

“protect Lebanon’s Christians” from the expansionism of the PLO and its Lebanese left ally, and clear in the bloody battles among their supporters in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon, namely during the 1983 Tripoli clashes and the War of the Camps (1985-1987).

A third approach is to place the Palestinian cause at the heart of global Islamism. For Islamists, Palestinians are part of the Muslim *Umma* and Palestine carries powerful Islamic symbolic values. Thus, defending Palestine becomes a religious duty. In this context, religious identity forces out national identity.⁵⁶

On the one hand, this religious logic explains the past Iranian Islamic leaders’ sympathy with the PLO. For example, in the early days of the Islamic revolution, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini called Shiite Muslims to devote part of their alms to Fatah’s men to help them in their war against Zionism.⁵⁷ On the other hand, this logic explains the later divorce between the PLO and the Iranian Islamic Republic, as the PLO’s support for Saddam and the confessional gap grew the dispute between the two sides. It is the same religious logic that paved the way for a rapprochement between Islamic resistance movements and other factions loyal to Syria, based on the rejection of PLO’s negotiations with Israel.

As part of their mobilization techniques, Palestinian leaders, be they political or religious, made sure to apply a nationalistic/Islamic label to the forms of resistance they promoted, either out of sincere belief, as a political tactic, or out of financial pragmatism. In their battle for identity, Palestinian refugees have adopted one of the three political logics raised above and found themselves remodeling their socio-political presentations of

⁵⁶Ibid, 43.

⁵⁷Ibid, 28.

Palestine with the rapidly shifting alliances. It is worth noting that Islamism is on the rise in Palestinian camps, in light of the failure of all political efforts to meet refugees' needs and aspirations. In addition, Islamism appears as a powerful tool of self-governance and serves as a coping mechanism in light of the absence of state-like governance in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon. It is within this context that the many moments of vulnerability experienced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon can be better understood.

The Palestinian Journey in Lebanon

Deprived from international refugee protection and oscillating between the many definitions of their Palestine, the Palestinian presence could not but simultaneously influence and be affected by the fragile demographic and political equilibrium of Lebanon. Throughout the 64 years of their presence in the country, the problematization of Palestinians served as a political technology at the disposal of Lebanese politicians who constructed the Palestinian refugee in one of two images: victim or aggressor. These images were revived and remodeled in each and every constitutive moment of the Palestinian journey in Lebanon, depending on the need to justify the securitization of refugee spaces or to promote a laissez-faire policy in the camps.

Resettlement (*tawteen*) is another recurrent theme in the political discourse on Palestinians, projecting the image of Palestinian refugees as a destabilizing threat to the Lebanese economy and sectarian structure. The naturalization of Palestinians will shift the demographic balance of Lebanon in favor of Sunni Muslims, which will upset the size of the vote and force a reconsideration of the power-sharing system in the country. This scenario

is feared by different groups in Lebanon, but mostly by right-wing Christians and, to a lesser extent, by the Shiite community. Publicly articulating sectarian concerns or hiding behind the right to return, the popular fear of resettlement is often conflated with granting civil rights to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, still regarded in Lebanese law as foreigners and known for being the most disadvantaged among all Palestinian refugee communities in Arab host states.

Arrival and Early Years (1948-1958)

Between April and December 1948, and as a direct result of the creation of the state of Israel, 100,000 Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon, arriving mostly on foot from North Galilee.⁵⁸ It is generally considered that upon their arrival and for the first few years of their stay in the country, Palestinian refugees were relatively welcomed and enjoyed freedom of movement across Lebanon. Some accounts, however, tell another story. For instance, Fawaz Turki – a Palestinian writer who fled Palestine to Lebanon in 1948 – outlines the blatant “discrimination against Palestinians on every level in society” since their early days in Lebanon. He particularly recalls the brutality of the Lebanese police in camps when he tells about a group of drunken policemen who had beaten up his mother and sisters because they did not “produce an identity card or UNRWA card or some other wretched document”.⁵⁹ Believing their presence would be temporary, the Lebanese authority perceived poor Palestinian refugees as a cheap labor force boosting low-skilled

⁵⁸ Jaber.

⁵⁹ Michael C. Hudson, “The Palestinian Factor in the Civil War,” *Middle East Journal* 32, no. 3 (1978): 7.

sectors. After calculating its sectarian and economic interests, the Maronite political elite chose to keep their fears of the Muslim Palestinian refugee community dormant and instead saw in the situation a golden opportunity to foster its hegemony by granting Lebanese citizenship for over 50,000 Palestinian Christians and businessmen,⁶⁰ who later played an influential role in building the banking and commerce sector of newly-independent Lebanon. Aware of the sectarian dimension of the situation, Lebanese President Beshara El Khouri (1943-1952), aspiring to better relations with the Lebanese Muslim community, ensured the relatively lenient treatment of Palestinian refugees to realize this rapprochement.⁶¹

Yet, the majority of the Muslim refugees, amounting to 77 percent of arrivals,⁶² became camp dwellers. By 1955, the Lebanese authority, religious associations, the Red Cross, and later UNRWA, together had built seventeen official camps to which must be added many informal gatherings across Lebanon. Camp dwellers, predominantly Muslim Sunnis, were settled in camps established mostly in the Sunni cities Tripoli, Beirut, and Saida. The few camps that were located in Christian East Beirut were later attacked by Christian militias at the beginning of the civil war, destroyed, and never rebuilt. Although 23,000 Muslim Palestinian refugees were later naturalized by the 1994 law,⁶³ all initiatives benefitting Palestinians remain part of larger sectarian deals.

⁶⁰Abbas Shiblak, "Palestinians in Lebanon and the PLO," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no. 3 (1997): 262

⁶¹ Roberts, 77.

⁶² Latif, 261.

⁶³ Roberts, 78.

Introducing Securitization (1958-1969)

It was in the early 1960s, when no solution to the Palestinian question seemed to likely, that Christians allowed their fears to surface and Muslims started seeing Palestinians as a tool to challenge the Maronite hegemony. Though Palestinian refugees did not take part in the clashes between President Camille Chamoun and nationalists, known as the first Lebanese civil war (1956-1958), this period marks the precursor of the political surveillance and socio-economic exclusion of Palestinian refugees. The clear manifestation of securitization in Palestinian camps concurred with the presidency of Fouad Chehab (1958-1964), who, despite his public alliance with Nasserist's Egypt, feared the rising popularity of Pan-Arabism and its repercussions on the Lebanese Maronite state ideology. In the early 1960s, the belief in a unified Arab military action as a solution to defeat Israel prevailed among Palestinian refugees and the Lebanese Muslim community. Then, disheartened by the 1967 Arab defeat (*Naksa*), Palestinians turned to their own guerrilla movements and camps became even more politicized and militarized.

The Lebanese Army, dominated by Maronite Christians, assumed the role of securitizing camps. Through its intelligence branch, known as the Second Bureau (*Al Maktab Al Thani*), the Lebanese army kept a tight control over camps by posting Lebanese guards inside them and recruiting Palestinian informers. Political surveillance of Palestinian refugees was not only a military practice restricted to camps, as all refugees were required to obtain special authorization for domestic travel from the Lebanese

army.⁶⁴ The Second Bureau even monitored UNRWA's operations and interfered to stop any decision that might strengthen other parties in camps.⁶⁵

The securitization of refugee spaces coincided with economic actions limiting the employment opportunities of Palestinian refugees to low-skilled jobs. Article 8 of Decree 17561- issued in September 1964 - banned Palestinians from joining professional syndicates in Lebanon, and even though Lebanon signed the Casablanca Protocol 1965, it placed reservations on Palestinians' right to work and freedom of movement.⁶⁶

Yet, the Lebanese securitization of Palestinian camps did not stand up for long, especially with the rising power of *Feda'iyyin* following the 1967 Arab defeat. In 1968, Palestinian camps became the theater of popular uprisings that ended up by forcing out the Lebanese army outside camps. On the political level, the Cairo Agreement of 1969 – discussed in the next section- empowered the popular movements and, together, they remodeled the power structure of the Palestinian refugee regime. In the following thirteen years, the scene was transformed in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon.

Glory and Grief (1969 -1982)

Egypt-sponsored secret talks in November 1969 between the PLO's leader Arafat and the Lebanese army Commander Emil Boustani redefined the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

⁶⁴ Rougier, 5.

⁶⁵ Roberts, 80.

⁶⁶ Knudsen, *Widening the Protection Gap: The 'Politics of Citizenship' for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948 -2008*, 55.

The Cairo Agreement, the fruit of these secret talks, was a by-product of diplomatic pressures exercised by Egypt and Syria, on one hand, and internal calls from the Lebanese left-wing and the Muslim community, on the other hand, pushing for legitimizing Palestinian armed resistance inside Lebanon. Although the text of the agreement does not directly prohibit the Lebanese army from entering Palestinian camps, it implicitly entails the relinquishment of Lebanese sovereignty in parts of its territory, namely camps in which Palestinian refugees were granted self-autonomy and the Arqub district in South Lebanon, where Palestinian guerrillas could operate freely.

Following “Black September” (1970) in which King Hussein of Jordan quashed the Palestinian guerrilla groups, those guerrillas regrouped in Lebanon, where the Cairo Agreement created a fertile soil for organizing military activity away from authorities’ scrutiny. Depending on funds from Syria, Libya and Iraq⁶⁷ and the military support of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) – a front of Lebanese socialist parties fighting against the Christian Lebanese Front - the PLO established itself a quasi-state in Lebanon. This was represented by its “Fakhani Republic” in West Beirut and the associated social and economic mass organizations serving and employing thousands of Palestinians. Till now, Palestinians remember the “days of the Revolution” (*ayyam el thawra*) with great nostalgia. The expansionist ambitions of the PLO - especially Arafat’s Fatah - in Lebanon during the 1970s made many historic records of this period describe PLO’s armed existence as an end in itself rather than a means to resist Israel.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Hudson, 268.

⁶⁸ Rex Brynen, “PLO Policies in Lebanon: Legacies and Lessons,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 2 (1989): 49.

Yet the glorious moments Palestinians experienced during the 1970s in Lebanon were often interrupted by moments of horror and grief. The siege and massacre of the Tel Zaatar camp by the Christian Phalanges in 1976⁶⁹ preceded by the control over the predominantly Palestinian Karantina Muslim district in East Beirut, the destruction of Dbayyeh and Jisr El Basha camps at the hands of the Lebanese Christian Front⁷⁰, and the heavy Israeli bombardment on the Nabbatieh camp were some of many incidents of hostilities and bloodshed against Palestinian civilians in Lebanon.

Unquestionably, the PLO's tutelage in Lebanon was another impetus adding to the long-existing and deep-seated Lebanese division between Pan-Arabism and its anti-thesis reflected by the Maronite national identity model. This division catalyzed and aggravated the course of the second Lebanese civil war (1975-1989). It is politically naïve to claim that the Lebanese infighting was caused by the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, knowing that Palestinians did not take part in the 1958 mini-civil war. The entanglement of Lebanese and Palestinian responsibility for the war can be best illustrated by Michael Hudson, who termed the Lebanese state and the Palestinian entity that existed within its borders "two rudderless ships drifting crazily in a storm".⁷¹ Yet, the Palestinian factor in the Lebanese civil war definitely made it bloodier and more complex by attracting greater levels of Arab intervention to the Lebanese battleground and evoking additional Israeli punitive raids.⁷²

⁶⁹ The role of Syria in this battle remains vague.

⁷⁰ Including the Lebanese Phalanges, the Guardians of the Cedars, and the Free Tigers' militia forces

⁷¹ Hudson, 262.

⁷² Brynen, 50.

The Israeli invasion in June 1982, aiming at ending the PLO's power and establishing an Israel-friendly Lebanese government by making Bashir Gemayel president, constituted another volatile and tragic moment for Palestinians in Lebanon. Between August 21 and September 1, 1982, 11,000 Palestinian fighters left Lebanon and the PLO officials departed to Tunis, as negotiated with US envoy Philippe Habib⁷³. A week before he was to assume office, Gemayel was assassinated by Habib Al Chartouni of the Syrian National Party in September 14, 1982. The following day, as retaliation for Gemayel's assassination and with the protection of the Israeli Defense Forces, the Lebanese Forces Christian militia entered the left-behind Sabra and Shatila camp, located in West Beirut, whose civilian residents were no longer under the PLO's protection. In the next 48 hours, militants slaughtered 3500 civilians, as estimated by Kapeliouk and the ICRC.⁷⁴ By the end of the summer of 1982, Palestinians in Lebanon, massacred by their enemies and betrayed by their authorities, felt weaker than ever.

The Camps' War (1985-1987)

Despite the rapidly shifting alliances characterizing the Lebanese political scene, the confrontation between the Syrian regime and the PLO remained a steady reality throughout the civil war.⁷⁵ The clashing political logic of the two sides placed them in a

⁷³Leila Shahid, "The Sabra and Shatila Massacre: Eye-Witness Reports," *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXII, no.1 (2002): 37.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 44.

⁷⁵Rougier, 8.

permanent state of confrontation, of which the bloodiest was the Camps War (1985-1987). Fearing a second resurgence of the PLO that might weaken its legitimacy in the Arab world and its hegemony over Lebanon, Syria made sure to eliminate any chances of the PLO's renaissance. Backed by Syria, the Shiite Amal movement and Fatah dissidents, who opposed Arafat's diplomatic initiatives, launched systematic attacks against loyalists to Arafat in the Sabra and Shatila and Burj El Barajneh Palestinian camps in Beirut and, to a lesser extent, in Rashidiyyeh and El Bass camps in the South. On a second front, Amal led another battle against Iran-backed Hezbollah to assume guardianship over the Shiite community. The Camps War, leaving 3000⁷⁶ dead by guns and of hunger, ended with the retreat of Arafat loyalists to the camps of the South, mainly Ein El Hilweh in Saida and Rashidiyyeh in Tyre. By the end of this war, with Lebanon officially revoking the Cairo Agreement in 1987, Palestinians in Lebanon gave up hope of restoring the PLO's golden age.

The Grey Years and Post-war Lebanon (1987-2005)

From refugees in 1948 to revolutionaries in the 1960s, Palestinians became a marginalized minority struggling to secure their civil rights in the Lebanese context, as Julie Peteet describes the Palestinian journey in Lebanon.⁷⁷ In the grey years that followed the war of the camps and while the Lebanese people awaited a political conciliation to end the strife in

⁷⁶Brynen, 53.

⁷⁷Julie Peteet, "From Refugees to Minority: Palestinians in Post-War Lebanon," *Middle East Report* 200 (1996).

their afflicted country, Palestinian refugees hoped that a diplomatic solution would consider their plight. Yet the Taef Accord 1989 - which came into effect in 1991 with the dissolution of Lebanese militias (except Hezbollah) - has succeeded to bring the Lebanese infighting to an end, but failed to touch upon, and perhaps aggravated, the Palestinian refugee question.

After the endorsement of the Oslo Accords by the PLO in 1993, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon found themselves isolated from larger Palestinian politics and marginalized internally. Always classified as “foreigners”, Palestinians faced further difficulties in receiving travel documents and were barred from work in 72 professions. Already deprived of the right to own property, in 2001 they were dispossessed from their right to bequeath property even if previously acquired legally.⁷⁸ Though revoked in 1987, the logic of de-domestication of Palestinian camps found in the Cairo Agreement was adopted by the post-war Lebanese government, though this time out of voluntary abandonment rather as a result of a negotiated withdrawal from the Palestinian spaces. By excluding camps from the domestic realm, the Lebanese authorities diluted its obligation to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees.

Limiting its presence to the outskirts of the camp, the Lebanese army applied restrictive security measures around Palestinian refugee spaces. In post-war Lebanon, the level of securitization depended on the Syrian regime’s position towards the political popular structure of each camp. This was evident in the preferential treatment of the camps of the North, known for their popular loyalty to Syria, as opposed to the tighter

⁷⁸Sari Hanafi, “Stop Humiliating Palestinians,” *The Daily Star*, March 16, 2012.

security control in the camps of the South, where refugee residents are punished because of their support to Arafat.⁷⁹

Rapid Developments, Same Reality (2005 – Present)

Since 2005, specifically after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, Lebanon has witnessed a sequence of volatile moments. For the purpose of this case study, this section provides a brief presentation of how these political events have reflected on Palestinians in Lebanon. The withdrawal of Syrian troops, ending a 25-year tutelage in Lebanon, revived the UN Resolution 1559 (2004) call for the disarmament of Hezbollah and Palestinians. The political discourse that portrayed camps as “terrorists’ safe havens” became more popular after the July 2006 War, in which the size of Hezbollah’s military power came to light.

On a different level, positive formal initiatives for Palestinians took place in 2005. In June 2005, Labor Minister Trad Hmadeh (known for his close ties with Hezbollah) lobbied for a relaxation of employment restrictions on Palestinian refugees, by limiting the barred professions to only twenty. In November 2005, the March 14 government formed the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) as a consultative body for social and legal reforms in Palestinian camps and, in May 2006, it facilitated the re-opening of the PLO office in Beirut. These steps could be interpreted as an attempt by the Sunni political elite to compensate for Rafic Hariri’s reluctance towards the predominantly Sunni Palestinian

⁷⁹Rougier, 16.

refugee community and instead blame Syria for paralyzing any initiative touching upon Palestinians during Hariri's term.

Yet Lebanese political divisions did not allow these initiatives to materialize into better living conditions in Palestinian refugee spaces. Preoccupied with its own problems, Lebanon went through a presidential vacuum in 2007, followed by a short but bloody civil war in 2008, and a collapse of the government in 2010. The vulnerability of Palestinians was exposed, in particular, during the Nahr El Bared War in May 2007 and in its aftermath, detailed in the sections below.

Today, available figures of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon range from 200,000⁸⁰ to 455,373 UNRWA-registered persons, as of January 2011, of whom 53 percent reside in 12 camps across the country.⁸¹ Among urban refugees, many live in unofficial gatherings where conditions are even worse than in the camps. The numbers are overplayed or underestimated by politicians and relief organizations, depending on different political and aid agendas. Moreover, realistic estimates should consider the number of Palestinian refugees who are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon but reside permanently outside the country, as well as the numbers of non-registered refugees⁸² and non-ID Palestinians⁸³.

⁸⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit, "Lebanon: Country Report – July 2006," The Economist, <http://www.eiu.com/Default.aspx> (accessed May 5, 2012).

⁸¹ UNRWA, *Statistics*.

⁸² Non-Registered Palestinian Refugees (non-Rs) are only registered with the Lebanese authorities.

⁸³ Non-ID Palestinians (non-IDs) are not recognized by UNRWA or the Lebanese state, and are thus legally considered stateless. Non-ID Palestinians include *Fedaiyin* that have entered Lebanon following the PLO's expulsion from Jordan in 1970 and also those Palestinians in Lebanon who had registered by UNRWA in other fields of operation and are unable to transfer their status to Lebanon.

The Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon is unquestionably the most underprivileged refugee group in Arab host states, reflected by having the highest percentage of camp dwelling and the biggest proportion of cases registered in UNRWA's Special Hardship Program.⁸⁴ Moreover, Lebanon is the only host state that does not provide any kind of humanitarian assistance to refugees. The conventional state-like governance is replaced in camps by alternative informal governmentalities embodied by a complex power structure of competing political, religious and aid bodies.⁸⁵

Other refugee communities in Lebanon are not more fortunate than Palestinians. As Lebanon is non-signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention, refugees are denied their basic human rights and are often subject to detention, a risk not faced by Palestinian refugees holding UNRWA "blue cards". However, the Palestinian refugee community's situation remains the most alarming in Lebanon, taking into consideration Palestinians' their large numbers and the impact of their protracted presence on the security of the country. Moreover, Lebanese law seems more discriminatory towards Palestinians, who unlike foreigners, are prohibited from bequeathing their property in Lebanon, according to the 2001 law. Furthermore, refugee camps in Lebanon remain the home of Palestinian refugees and underprivileged Lebanese citizens only. For instance, the thousands of Iraqi refugees, arriving to Lebanon mostly after 2006, were relatively integrated in the Lebanese societies, depending on their sectarian background. While Shiite Iraqi refugees are concentrated in

⁸⁴ Roberts, 106.

⁸⁵ Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010).

the southern suburb of Beirut, and to a lesser extent, in cities and villages of Beqa'a and South Lebanon, Christian Iraqi refugees tend to live in the Christian neighborhoods of the northern suburb of Beirut. This sectarian regroupment renders Agamben's "space of exception" inapplicable in the case of Iraqi refugees.

Following its destruction in 2007, NBC became a laboratory for testing a new refugee regime, in which the Lebanese state struggles to establish itself as the only sovereign. What is happening inside the NBC laboratory? This thesis examines the many factors shaping the post-conflict governance of NBC.

Chapter 3

THE NAHR EL BARED CONFLICT

NBC: neither a Camp, nor a City

From an emergency shelter established in 1949 by the League of Red Cross Societies (LRSC) to relocate Palestinian refugees from the cold Beqa'a valley, the Nahr El Bared Camp (NBC) grew into the home to some 31,000 refugees⁸⁶ and a vital economic hub in North Lebanon before its destruction in 2007. Originally occupying an area of 0.2 square kilometers, the population growth of the NBC refugee community caused an informal extension of the camp onto additional land, approximately two square kilometers from the adjacent municipalities of Muhammara and Bhanine. As a result, NBC became the second-largest camp in Lebanon.⁸⁷ The official camp is referred to as the "Old Camp", while the adjacent area, known as the "New Camp," is also home to approximately 3,000 Lebanese

⁸⁶Lebanese Republic Presidency of the Council of Ministers Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, "Nahr El bared Camp," <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/Camps/Nahr-El-Bard-Camp.aspx> (accessed May 5, 2012).

⁸⁷ UNRWA, "Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp: UNRWA Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework 2008-2011" [2008], Accessed April 21, 2012
http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/NBC_RRR_Framework_6June08.pdf

citizens⁸⁸. The separation between the Old and the New Camp became a recurrent trend in the political discourse emerging with the NBC crisis.

Profiting from its proximity to the Syrian border and acting as a link between the city of Tripoli and the Akkar rural region, NBC developed an informal credit-based economy⁸⁹ and an influential wholesale distribution center for north Lebanon.⁹⁰ As a reward for the NBC Fatah Al Intifada military support to Syria during the “Abou Ammar⁹¹ War” (*Harb Abou Ammar*) in 1983 – during which the Syrian army succeeded to expel Arafat loyalists from the camps of the North - NBC benefited from relatively preferential treatment. This was reflected by the absence of Lebanese military barricades on its outskirts and the freedom of movement of its inhabitants as well as the free flow of building materials, allowing the expansion of the camp.⁹²

When compared to the residents of the neighboring Baddawi Palestinian camp in Tripoli, the NBC community appeared wealthier and more religiously conservative.⁹³ The presence of the large market inside NBC and its relative remoteness from urban Tripoli

⁸⁸ The majority of the Lebanese residents of NBC originates from adjacent Lebanese villages and lived in NBC prior to its establishment in 1949.

⁸⁹ NBC businessmen are known to provide their clients with huge supplies/goods with no payments in return. Instead, they are promised future payments once their clients make the profit. This credit-based trade, not common in the Lebanese market, encourages Lebanese entrepreneurs to deal with NBC businessmen.

⁹⁰ “Nahr El Bared: Between Past and Present” [afilmsPalestine, 2008], Video Clip, Accessed 21 April, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRA4npTZcF8&feature=watch_response

⁹¹ Fatah’s Leader Yasser Arafat’s nom de guerre

⁹² Rougier, 16.

⁹³ Roberts, 197.

explain these two traits. When speaking of the distinctive characteristics of the NBC society, it is worth noting that the spark of the 1968 camps' uprising (*Intifadat Al Mukhayamat*) that forced the Lebanese army from camps started from NBC. Provoked by the martial law ruling their lives and spaces and inspired by the post-1967 war "revolutionary expansion", a popular uprising spread across Palestinian camps. Refugees forced out Lebanese security agencies and replaced them with Palestinian popular committees.⁹⁴

NBC, May-September 2007: Flashback

On the night of May 19, 2007, the BankMed branch in Amioun village, north Lebanon was robbed with an estimated loss of USD 125,000. By dawn, the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) attacked suspects in their apartment in Mitein, Tripoli. As the suspects turned out to be Fatah Al Islam (FAI) militants, the raid developed into a long day of violence in the city that culminated with FAI's slaughter of 27 Lebanese Army (LA) soldiers while they were sleeping.⁹⁵ The next day, the battlefield was transferred to NBC, in which FAI had started to build a military base since 2006. From inside the camp, FAI fired at LA soldiers present on the outskirts of NBC, who retaliated by launching heavy assaults on the refugee camp. For the next 105 days, intense bombardment and nonstop sniper fire were the ambient sound at NBC, until its fall on September 2nd, 2007.

⁹⁴ Amal Kwar, *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), 54-55.

⁹⁵ "Chronology of a Crisis," *NOW LEBANON*, June 15, 2007, (accessed April 21, 2012) <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=3221>

Fouad Siniora, then Prime Minister, announced the LA “victory” and praised “the heroism” of its soldiers.⁹⁶ Outside NBC, Lebanese civilians and soldiers waved Lebanese flags and V signs celebrating their “national victory”. In neighboring Baddawi camp, where most of the 27,000⁹⁷ NBC displaced residents sought refuge, the scene was quite different. For them, having their “little Palestine” reduced to rubble was another Palestinian “*Nakba*” (catastrophe)⁹⁸.

In terms of casualties, the NBC war resulted in the death of fifty civilians (predominantly Palestinians), 179 Lebanese soldiers, and 226 FAI militants.⁹⁹As for the physical loss, the war resulted in the total destruction of the Old Camp and serious damage to its adjacent area. The Lebanese government estimated the losses at over USD 300 million¹⁰⁰ with 5,493 residential¹⁰¹ commercial and institutional buildings needing to be entirely rebuilt in the Old Camp alone. Social ties seem to have suffered even more than the camp’s infrastructure. Intra-Palestinian tension appeared as the sudden influx of the NBC residents – three days after the war’s outbreak, exacerbated the infrastructure of the crowded Baddawi camp. The social rift between the NBC community and their Lebanese

⁹⁶ “Fouad Siniora,” *NOW LEBANON*, September 3, 2007, (accessed April 21, 2012) <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=11926>

⁹⁷ UNRWA, *Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp: UNRWA Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework 2008-2011*.

⁹⁸ In reference to the 1948 exodus

⁹⁹ Government of Lebanon, *A Common Challenge, A shared Responsibility: The International Donor Conference for the Recovery and Reconstruction of the Nahr El Bared Refugee Camp and Conflict-Affected Areas of North Lebanon*, (Vienna: June 23, 2008), 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

neighbors had more salient implications. The latter blamed Palestinians for the conflict and the killings of its sons fighting amongst the LA. Though the Sunni Lebanese are known for their deep affinity with the Palestinian refugee community, for the first time Sunni Lebanese publicly shows hostility against Palestinians: Many Lebanese residents of neighboring areas protested the reconstruction of the camp.¹⁰² Frustrated by the practices of the LA during the conflict and its aftermath, the NBC community perceived the war as a planned conspiracy preparing their permanent resettlement in the country. As none of the previously destroyed camps were rebuilt, Palestinian refugees saw in the NBC War a project to force their integration into the Lebanese community of the North, naturalize them, and exploit the voting power they constitute as Muslim Sunnis. When Lebanese entrepreneurs took up the role of NBC destroyed businesses in the economy of the North, NBC businessmen went further to suggest that the NBC War was also motivated by economic jealousy.

Fatah Al Islam: Origins and Rise

It is not an easy task to draw an anatomy of Fatah Al Islam or a clear account of the group's agenda and identity. Founded by Palestinian-Jordanian Shaker Al Absi, FAI can be best described as a Salafi multinational group, inspired by Al Qaeda and its militant interpretation of Jihad and aspiration to establish Islamic rule. Based on the numbers of

¹⁰² Adam Horowitz, "The Battle of Nahr al-Barid: Iraq Comes to Lebanon - an excerpt from Nir Rosen's New Book Aftermath: *Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World*," [November 5, 2010], MONDOWEISS <http://mondoweiss.net/2010/11/the-battle-of-nahr-al-barid-iraq-comes-to-lebanon-an-excerpt-from-nir-rosens-new-book-aftermath-following-the-bloodshed-of-americas-wars-in-the-muslim-world.html>

arrested and killed FAI militants during the NBC war, the Lebanese Judiciary Council stated that the group was predominantly Lebanese, then Palestinian, and comprised over ten nationalities.¹⁰³ However, Simon Haddad notices the discrepancy in numbers when comparing the dates of birth and nationalities of the militants, most of whom are Palestinians born in Lebanon.¹⁰⁴ Speaking of the group's origins, FAI is generally considered an offspring of Fatah Al Intifada, a Palestinian militia backed by Syria in the days of the Lebanese civil war to challenge the power of the PLO. The link between the two groups was made, because Al Absi and many other founding members of FAI were active members of Fatah Al Intifada during the 1970s.

When it first came to the surface during the NBC crisis, two contradictory stories about FAI became popular. The first portrays the group as a Syrian creation meant to shake Lebanese internal security and thus hinder the course of the International Tribunal investigating Hairri's assassination. This version of the story is based on the release of Al Absi from prison by the Syrian regime in 2005, interpreted by FAI's spokesperson Abou Salim Taha as a step to encourage Salafi militant activity against US troops in Iraq.¹⁰⁵ The second story states that FAI was financially supported by the Future Sunni Movement of the Hariri family to serve as a counterweight to the rising power of Hezbollah, especially after the July 2006 War, as suggested by *New Yorker* journalist Seymour Hersh.¹⁰⁶ The visit

¹⁰³Rougier, 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Haddad, "Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organization," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010): 561.

¹⁰⁵ Haddad, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*, 577.

¹⁰⁶ Seymour Hersh, "An Interview with Seymour Hersh," Interview by *Democracy Now!* (2007) <http://aljazeera.com/news/articles/42/Nahr-El-Bared-fighters-US-protg-.html> (accessed May 28, 2012).

of pro-Syrian Palestinian factions to Hezbollah's leaders to warn against the threat posed by the sectarian agenda of FAI to the camp and the Shiite party supports Hersh's claims. A third opinion suggests that FAI possessed a "freedom of maneuver" that profited from different opponent sides whenever the local and regional agendas of those met with the group's ideology.¹⁰⁷

How did FAI find its way to NBC? Arriving from Syria, Al Absi connected with ex-convicts he had met during his prison sentence. These connections facilitated military training for Al Absi and his followers and helped him expand his networks of Jihadis by recruiting ex-Iraq fighters from different nationalities.¹⁰⁸ In the destroyed NBC, refugees tell stories of how FAI was expelled by the popular committees of the Baddawi camp. School girls recall seeing FAI masked men occupying the former office of Fatah dissidents (*Fatah Al Munshaqin*) right in front of their school, located in Al Cornish area in NBC, and verbally harassing unveiled girls.¹⁰⁹ Supported by some of the religious authorities (*mashayekh*) of the camp, known for their mediating role between FAI militants and the LA during the NBC conflict, FAI masked and armed militants started moving confidently within the camp and acted as a religious police for the NBC community, which was particularly scared by the large number of FAI's foreign members. The situation had gotten out of hands for the camp's leadership, especially when the Head of the NBC Popular Committee Abu

¹⁰⁷ Haddad, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*.

¹⁰⁸ Haddad, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*, 553.

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

Hisham Leyla resigned, following Al Absi's public announcement of the formation of his militant organization in NBC in November 26, 2006.¹¹⁰

Rougier traces the birth of Islamism in the Palestinian community to the Iranian networks in the camps of Southern Lebanon, starting in the 1960s.¹¹¹ However, the Salafist trend that remodeled Islamism since the late 1990s seemed more convincing to the Palestinian refugee community, as it resolved the confessional gap between Sunnis and Shiites and the regional sectarian rift (*fitna*) between the two nurtured by the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. As the Sunni-Shiite rift became wider in Lebanon following Hariri's assassination in 2005 and following the July 2006 War, Salafi thought flourished among those Sunnis who sought to emulate the Shiite Hezbollah's model. This was especially promising in North Lebanon, where the city of Tripoli served as a strategic locale for a collective representation of the scattered Lebanese Sunni community.¹¹² It is in this context that the FAI Salafi group was able to penetrate NBC and secure a military base inside it in late 2006.

¹¹⁰ Sari Hanafi, "Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion," [March 1, 2010] ArteEast. <http://www.arteeast.org/pages/artenews/extra-territoriality/272/> (accessed April 21, 2012).

¹¹¹Rougier, 49.

¹¹²Ibid, 254.

NBC as a 'Space of Exception'

"Nahr El Bared is a cage. Inside, there are some birds with broken arms." This is how NBC residents now see their camp, as described by a returnee to NBC in October 2008.¹¹³ What this returnee meant is clearly articulated by another NBC refugee who describes the prevalent rule of law at NBC today as "anti-civil" and "not even resembling martial law." While this has been always the case in Palestinian camps, post-2007 NBC exposed this logic, as securitization substituted de-domestication. An "anti-civil" law, which sole value was its being the opposite of civil law - the privilege of Lebanese citizens only -- presents the Palestinian refugee as the opposite of the citizen and even deprives him/her from the rights of a criminal citizen. Arendt illustrates the calamity of the stateless person in the nation-state by exposing the better position of a criminal citizen in front of the law when she writes: "Since he [the stateless person] was the anomaly for whom the general law did not provide, it was better for him to become an anomaly for which it did provide, that of the criminal"¹¹⁴. Similarly in scholarly work, researchers have frequently referred to Agamben as they saw in Nahr El Bared "a case of urbicide in a space of exception,"¹¹⁵ excluded from the domestic realm, and in which the law is permanently suspended. Amnesty International Fact Finding team, investigating cases of looting and abuses at NBC, made a similar

¹¹³ "Nahr El Bared: Transitions" [afilmsPalestine, 2008], Video Clip, Accessed 21 April, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-cNd452l4c&feature=relmfu>

¹¹⁴ Arendt, 284.

¹¹⁵ Adam Ramadan, "Destroying Nahr El Bared: Sovereignty and urbicide in the space of exception," *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 153.

conclusion by portraying the NBC War as a “deliberate and unjustified erasure of the camp”¹¹⁶.

Lived testimonies of refugees, who were present in the camp during the outbreak of the conflict, assert that NBC refugees were denied evacuation in the first three days of the war,¹¹⁷ which directly resulted in the killing of 23 Palestinian civilians.¹¹⁸ One month later, the 3,000 refugees¹¹⁹, who were still refusing to leave the camp, were considered “terrorists”¹²⁰, as openly articulated by a statement of the LA. Accounts of arbitrary arrest and torture in detention of NBC Palestinian young men while leaving the camp were frequent.¹²¹ The blurring of the civilian and military boundaries was even clearer in the reaction of the LA soldiers to a demonstration in Baddawi, organized in solidarity with the 3,000 refugees remaining in the camp. On its second day, the LA opened fire at demonstrators, killing three civilians and injuring 45 others, because, the LA claimed, they were approaching the checkpoint. This incident was left uninvestigated, even though the

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International, “Lebanon : Amnesty International calls for inquiry into reports of looting and abuses at Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp,” Public Statement AI Index : MDE 18/015/2007 [31 October, 2007], Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/ar/library/info/MDE18/015/2007/en> (accessed April 21, 2012)

¹¹⁷ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Abott, “Citizens attacked: Lebanon fails to protect its Palestinian Citizens,” *New Internationalist Magazine*, 2007.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Nisrine Mansour and Nasser Yassin, “Protecting refugees and governing spaces: the case of the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon,” in *No Refuge: Palestinians in Lebanon*, a paper presented by the Refugee Study Center (England: University of Oxford, 2010), 27.

¹²¹ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

participating foreign activists stressed the peaceful nature of the protest taking place at few hundred meters away from the LA checkpoint.¹²²

The Lebanese Army was also criticized for adopting indiscriminate shelling as a military tactic to control the camp. Videos on YouTube record military actions that went beyond “military necessity”: Soldiers appeared to challenge each other to attack intact buildings.¹²³ In other short films, gunfire spots were clearly caused by soldiers “amusing themselves by shooting at the ceiling”.¹²⁴ Destruction of civilian property continued after the fall of the camp. Many residents, who saw their houses intact after the end of the war, returned a few days later to find them looted and burnt: “They burnt my house after the Eid. They have used flammables to erase what they did. They’ve stolen and burnt,”¹²⁵ reported a Palestinian refugee, filmed while walking through his severely damaged house in NBC. “They took everything. When we came back, we only found the fridge. They thought we were Palestinians,”¹²⁶ said a Lebanese woman residing in the NBC camp. It is worth noting that no direct reference to the LA was made by Palestinian refugees or Lebanese residents when speaking of vandalism inside the camp.

¹²² Under the Holly Tree Blog, “Lebanese Army kills 2, Wounds 35 in Peaceful Protest,” http://thehollytree.blogspot.com/2007_06_01_archive.html (accessed May 5, 2012).

¹²³ “Lebanese Army in Nahr El Bared,” [n.d.], Video clip, Accessed April 21, 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgqW9LVn7ZM>

¹²⁴ “Looting Naher Al Bared: The Looting and Burning of Nahr El Bared Refugee Camp,” [October, 2008], Video clip, Accessed April 21, 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4PH7bp15EY&feature=related>

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Interview with Lebanese family, March 2012.

When they were allowed to enter the camp in October 10, 2007, to check on their homes, NBC refugees could probably explain the looting and burning of their houses. Yet, they couldn't process why some defecated in their pots and pans¹²⁷ or threw copies of the Quran in their toilets.¹²⁸ Even more provocative for this conservative society were the hanged photos of their wives and daughters with their heads unveiled¹²⁹ and the writings on women's underwear¹³⁰. Racist and sectarian graffiti, signed with the names of soldiers, was written and sprayed on the walls of houses and streets. In the houses occupied by LA soldiers during the conflict, one could read on the walls: "We received you in peace, but you planted your support for terror. This is your end: your destruction." Menacing Muslims and Palestinians, others wrote "We step on you, the nation of Mohammad." Other graffiti borrowed the discourse of the Lebanese civil war by writing "Lebanese Phalanges passed by here"¹³¹. It is not surprising that the NBC refugees could not but compare their plight to the massacres of the Tal Zaatar in 1976.¹³² Some Lebanese soldiers fighting in NBC seem motivated by more than professional solidarity with their slaughtered comrades. The graffiti reviving older sectarian divides rendered the NBC conflict an occasion for vengeful reactions to battles between Palestinians and Christian and Shiites militias. Also inspired

¹²⁷ *Looting Naher Al Bared.*

¹²⁸ Ramadan, *Destroying Nahr El Bared*, 153.

¹²⁹ *Looting Naher Al Bared.*

¹³⁰ Ramadan, *Destroying Nahr El Bared*, 153.

¹³¹ "Writings on the wall: The Lebanese Army's Graffiti in NBC," [October, 2008], Video clip, accessed April 21, 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wbHBOUawPI&feature=related>

¹³² Nahr El Bared: Transitions.

by recent political and sectarian divisions, some refugees speak of Sunni soldiers expressing their hatred of Hezbollah, known for its sympathy with the people of NBC, by indiscriminately shelling the refugee spaces.

With the re-introduction of the pre-1968 permit system in NBC, refugees now need special authorization (*tasrih*) to access their houses and businesses inside the camp. Lebanese residents are allowed entry, upon showing their Lebanese IDs. Prior to 2009, children also needed special permits to access their UNRWA schools. Verbal harassment and even physical abuse is frequently reported on checkpoints. The level of hostility or friendliness of Lebanese soldiers highly depends on their religious backgrounds and the cities they come from.¹³³ Moreover, the military siege on NBC is highly affecting its economic recovery: “I used to sell [to] the whole region of Akkar, that’s more than 400,000 consumers. Today, I have only the 10,000 who have returned to the camp,” says a returnee who owns a stationery store in the New Camp.¹³⁴

Political Stances:

What role did each of the key players of the “Palestinian refugee file” have in the NBC conflict? Citing the content analysis conducted by Knudsen is useful in this context and

¹³³ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

¹³⁴ Nahr El Bared: Between Past and Present.

helps briefly present the political stances of major actors, namely the PLO, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Hariri Future Movement.¹³⁵

While displaced in Baddawi, NBC refugees felt betrayed by their own leadership. The PLO, the official Palestinian delegate to Lebanon, supported the LA's intervention in the camp. This political stance was plainly expressed by Abbas Zaki, PLO representative in Lebanon during 2005-2009, who approved the military solution to the NBC crisis. Zaki's declarations were labeled by some as "defeatist" and the PLO was criticized for submitting to the Lebanese authority and even profiting from the new refugee regime in NBC. Fatah supporters defended Zaki by viewing his statements as "politically intelligent" aiming at protecting the Palestinian refugees in the other eleven Lebanese camps from a securitization approach, similar to that in NBC.¹³⁶ Oussama Hamdan, Hamas representative in Lebanon, strongly disagreed with Zaki and condemned the destructive impact of a military solution to the crisis. Despite its dissatisfaction with the Lebanese government's handling of the conflict, the Hamas leadership refrained from taking any political actions to affect the course of the war.

At the domestic level, Lebanese politicians were also preoccupied by the crisis. During the siege, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah hardened his tone against the military solution of NBC, considering the LA's entry to the camp as "a red line that should not be crossed". Hezbollah, still then suffering politically from the July 2006 War, could not raise its voice higher against the Lebanese Army.

¹³⁵ Are Knudsen, "Nahr el-Bared: the people fall-out of a refugee disaster," in *Palestinian Refugees: identity, space, and place in the Levant*, ed. Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

¹³⁶ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

The Future Movement was passing a political test of a different kind. For the Sunni coalition, the dilemma lay in adopting a political discourse that would silence the news that Bahia Hariri, sister of Rafic Hariri, was involved in financially supporting FAI, would calm related dissatisfaction among the Sunni Palestinian community, and would reflect a political logic opposed to that of Hezbollah and Syria.

Although confined by its apolitical mandate, UNRWA was criticized for its political silence during the war and its failure to lobby for the protection of civilian refugee lives. While NBC refugees agree on the tremendous role played by UNRWA in providing emergency relief during the NBC War, they criticize the agency for not lobbying against the military operations in their camp. In summer 2007, NBC was militarized to an extent that left no room for diplomacy and humanitarian initiatives. This was reflected in the ineffectiveness of humanitarian efforts, not only by UNRWA but also all aid organizations.

Recovery and Reconstruction

Below is a brief introduction to the reconstruction plan of the Lebanese government's engineering consultant Khatib and Alami (K&A) and the alternative plan prepared by the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC) with the support of UNRWA, known as the Master Plan for the Recovery and the Reconstruction of the NBC 2008. These two plans and their impact on the reconstruction processes and post-conflict governance model of NBC will be revisited and analyzed in later chapters.

The Vienna Document: Lebanon's Security First

“The camp will not return to the previous environmental, social and political status quo that facilitated its takeover by terrorists,”¹³⁷ stated former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora at the conference to launch the NBC Reconstruction Plan in February 2008. As the development of the post-conflict society of NBC is still ongoing, this newly-adopted security arrangement can only be read through plans and statements made by the Lebanese government of 2007-2008. A highly revealing tool is the Vienna Document, a paper presented by the Lebanese government in the International Donor Conference for the Reconstruction and the Recovery of the Nahr El Bared Camp and Conflict-Affected Areas in Lebanon, hosted by the Austrian government in Vienna in June 2008. Criticized for not involving the NBC community in the drafting of the Document and the Master Plan, the Lebanese government announced in the preface to the Vienna Document its intention to “turn [NBC] into a model for the rest of the camps in Lebanon”¹³⁸ using “new types of Lebanese-led security arrangements”¹³⁹.

The two components of the Vienna Document shaping the new Lebanese approach to securitization in NBC are “community and proximity policing” and the “physical re-arrangement” of its space. Seeking to “reinststate Lebanese sovereignty”¹⁴⁰ and prevent all forms of armament in the camp, the Vienna Document asked for donor support of USD five

¹³⁷ Mansour and Yassine, 29.

¹³⁸ Government of Lebanon, 11.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 51.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

million to build the capacity of its Internal Security Forces (ISF) in preparation for the policing role they would assume inside the Palestinian camp.¹⁴¹ Walking in the arid land of NBC in March 2012, an elegant building appears in the middle of nothing: the Lebanese ISF police station. The “securitization fund” was secured by a US donation during the Vienna Conference, while half of the funds needed for the reconstruction works are still not available. Speaking of the new physical arrangement of the camp, the most significant variable is the reduction of the total size of residential areas to widen public streets. Figures and criticisms related to this new physical model are comprehensively tackled later in this thesis. The K&A plan echoed the Lebanese state security agenda in NBC and prioritized it over the camp’s social fabric.

NBRC: A Mature ‘Act of Resistance’

Filling the gap caused by the lack of a central Palestinian power, a group of architects, UNRWA teachers, and social scientists gathered on July 15, 2007, while the army siege was still in place, to think about the best ways to help their camp recover.¹⁴² Soon, this group of Palestinian professionals was joined by Lebanese activists and developed into the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC). In nine months, NBRC transformed refugees’ mental maps into physical maps of pre-2007 NBC as well as the asset losses and suggested a future recovery plan in consultation with the NBC

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 87.

¹⁴² Interview with NBRC former members, March 2012.

community.¹⁴³ Determined to politically pressure the Lebanese government to replace the K&A design model for a new NBC, the grassroots' organization presented an alternative plan in which social ties between extended families shape the NBC architecture instead of family size, as is the case in the K&A proposal. Attracted by its community-participatory approach and its fine organization, UNRWA welcomed NBRC as its partner and played a mediating role in convincing the Lebanese government to take the alternative plan into consideration. Today, NBRC's center is affiliated to UNRWA's office in NBC. The interplay between UNRWA and NBRC is examined further in the last chapter of this thesis.

NBC Today

Following the validation of the NBC Master Plan by all stakeholders in May 2008, UNRWA set a three-year deadline for the completion of the eight packages' reconstruction works. Under 31 May 2011, the timeline for implementation of NBC reconstruction reads: "NBC is rebuilt, all NBC displaced families re-housed in rebuilt camp".¹⁴⁴ The same deadline is mentioned in the Vienna Document under "Recovery and Reconstruction Timeline for NBC".¹⁴⁵ Almost a year after the deadline passed, the great majority of the 5,670 NBC families¹⁴⁶ are still displaced. Only 369 families returned¹⁴⁷ to package One of NBC in

¹⁴³Hanafi, *Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion*.

¹⁴⁴ UNRWA, *Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp: UNRWA Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework 2008-2011*, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Government of Lebanon, 89.

¹⁴⁶ UNRWA, *Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp*, 15.

¹⁴⁷ UNRWA, *an Open Letter to the Displaced NBC Residents*, January 2012.

October 2011. The remaining families are still scattered around adjacent areas: 3,352 families have rented houses (60 percent of the NBC community) and 749 families live in UNRWA's temporary shelters and collective centers (barracks).¹⁴⁸

Recently, UNRWA decided to close the temporary shelters and, as an alternative, contribute to the rent fees of their residents. UNRWA justifies this decision by its preference to re-channel the barracks' maintenance cost to reconstruction efforts, knowing that the agency is still trying to secure the necessary funds for the reconstruction of packages Four to Eight. Others interpret this step as a reaction to the growing dissatisfaction among barracks' residents who compare shelters to "fridges" during the cold days and "ovens" during summer.¹⁴⁹ In 2012, UNRWA anticipates the return of 592 families to Package Two and some others to the first three blocks of Package Three.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ UNRWA, *Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

¹⁵⁰ UNRWA, *an Open Letter to the Displaced NBC Residents*.

CHAPTER 4

THE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTIES' TECHNOLOGIES OF CONTROL

The first discussion chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the study of the technologies of control developed by the Lebanese government (2007-2008) to implement its vision of the future refugee regime in NBC. Examining the techniques employed by different state actors during the conflict and in its aftermath, this chapter exposes the political logic behind each technology, the ends it aims to achieve, and its actual impact.

I start first by defining the meanings of “governance” and “technologies of control”, two terminologies appearing in academic and policy debates about post-war scenarios. Before tackling the Lebanese state technologies of control emerging in post-conflict NBC, I visit the mode of governance that prevailed in the camp prior to its destruction in 2007. I then present the multifaceted meanings of “Lebanese sovereignty” and the partial, often competing, sovereignties that shape it. After that, I underline three major mechanisms adopted by the Lebanese sovereignties to impose a certain definition of governance,

reflected in the discourse framing the NBC crisis, the physical re-arrangement of the camp, and the disciplining of its inhabitants. Within this context, I look at the popular attitudes that prevailed in the Lebanese Sunni street throughout the conflict and during the following period, when resentment against Palestinians surfaced for the first time and legitimized the Lebanese government's handling of the NBC crisis file. I conclude this chapter by highlighting the repercussions of the NBC conflict as observed in other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

The Lebanese state technologies of control presented in this chapter, and the intentions they carry, are not to be understood as uninterrupted, as various non-state actors intervene to (re)assert their sovereignty over the camp and alter the Lebanese model of governance.

'Governance' and 'Technologies of Control': Meanings and Evolution

There is no standard definition of "governance", a term originating from Plato's metaphor that compares the act of ruling people to piloting a ship.¹⁵¹ Largely understood as the act of governing, governance describes the nature of relations between a population and its ruling authority. Governance is not to be reduced to state power, but applies to any interaction between a certain leadership and the socio-political organization it represents. After gaining popularity in the mid-1990s, governance emerged as a recurrent term in the development jargon of donor agencies. The United States Agency for International

¹⁵¹ "Etymologie du terme gouvernance," http://ec.europa.eu/governance/docs/doc5_fr.pdf (accessed May 5, 2012).

Development (USAID) defines good governance as: “a complex system of interactions among structures, traditions, functions, (responsibilities), and processes (practices) characterized by three key values of accountability, transparency and participation”¹⁵². There is a general consensus that “governance is political and not technical,”¹⁵³ meaning that its legitimacy and effectiveness rely primarily on its ability to respond to public expectations. This brief definition of governance is useful to evaluate the model of post-conflict governance proposed by the Lebanese government in NBC.

As for “technologies of control”, this terminology derives from the Foucauldian notion of “technologies,” referring to the wide spectrum of practices adopted by “societies [to] pacify, dominate, and regulate subjects”¹⁵⁴. Among these technologies, the most interesting for this chapter are discourse (defined by Foucault as ‘language in action’), the spatialization of spaces (falling under Foucault’s ‘technology of life’) and disciplining practices (falling under Foucault’s ‘technology of body’). According to Foucault, discursive practices adopted by power institutions alter individuals’ perceptions of their environment. Statements, and the values they carry, serve as “regimes of truth” affecting subjects’ bodies and thoughts. By “technologies of life”, Foucault refers to the regulatory practices intervening in the living experience of subjects, such as urban planning and the

¹⁵² Suchitra Punyaratabandhu, “Commitment to Good Governance, Development, and Poverty Reduction: Methodological Issues in the Evaluation of Progress at National and Local Levels,” (Paper presented for the sixth session of the Committee on Development Policy by the National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand March 29 – April 2, 2004): 2.

¹⁵³ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “USAID/DFID/World Bank Governance Roundtable, Towards Better Strategies and Results: Collaborative Approaches to Strengthen Governance – Meeting Summary,” (Washington, DC: 2011): 3.

¹⁵⁴ Danaher et al, xv.

“spontaneous policing and control” reflected by “the spatial layout of the town”¹⁵⁵. Foucault also speaks of the “technologies of body,” describing the disciplinary actions adopted by power institutions to render individual bodies’ “useful” and “docile”.¹⁵⁶ Presenting various technologies of control is necessary in order to understand the ways in which Lebanese sovereignties sought to exercise authority over the new NBC.

NBC: Pre-conflict Governance

Since it was first established in 1949, NBC refugees compensated for their lost homeland by turning their refugee camp into a little Palestine. Hanging on to their family linkages, NBC refugees settled themselves in the camp in a way that recreated the villages of North Galilee: Saasaa, Saffouri, Safad, Safsaf, Loubieh and Khalsaa. It is not surprising then that the NBC community perceive the destruction of their camp in 2007 as another “Nakba”.

After suffering from the “brutal actions” of the Lebanese Second Bureau that “did not exclude the women and the children of Al Bared”¹⁵⁷, the NBC refugees proudly recall their popular uprising that succeeded to throw out the Second Bureau of their camp in 1968, even before the Cairo Agreement granted self-autonomy for Palestinian camps. In 1969, the PLO confidently established itself as a legitimate political representative of refugee communities, replacing the Lebanese securitized governance with a hub of social and economic institutions that brought pride and relative prosperity to the camp. With the

¹⁵⁵ Foucault, 250.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 249.

¹⁵⁷ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

departure of the PLO in 1982, the Palestinian refugee communities found themselves in Lebanon but not of Lebanon, as the de-domestication of their spaces continued, even though the Cairo Agreement was revoked by the Lebanese state in 1987. This power vacuum was resolved differently in each of the twelve Palestinian camps. Various “governmentalities” (practices of governance) emerged to substitute conventional governance -- that of a classical state-like power.¹⁵⁸ In Palestinian camps in Lebanon, governmentalities echo the coping mechanisms adopted by refugee communities to reassert their political existence, after they were denied the Lebanese state’s legal protection and were deprived from the political organization of their quasi-state represented by the PLO. In 1982, Palestinian camp dwellers in Lebanon resembled Arendt’s rightless people who “no longer belong to any community whatsoever” and whose real calamity “is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them”.¹⁵⁹ Hanafi and Long notice the similarities characterizing the complex power structures governing refugee camps and the large gap between camp dwellers and urban refugees in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), as opposed to the case of Syria and Jordan in which the state does not “wall off” refugee communities.¹⁶⁰

Although excluded from the domestic realm, Palestinian refugee camps’ governmentalities are a reflection of local and regional politics and are constantly remodeled by its developments. In NBC, the support of PLO opponents to Syria in its fight against Arafat loyalists in 1983 was rewarded by relatively preferential treatment of the

¹⁵⁸Taylor Long and Sari Hanafi, “Human (in)security: Palestinian perceptions of security in around the refugee camps in Lebanon,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 10, no.5 (2010).

¹⁵⁹ Arendt, 293.

¹⁶⁰ Long and Hanafi.

camp and its inhabitants. In the 1990s, the Syrian tutelage in Lebanon allowed NBC to become a trading city and strengthened the rule of the Hamas-led Alliance of Palestinian Forces (*Tahaluf Al Qiwa Al Falastiniya*). It was not before the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000) and the consequent increase in the popularity of Fatah, that Arafat's photos reappeared in NBC. With the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005, the decrease in the activity of Palestinian informers recruited by the Syrian intelligence in NBC was accompanied by an enlargement of the network of informers recruited by the Lebanese intelligence, known for its close and regular cooperation with the Syrian regime. "We [the NBC community] were transferred from the Syrian intelligence's hand to that of the Lebanese intelligence," says a NBC refugee, illustrating the repercussions of the 2005 political developments on his camp. Another governmentality to be added to the complex power structure of NBC is that of Islamism, creating a self-governing "economy of morals"¹⁶¹, with the support of the camp's religious leaders (*mashayekh*). This same "economy of morals" was reflected by a low crime rate¹⁶² in the conservative society of NBC and has concurrently provided a welcoming environment for Salafi agendas.

Prior to its destruction in 2007, the socio-political organization of NBC comprised a multitude of traditions and institutions with overlapping functions: a popular committee formed of sixteen representatives appointed by the various political factions with a rotating presidency¹⁶³, civic organizations (*tanzimat*) characterized by their political rather

¹⁶¹Hanafi and Long, 134.

¹⁶² Ibid, 151.

¹⁶³ International Crisis Group, *Lebanon Palestinian Dilemma: The Struggle Over Nahr Al-Bared: Middle East Report N°117 – March 2012* (Beirut/Brussels: March 2012), 8.

military nature in NBC, the neighborhood committees (*lijan ahliya*) and the elders of the camp (*woujaha'a*), the religious leaders (*mashayekh*), and the Armed Struggle (*Al Kifah Al Musalah*) responsible for solving the most complicated security problems. UNRWA and the Lebanese Army often interrupt this power structure with the former's control of aid and the latter's presence at the outskirts of the camp and its large network of informers inside the camp.

In search of the Lebanese Sovereign

Amidst the mountains of rubble of the destroyed NBC, a Lebanese flag stood alone in September 2007, marking the vengeful return of the Lebanese sovereignty onto the Palestinian camp. Banners showing a Lebanese soldier planting a Lebanese flag amidst a mountain of rubble were seen across the country's streets. The iconic symbolism of this banner shows how the Lebanese sovereignty, non-existent to a great extent, is more of an object of desire of the Lebanese state. It is the same thirstiness to practice sovereignty that might explain why the arrest of a 14 year-old Palestinian child in NBC, allegedly for removing a Lebanese flag from his house's balcony in NBC. Considering Lebanon's complex sectarian power-sharing arrangements and the constant shifting alliances among its political elites, it would be simplistic to assume the presence of one sovereign power in Lebanon. Below, I evaluate the level of sovereignty of each of the Lebanese power institutions and the role they strive to assume in the governance of post-conflict NBC.

The first power institution to analyze is the Lebanese government. It is not possible to say that Lebanese governments have a rigid nature or carry unified agendas, especially

when talking about the different governments in power in the five years that followed the NBC War (2007-2012). The political logic of Fouad Siniora's governments (2006-2009), responsible for drawing up the initial Lebanese official vision of post-conflict NBC and organizing the Vienna donor Conference in June 2008, definitely contributed to the official Lebanese solution to FAI and affected the framework of the future refugee regime of the camp. Fouad Siniora, leader of the Sunni Future Movement's parliamentary bloc, echoed his political party's support for a military solution to eliminate the presence of FAI. During his term, the Lebanese government was often labeled as "pro-western" even by the most impartial media. Its political opponents, represented by the Hezbollah-led March 8 coalition, went further to consider it an "American-Zionist" tool implementing the "New Middle East" project of former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Would the Lebanese government's response to FAI and its handling of the NBC crisis file have been different if Siniora and the March 14 Movement had not been in power? There is no definitive answer for this question. Yet, a March 8 Movement government would have probably favored or lobbied for a political solution instead of a military siege. Also, if this was the case, the government would have more likely respected Nasrallah's red lines related to the Lebanese Army's bombing of the camp.

Some observers would hesitate to consider Siniora's government as a sovereign body. Instead, they regarded it as merely the mouthpiece of its US ally and do not give it any significant political power. The exclusion of the NBC camp and the de-politicization of its inhabitants is not necessarily the decision of the sovereign in this case, but rather an indicator of its lack of capacity and political power. Leaving the NBC community "to be fed

by UNRWA and guarded by the army”¹⁶⁴ might be a deliberate choice to turn NBC refugees into bare lives, but can also be a reflection of the political ineffectiveness of a Lebanese government, boycotted by six of its ministers for over a year, with the Lebanese Parliament not meeting even once from November 2006 until May 2008.

When evaluating the level of sovereignty of the 2007 Lebanese government, some would question the source of such sovereignty rather than its existence. In the case of an indebted country like Lebanon, the reconstruction bill of a camp like NBC is not affordable. Based on this observation, Hanafi draws attention to the role of donors in empowering a particular sovereign by channeling their funds and resources through its bodies. Hanafi sees in the NBC case a typical postwar scenario that reminds us of Gaza, Iraq and Afghanistan, where different actors chose one local elite as the conduit of both their huge funds and their political agendas.¹⁶⁵ If this is the case, then the Lebanese government, the recipient of the biggest chunk of funds, has derived its sovereignty from state donors, who participated in the Vienna conference. In this context, one cannot but think of the USA grant to fully fund the “community and proximity policing” component costing USD five million, as proposed by Siniora’s government. “A US-trained police in our camp is part of a bigger American project taking place here,” says a NBC refugee, pointing at the role of external powers in shaping the future of his camp. In the eyes of this refugee and many others, the donor is the sovereign.

¹⁶⁴ Hanafi and Long, 156.

¹⁶⁵ Hanafi, *Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp*.

The most visible manifestation of Lebanese sovereignty in NBC is that of the Lebanese Army (LA). From the moment it entered the camp in May 2007, the LA insisted on establishing itself as the only force confronting FAI. Refusing the Palestinian Leadership's offer to cooperate with a NBC security PLO force in July 2007,¹⁶⁶ the LA insisted on its absolute sovereignty in the battlefield, even if this necessitated a bloodier price. The NBC War might be the only military operation conducted by the LA in post-war Lebanon. Always prioritizing the Lebanese popular public opinion of its performance, the LA steered clear of internal conflicts to preserve its a-sectarian nature and emerged as the only unbiased Lebanese institution. This national consensus on its performance makes the LA, in the eyes of NBC refugees, a reflection of Lebanese public opinion and thus the focus of their criticism of the Lebanese handling of their camp's file.¹⁶⁷In the NBC Palestinian space, the LA's mission was easier in terms of potential political losses. Occurring nine months after the July 2006 War, in which the LA's role was less than minimal, the NBC War presented itself as an occasion for the LA to re-polish its public image.¹⁶⁸ "Being involved in the NBC War made better military CVs and army officers were rewarded for their participation in the military operation in our camp," says a NBC refugee. Promotions in the LA followed the NBC War as well as the election of the LA commander Michel Suleiman as president of Lebanon in May 2008.

¹⁶⁶Samer Abboud, "The Siege of Nahr El Bared and the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 2&3 (2009): 37.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, 3.

Immediately after it fell in September 2nd 2007, NBC was declared a restricted military zone. This continues to be the situation as of the date of writing. “What does the LA’s tight security control serve after the total eradication of FAI, whose militants entered NBC from the very same checkpoints controlled by the LA?” ask NBC refugees. Their interrogation is similar to Agamben’s rhetorical question: “How could we not think that a system that can no longer function at all except on the basis of emergency would not also be interested in preserving such an emergency at any price”¹⁶⁹.

With the transfer of some of the LA security responsibilities to the Internal Security Forces (ISF), as proposed by the governance model of the Vienna Document, another Lebanese sovereign appears in NBC. The Lebanese government spent millions of the US dollars it secured in the Vienna conference on building the capacities of the ISF, in preparation for the “community and proximity policing” role they would assume from their already-existing police station in the New Camp and the newly-built police station in package three of the Old Camp.

Although the role of the ISF in NBC was framed as complementary to that of the LA, facts on the ground reflect a different reality. Unlike the national representativeness of the LA, the ISF is known for its close ties to the March 14 political coalition and its support to Saad Hariri, head of the Sunni Future Movement, as openly articulated at many occasions by ISF Chief Ashraf Rifi. In a recent interview with the International Crisis Group, Rifi emphasized the relatively larger security role of the ISF in comparison with that of the LA in the post-conflict NBC: “We will deal with Nahr al-Bared in the same way we deal with

¹⁶⁹Agamben, *Means without Ends*, 6.

any other piece of Lebanese territory. In the future, the LAF will be on the outside of the camp and will enter only if necessary".¹⁷⁰ Rifi's words express the competition between the two Lebanese security institutions, now transferred to NBC. The poor coordination between the ISF and the LA was exemplified in the early moments of the conflict, when the LA learned -along with the Lebanese general public -- that the ISF had been conducting surveillance of FAI and had not shared the results of its investigations with the Lebanese Army' Intelligence.¹⁷¹ In NBC, refugees provide clearer examples of this sovereignty contest over the camp between the LA and the ISF. They refer to a recent Friday sermon in which an Imam, known for meeting weekly with the LA, issued a Fatwa banning cooperation with the network of informers inside the camp. "Which informers is he referring to if he himself is an informer?" asks a NBC refugee. Then he answers: "the Imam means here Rifi's group of informers [those recruited by the ISF]".

The Discourse on NBC: Old Scarecrows and New Euphemisms

Aware of the authoritative effect of language, I start by examining the political discourse surrounding the NBC War and the discussions related to its post-conflict governance. Outlining dominant discursive practices framing NBC and the meanings they convey help historicize consequent political effects and the birth of counter-effects, visible in the camp's re-establishment processes. The language in action can pave the way to certain events and cause counter-reactions resisting and thus interrupting the course of events. In the case of NBC, the re-construction of the figure and the space of the Palestinian refugee through

¹⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, 12.

¹⁷¹ Abboud, 36.

discourse contributes to the re-definition of his/her presence and the future of his/her space. Reviving the “scarecrow of *tawteen*”¹⁷², borrowing the American discourse of the “global war on terror” (GWOT)¹⁷³, and defining governance as unilateral security, the NBC conflict re-problematized the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

The public phobia of *tawteen* (the naturalization of Palestinians in Lebanon) has always served as a political technology in the hands of Lebanese leaders. Soon after the NBC War erupted, Lebanese political opponents exchanged accusations of causing the war to implement the bigger project of *tawteen*. Nasrallah’s “red lines” and the Mach 14 government’s military solution were both understood by political rivals as promoting *tawteen*, the only common political taboo in Lebanon connoting national betrayal¹⁷⁴. The camp’s destruction and delays in reconstruction are framed as the introduction of Palestinians’ implantation, allowing them to “invade” and stay longer in “Lebanese spaces”, ignoring that almost all displaced NBC refugees relocated to other “Palestinian spaces,” mainly the Baddawi camp. In a content analysis of the editorials of four prominent Lebanese newspapers that echo different political logics, Hanafi, Chaaban, and Seyfert notice that they all associate the destruction of NBC with a start of *tawteen*.¹⁷⁵ This forced association prevented the development of a political solution and reduced it to a humanitarian intervention guaranteeing the non-passage of the Palestinian refugees to the level of the citizen.

¹⁷²Sari Hanafi, Jad Chaaban, and Karin Seyfert, “Social Exclusion of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: Reflections on the Mechanisms that Cement their Persistent Poverty,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* (2010): 9.

¹⁷³ Mansour and Yassin, 19.

¹⁷⁴ Hanafi et al, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

When presenting *tawteen* as the ultimate form of national treason, another discursive by-product emerges, that affirming Palestinians' right to return. The right to return, as opposed to *tawteen*, becomes a powerful discursive practice justifying any political action in relation to Palestinian refugees. Under the four guiding principles of the Lebanese government's policy on Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and NBC, the self-serving right to return appears second after Lebanese sovereignty, and presents itself as the one and only political solution for Palestinians. Again, human rights appear as entangled with citizenship and nationality; for Palestinians, their rights can only be regained with their return to Palestine.

Beside the revival of traditional discourses on Palestinians, Nisrine Mansour and Nasser Yassin detect a GWOT-like discourse¹⁷⁶ in the framing of the war between the LA and FAI¹⁷⁷, representing NBC refugees as a national threat and facilitating the transformation of their camp to a militarized zone. Blurring the multinational identity of the Salafi group created the false impression that it had a Palestinian character, simply because FAI was able to secure a military base inside the camp. This representation, aiming to justify the military solution against a civilian camp, constructed (perhaps unintentionally) the NBC community as a national threat. The mainstream public reasoning followed this logic: FAI enjoyed a Palestinian civilian cover and was now attacking a national symbol, the LA. Palestinians were a national threat, the public concluded. Consequently, this formula justified the uneven levels of "deservedness for protection"¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Global War on Terrorism

¹⁷⁷ Mansour and Yassin, 2010.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 20.

the victims of the NBC conflict enjoyed. While FAI militants were obviously undeserving protection, Palestinian civilians were constructed as less deserving of protection than their Lebanese counterparts, because of FAI's Palestinian label. Mansour and Yassin find the division of the camp and its surrounding into three rings a revealing symbolic reflection of this classification: the level of civilian protection gradually decreases as one moves from the Lebanese third ring to the New Camp's second ring (home to Lebanese and Palestinians) and finally to the purely Palestinian Old Camp.¹⁷⁹ Isin and Rygiel make a similar observation when describing the more complex construction of today's contiguous spaces of abjection and citizenship and the "overlapping spaces of greater and lesser degrees of rights and rightlessness" that they create.¹⁸⁰ They note that the partition of NBC into an old and a new camp, as promoted in the Vienna Document, is not innocent. This recent discursive practice not only reflects on the level of protection enjoyed by the inhabitants of the two separated entities, but also on the funding allocated to each of them.

The Lebanese official handling of the NBC crisis has also marked some discursive shifts embodied in the use of euphemisms and a softer political tone. Although the NBC conflict reproduced images of Palestinian camps as "zones of lawlessness", "criminals' safe havens", "states within a state", and "security islands", none of these expressions that emerged during the Lebanese civil war re-appeared in official documents and declarations commenting on the crisis. In the Vienna Document, the Lebanese government's perception of a post-conflict refugee regime in NBC is framed by conciliatory language and an

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁸⁰ Isin and Rygiel, 199.

abundance of trendy development terms. For the purpose of this section, I highlight how the repetitive use of the term “governance” in the Vienna Document serves as a euphemism for “securitization”.

The assertive repetition of the lack of legitimate governance in the camp throughout the Vienna Document is a linguistic technique aimed at projecting NBC as an ungoverned space and hence a dangerous zone¹⁸¹, rendering its securitization urgent and necessary. Under Pillar One of Three of the Lebanese government’s strategic approach to recovery and reconstruction, the “transparent and effective governance” to be established in NBC (also referred to as ‘enabling environment’) is first and foremost about “enforcing security and rule of law inside NBC through community and proximity policing.” The other three elements of this pillar only mention local development projects in surrounding Lebanese areas and some bureaucratic details concerning the role of UNRWA. The other two pillars are confined to reconstruction works.¹⁸²In other words, the complex concept of governance in NBC is simplistically reduced to one component: “community and proximity policing”. The latter component carries another euphemism. Reading through the Vienna Document, policing appears as a one-sided task carried solely by the Lebanese ISF.¹⁸³ The participatory approach the word “community” connotes blurs this unilateral approach to security. Security Committees, Popular Committees, and the Armed Struggle are invisible in the proposed plan.

¹⁸¹Sari Hanafi and Ismail Sheikh Hassan, “(In)security and Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Nahr al-Bared Refugee Camp,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 1 (2010): 29.

¹⁸² Government of Lebanon, 46.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 51.

It can be argued that the Lebanese street has also its legitimate concerns in NBC as the 2007 conflict drastically affected Lebanese living in surrounding areas and the economy as a whole. This justifies the securitization of NBC as a means of conflict prevention and the intervention of the ISF as a response to the “security vacuum” in NBC¹⁸⁴. While these concerns might be valid, the Lebanese government does not address the root causes behind the absence of conventional governance in NBC and instead presents an “ahistorical and de-contextualized”¹⁸⁵ plan that ignores the political aspect of the problem. While the pre-1968 experience in camps has proved the failure of unilateral securitization, the 2007 conflict provided evidence of the inability of political and armed factions to act as a deterrent force preventing the activity of FAI inside NBC. And so, why doesn’t the Vienna Document present an innovative solution to protect Palestinians and Lebanese national security, a third solution that is neither exclusively Lebanese nor merely Palestinian?

Designing the New NBC: Experimenting with Total Domination¹⁸⁶

I move now to analyze the Lebanese state’s institutional practices related to the re-building of NBC and the management of its space and inhabitants. Following Foucault’s classification of technologies of power into two mutually-inclusive series, I start by exposing the manifestations of “regulatory technology of life” in the physical re-arrangement of the camp, initially proposed by the Lebanese state in 2007. Then, I look at the “disciplinary

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Abboud, 43.

¹⁸⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 120.

technology of body” employed by the Lebanese state in post-conflict NBC, primarily through proximity and community policing.

Seeking to establish its own definition of equilibrium, the institution of power utilizes a “technology of life” to preserve the “norm” and adjust the natural development of events. Operating at the macro-level, the technology of life is interested in the body of the population as a whole or, in other words, the convergence of their bodies. Making sure that the population does not turn aside from the direction it chooses, the state anticipates random events and actively works to eliminate the chance of their happening.¹⁸⁷The Lebanese state’s initial vision of the spatialization of NBC reveals a similar logic.

Was the physical re-arrangement of NBC a spontaneous response to its destruction in the 2007 conflict? While most of the reports assessing the economic losses in NBC claim that all the buildings of the old camp were damaged beyond repair as a direct result of the War, social workers who had access to the camp on September 3rd, 2007, report a different reality. “On that day, we saw a lot of intact buildings,” recalls a Palestinian social worker. “When we returned the next day, the same buildings were burnt or reduced to rubble,” he adds. It is worth noting that the military activity of FAI was almost limited to the New Camp and that a large amount of the damaged buildings in the Old Camp were demolished by the indiscriminate shelling by the LA,¹⁸⁸ which was not familiar with the camp geography and adopted this military tactic to spare the lives of its soldiers. Based on this reality, many NBC refugees believe that the 2007 conflict was a planned conspiracy to destroy their camp.

¹⁸⁷ Foucault, 249.

¹⁸⁸ Hanafi and Hassan, 34.

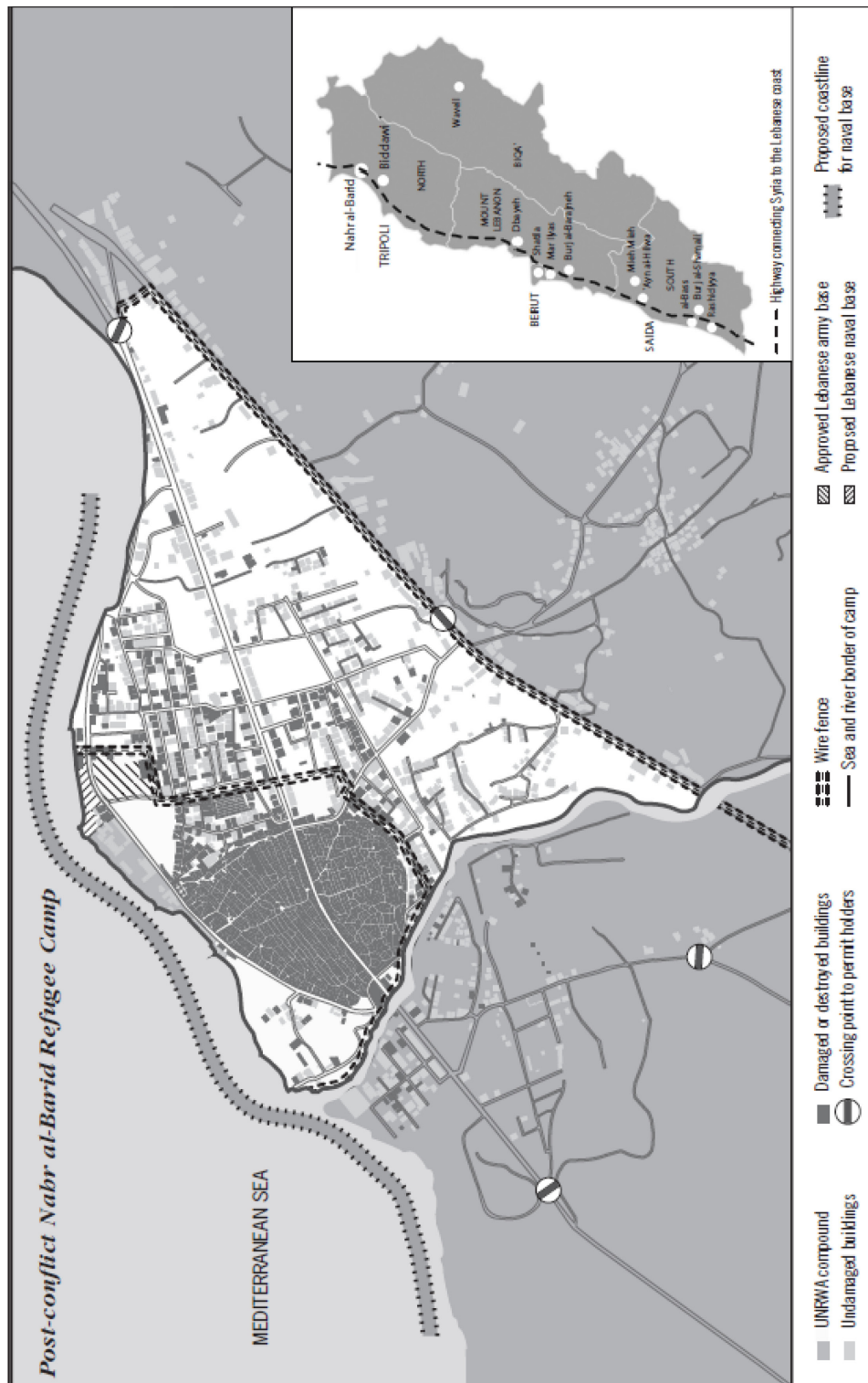
“The camp will not return to the previous environmental, social and political status quo that facilitated its takeover by terrorist,”¹⁸⁹ states the Vienna Document. Away from conspiracies, the NBC conflict has established itself as an occasion to reassert sovereignty over the camp or, euphemistically, “an opportunity to improve both the camp and its environment”¹⁹⁰. Therefore, the deliberate erasure of the Old Camp is likely a fact on the ground created by the LA (or any other state actor behind the decision) to facilitate the physical re-arrangement of the camp in a way that will establish the Lebanese state as the absolute sovereign.

By exaggerating the chaotic architecture of the NBC camp¹⁹¹ and ignoring the socio-economic and legal exclusion behind this disorder, the NBC community is represented as chaotic and thus uncontrollable. When the physical look of an environment is presented as expressive of the nature of those who occupy it, an intervention to re-organize this space appears as a solution to regulate their behavior. An orderly space, constructed in a way that minimizes the chances of undesirable events and maximizes the ability to contain such events, is expected to produce an obedient and more controllable NBC community.

¹⁸⁹ Government of Lebanon, 18.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Manour and Yassin, 29.



This map is prepared by *AlKharita Media Team* in [January 23, 2009] (NBC Press kit, 2009) and translated to English by Hanafi and Hassan, 2010: pp. 36

A random undesirable event in NBC for the Lebanese state is primarily a repetition of the 2007 conflict or any similar incident in which the LA finds itself obliged to confront a radical irregular armed group. Not surprisingly, the LA rather than the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU) assumed responsibility for drawing up the major lines of the initial NBC reconstruction plan. The DGU, the governmental body usually in charge of urban planning and public works, was kept away from related discussions and preparation meetings. Instead its role was reduced to a consultative body adjusting minor details in the final plan.¹⁹²LPDC, the only Lebanese non-military body involved in NBC, was totally absent in the reconstruction planning process. LPDC backed away with the establishment of the NBC Recovery and Reconstruction Cell (RRC) in May 2008.¹⁹³

In the eyes of the LA, NBC seemed a military zone rather a residential area. In the initial plan proposed by the LA, the major change in the re-arrangement of the camp was the increase of the public space to the detriment of private properties and residential areas. The LA plan replaced the narrow alleyways of NBC (on average 1.5 meters wide)¹⁹⁴ by 16-17 meter wide streets to allow military vehicles to pass and prevent the easy movement of irregular armed groups. Although NBRC, together with UNRWA, was able to secure some concessions in this regard in its final Master Plan, other LA demands could not be compromised. "The LA had seemingly provided UNRWA with a list of non-negotiable

¹⁹²Hanafi, *Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp*.

¹⁹³ Government of Lebanon, 16.

¹⁹⁴ UNRWA, "Preliminary Master Plan and Guidelines for the Reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Palestine Refugee Camp," [2008]: 7.
[http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/B74231078356010AC125746C005A0EFD/\\$file/NBC_Preliminary_Master_Plan_and_Guidelines_FINAL_19May08.pdf](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/B74231078356010AC125746C005A0EFD/$file/NBC_Preliminary_Master_Plan_and_Guidelines_FINAL_19May08.pdf) (accessed April 21, 2012).

issues,” says a NBRC former member recalling the early UNRWA-NBRC meetings. This list included adding balconies and ramps, as flat buildings and wide streets will guarantee easy aerial surveillance and speedy movement of military vehicles, and thus give power over undesirable events. Another limitation imposed by the LA was restricting the maximum number of floors allowed in a building to four storeys.¹⁹⁵ Palestinians in Lebanon legally deprived of the right to buy land and own property, have adopted vertical expansion as a solution to population growth. Imposing a limit on this vertical expansion is symbolically and practically an intervention to keep population growth rates within an “acceptable” norm, given that Palestinian are legally excluded from the right to own and inherit property outside the borders of the old NBC. As Foucault suggests, introducing measures to alter the procreative activity of a population is a technology of life affecting the sexual behavior of individuals.¹⁹⁶

The design of Khatib and Alami (K&A), the engineering company contracted by the Lebanese government, complements the conflict-prevention logic of the LA. Ignoring the social geographies of pre-conflict NBC, K&A suggests building various building plots, each with standardized apartments housing families of the same size. The standardized aspect of K&A’s sketch, inspired by the stratified data of refugees, is expected to impact the community’s living experience by making the behavior of its individual homogenous and uniform.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 13.

¹⁹⁶ Foucault, 251.

The visibility of power institutions within an urban space is another indicator of the technology of life employed by this power. In a letter from the NBC community to Prime Minister Siniora on January 2009, refugees protested against the location of the military naval base¹⁹⁷ and the LA Regiment inside the Old Camp of NBC. In the letter, NBC refugees exposed the regulatory practices introduced to their lives through the reconstruction process: “Does the reconstruction of NBC aim to replace wedding halls, playgrounds, and spaces of dignified life by military and naval bases? The NBC community calls on the Lebanese government to at least reconsider the location of these bases and build them away from schools and residential neighborhoods.”¹⁹⁸

Community and Proximity Policing: Training Refugees’ Bodies

Complementing the “technology of life”, the disciplinary “technology of body” is centered on the individual body and shapes the way this organism is understood and how it functions. Because disciplining the individual body facilitates the regulation of the population, power institutions are created to train the body by keeping it under close surveillance and by engaging grounding measures if necessary, similar to animal domestication methods. Observed at all times, the individual body is trained to become docile; its constant visibility makes it always alerted not to upset the power institution, and thus makes it easier for the latter to control the population made of this biological

¹⁹⁷ On 16 January 2009, the Lebanese cabinet issued a ministerial decision to build a military base on the seashore of the NBC Old Camp.

¹⁹⁸ *File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants*, Encounter with Nahr El Bared – Press kit (2009), 2.

multiplicity.¹⁹⁹ The military siege in NBC and the introduction of community and proximity policing in the camp are revealing examples of the technologies of body.

Just as the deliberate erasure of the camp is accomplished to allow the production of a new technology of life in NBC through the physical re-arrangement of the camp, the discursive practices criminalizing NBC refugees by identifying them with FAI militants paves the way to the smooth introduction of a new technology of body through the supreme control of the LA and the ISF. The words of this Lebanese woman residing in NBC prove that the mainstream Lebanese public has internalized the discourse of the state justifying the military siege on the camp: “The militants entered as civilians and Palestinians here married them to their daughters. A tighter security control will guarantee that this will not be repeated again,” says NBC Lebanese resident. “It is also possible that they [FAI] came from the sea and that’s why we need the army there,” she adds defending the establishment of a naval base inside the camp.

On the Palestinian side, the securitization of the camp is understood differently or, better said, vaguely understood. “I understand they are policing the camp, but if Palestinians are excluded from the Lebanese law, which law are they applying?” asks a NBC refugee. To understand the logic behind the introduction of policing in NBC, it would be useful to trace back the origins of the policing technology of governments. According to Foucault, the police is the name of the institution created by the nation-state when the latter “recognized the necessity of defining, describing and organizing very explicitly this

¹⁹⁹ Foucault, 249-250.

new technology of power [the disciplinary technology of body]”.²⁰⁰It is likely that the Lebanese state, determined to “reinstate its sovereignty”²⁰¹ in post-conflict NBC, had a similar revelation when it decided to institutionalize its disciplinary technology of body inside NBC. Now, looking at the query raised by this refugee, Arendt tells us that the answer lies in the very same question that he poses. Not willing to provide a surrogate law for those excluded from its legal protection, the nation-state hands over its governing responsibilities to the police. In this case, national interest gains supremacy over the law and the police becomes a substitute of law: The nation-state, incapable of providing a law for those who had lost the protection of a national government, transferred the whole matter to the police. (...) it (the police) was no longer an instrument to carry out and enforce the law, but had become a ruling authority independent of governments and ministries.²⁰²

In accord with Arendt, Agamben outlines the complementary role of humanitarian organizations and the police in the camp, both reducing the refugee to an apolitical figure.²⁰³ In spaces of exception like camps, the sovereign can only manifest itself through the figure of the police, who are “the place where the proximity and the almost constitutive exchange between violence and right that characterizes the figure of the sovereign is shown more nakedly and clearly than anywhere else”.²⁰⁴ Once exposed, the manifestation

²⁰⁰ Barker, 64.

²⁰¹ Government of Lebanon, 51.

²⁰² Arendt, 285.

²⁰³ Agamben, *Means without Ends*, 19.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 103.

of the sovereign in the police makes it necessary to criminalize the human subject it controls²⁰⁵, perhaps to make the lack of a distinction between violence and right less shameful.

It can be argued that this logic of sovereignty does not apply to the case of NBC where the newly introduced security arrangements were approved by the PLO, the official representative of Palestinians in Lebanon, as stated by the Lebanese government in the Vienna Document.²⁰⁶ Yet the PLO, which had a symbolic role in drafting the Vienna Document, became aware of the security and governance only through a printed version of the paper distributed a few hours before the launching of the conference, just like all other donor states attending the event.²⁰⁷

“Welcome to Kalandia,” sarcastically comment a NBC refugee while we cross the LA checkpoint to enter NBC. Comparing himself to the Palestinians who daily cross the Kalandia checkpoint established by the Israeli Defense Forces between Ramallah and Jerusalem, this refugee draws an interesting parallel between the bodies of the NBC community and those of Palestinians in the West Bank, both daily reminded of the potential threat of their collective bodies and are trained to remain obedient to the sovereign.

A closer analogy, voiced frequently in NBC, is the comparison between the LA's permits system and the newly-introduced ISF, on one hand, and the Second Bureau

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 105.

²⁰⁶ Government of Lebanon, 51.

²⁰⁷ Hanafi and Hassan, 42.

controlling Palestinian camps in Lebanon between 1959 and 1969, on the other hand. During that period, Palestinian camp dwellers were subject to similar measures, such as mandatory exit and entry permits, curfews, the outlawing freedom of association, and banning the Nasserist radio station *Sawt Al Arab* (The Voice of Arabs).²⁰⁸ “This reminds me of the Second Bureau’s days,” says a NBC refugee who is too young to have experienced that period. It is more likely that the collective memory he inherited is now speaking, a memory of the bodies of his parents and grandparents who were trained by the disciplinary power of the Second Bureau. “The people exploded and they kicked them out of their camp,” he adds recalling the 1968 popular uprising against the Second Bureau in NBC. “People are now swallowing humiliation at checkpoints, but soon they will burst out,” he predicts.

“I am besieged right now.” The way this NBC refugee and many others articulate their individual existence is expressive of the disciplinary practices their bodies experience. To enter his camp, the NBC refugee has to receive a permit from the LA, wait daily in long queues (on average for 25 minutes), pass by the inspection machine, and have his car searched and his permit checked.²⁰⁹ Inside the militarized zone of NBC, there is another military siege. Till now, special permits are needed to have access to the Old Camp, surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Procedures do not spare the dead. When the inspection machine detected suspicious material, LA soldier had to open and search the coffin. “Even in death, we lose,” commented the Palestinian woman accompanying the dead body.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 29.

²⁰⁹ File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants, 9.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

Do these procedures succeed in conflict prevention? With the growing frustration of the NBC community, recorded confrontations between the army and refugees at checkpoints and the tensions within the Palestinian community caused by the activity of informers recruited by the LA and the ISF²¹¹ prove that the securitization of the camp is provoking problems rather than preventing conflict.²¹² For the NBC community, securitization is illogical when the LA does not dare to enter lawless areas in Tripoli where fundamentalist Salafi networks originate and flourish.

“Security is not achievable through naval bases, regiments, army checkpoints, and ISF police stations in the absence of law, rights, and transparency,”²¹³ wrote the NBC community in a letter to PM Siniora in January 2009. What is the interest for a civilian community, which had drastically suffered from a deadly destructive conflict, in opposing a system that wants to bring security to its space? What NBC refugees are protesting in this letter is not security, but their exclusion from law, their deprivation of rights in return for obligations, and the blurry functions of the power institutions that daily discipline their bodies.

²¹¹ Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

²¹² Hanafi and Long, 150.

²¹³ File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants, 2.

The Moral Siege of NBC: Mainstream Sunni Public Opinion

Aware that the hostility against Palestinians expressed by Sunni Muslims in North Lebanon does not represent all the Sunnis of Lebanon and its North, and acknowledging that a great number of NBC refugees identify themselves with the mainstream Lebanese Sunni politics, this section tackles local resentment against the NBC community, following the 2007 conflict, specifically among Sunni Muslims known for their empathy with their Sunni counterparts, the Palestinian refugees. Highlighting rising tensions between the NBC Palestinian community and their Lebanese neighbors is significant, not only because it reveals shifts in the politics of the Lebanese Sunni street, but also because it provides evidence that the majority of the Sunni community in north Lebanon has internalized the discursive practices of their government and offered the latter support in its post-conflict NBC projects.

“As soon as the fighting stops, people will go down to prevent the camp from being rebuilt,” said Abou Mohamad, whose son was killed while fighting on the side of the LA during the war.²¹⁴ Abou Mohamad and the majority of the Sunni villages surrounding NBC hold Palestinians responsible for the conflict. Yet, the tendency to blame Palestinians for events for which they paid the highest price dates back to the days of the civil war. In a survey conducted in 2002, designed to measure the Lebanese perceptions of Palestinian responsibility for the civil war, the vast majority of respondents blamed Palestinians for the outbreak of the conflict: 93 percent of Maronites and Greek Catholics, 96 percent of Greek Orthodox, 89 percent of Shiites, 75 percent of Sunnis, and 61 percent of Druze made this

²¹⁴ Horowitz.

connection²¹⁵. However, the particularity of the NBC conflict lies in the Lebanese side expressing the anger against Palestinians, even though the Sunni community is known for its sectarian and political affinity with Palestinians. In the months following the fall of the camp, Lebanese residents of neighboring areas gathered in large numbers in front of NBC to protest its re-building. They even demanded throwing Palestinians (the NBC community) in the sea. “We are witnessing a bitter present,” says a NBC refugee, recalling the days where Lebanese Muslims used to take blessings from the corpses of *fidaiyin*.²¹⁶ A more revealing figure is the 90 percent decrease of the rate of intermarriage between NBC refugees and their Lebanese neighbors as reported by the Sharia’a Court of the NBC Popular Committee, a year after the end of the conflict.²¹⁷ While this figure can serve as a powerful tool to illustrate the Lebanese-Palestinian social rift resulting from the conflict, such statistics should be interpreted with caution as intermarriage rates before the conflict are not accessible. Low intermarriage rates prior to the conflict may render this figure insignificant.

Why did hostility against Palestinians surface in the Lebanese Sunni street, following the 2007 conflict? The case of Abou Mohamad and others who had paid the high cost of the war might associate this phenomenon with the bloodshed of the conflict and the proximity of the two communities. However, the political developments in Lebanon since the year 2005 tell more than that. Following the assassination of former Prime Minister

²¹⁵Simon Haddad, *The Palestinian Impasse in Lebanon: The Politics of Refugee Integration* (Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), 85.

²¹⁶ Interviews with NBC Refugees, April 2012.

²¹⁷ File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants, 5.

Rafic Hariri in February 2005, political alliances and rivalries were produced and have been constantly and radically shifting since then. Among them, one alliance and one rivalry remain solid: the first is the coalition uniting Hariri's Future movement (the most popular party among Sunnis in Lebanon) and the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces, while the second is the rising animosity between the Future Movement and Hezbollah, a relation expressive of the Sunni-Shiite rift in Lebanon and the region. While the Future Movement-Lebanese Forces alliance does not mean that Lebanese Sunnis supporting Hariri are now defending the role of the Lebanese Forces in killing Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila or have forgotten the Christian party's practices during the civil war, yet the mainstream Sunni public had to remodel many of its convictions in 2005 to make them match the choices of its leadership and have ended up internalizing this new belief. On the other hand, the repercussions of the Future Movement's relationship with Hezbollah on the Sunni discourse on Palestinians are even more apparent. Since 2005, the Sunni street has often identified its politics by what was opposed to Hezbollah. In addition, there is the increasing popularity of the Salafi thought to the detriment of secular Arab nationalism. During the conflict, Nasrallah's red lines provoked many Sunnis across the country. Their anger against the NBC community was primarily the product of Hezbollah's sympathy with them. Abou Mohammad's solution to the NBC displacement problem articulates sarcastically the sectarian aspect of the tensions: "They should be put on the border in the South (predominantly Shiite and politically supporting Hezbollah) so they can smell Palestine soil and remember it"²¹⁸.

²¹⁸ Horowitz.

The NBC Conflict: A Wake up Call for the other Palestinian Camps in Lebanon

With the outbreak of the NBC conflict in May 2007, eyes turned on Ain El Helweh, the largest and the most armed of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Fearing a fate similar to that of NBC, Palestinian camps in Lebanon, especially Ain El Helweh in the South, witnessed an uneasy calm. Worries were revived by the fall of NBC in September 2007 and the Lebanese government's publicly announcing its intention to turn NBC reconstruction and recovery program into a model for the rest of the camps in Lebanon.²¹⁹

In the first days of the war, everyone was surprised that it was not Ain El Helweh but NBC, the Palestinian camp with the lowest crime rate in Lebanon, which became the theater of the most violent combat in the history of post-war Lebanon. In Ain El Helweh, from where the FAI phenomenon was imported to NBC²²⁰, political factions and armed groups saw in NBC an alarming situation. Soon, they found themselves revisiting their military agendas and adopting a conciliatory approach toward the LA. A revealing example would be the first meeting between the Salafi group *Usbat Al Ansar* and the LA to think of a strategy to end the activities of *Jund Al Sham*, a radical breakaway of *Usbat Al Ansar* and the only group to openly support FAI in its confrontations with the LA.²²¹

For the afflicted Palestinian community in North Lebanon, the NBC conflict provoked different thoughts. For some political and armed factions, the NBC conflict

²¹⁹ Government of Lebanon, 11.

²²⁰ During the days of the conflict, rumours spread about Future Movement MP Bahia Hariri paying for Islamists in the Taamir neighborhood, located at the borders of Ein El Hilweh Palestinian camp in Saida, to relocate outside the city. Those Islamist were believed to constitute the nucleus of FAI.

²²¹ International Crisis Group, 20.

provided evidence of the necessity of arming Palestinian camps: “After the Nahr El Bared crisis, we are willing to do anything in the other camps - to be armed to teeth to avoid replication of the Nahr El Bared model,” says a representative of Fatah Al Intifada in the Baddawi camp.²²²

The NBC phobia infected the PLO, whose leadership’s surrendering position, was interpreted by some as a political tactic to spare other Palestinian camps a Lebanese intervention similar to that of NBC. The PLO leadership’s political stance, reflected by the declarations of its representative Zaki, did not find it enough to support the military solution of the Lebanese state in NBC, but also insisted on apologizing from the Lebanese people on the wrongdoings of the PLO during the civil war.²²³ It is worth noting that Zaki’s position expresses the diplomatic stance of the PA in Ramallah and does not match the popular aspirations of the PLO’s supporters in Lebanon or the political opinions of their internal leadership.

As the NBC file dropped back from the Lebanese political agenda, the Palestinian community’s fears were eased and the NBC community was left alone in its plight. Actually, criticism of the NBC refugees soon dominated the feelings of sympathy and solidarity showed by the Palestinian communities in other camps in the days of the War. “In Ain El Helweh, they call us cowards,” says NBC refugee. Nahr El Bared was the only Palestinian camp that was not defended by its community in Lebanon.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Knudsen, *Nahr el-Bared*, 106.

Conclusion

Damaged buildings and Lebanese soldiers chatting, while refugees look at their homes from behind the wire fence; this is the NBC camp in the eyes of a Palestinian child. At the bottom of his painting, he writes: “Nahr El Bared, the Holocaust”.²²⁴ It is certainly not possible to claim that “a unity of logic and purpose” exists between the Nazi concentration camp and modern refugee camps like NBC.²²⁵ Yet what this Palestinian child is trying to expose is probably the illogical siege imposed on his camp’s community. As it regained its feet, NBC will witness mature acts of resistance from its refugees and other non-state actors, who will reassert their sovereignty over the camp and interrupt the Lebanese government post-conflict NBC. Details follow in the next chapter.

²²⁴ File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants, 10.

²²⁵Latif, 265.

CHAPTER 5

THE UNRWA – NBRC SOVEREIGNTY

As the Lebanese government struggled to establish itself as the absolute sovereign in NBC and rushed to employ various technologies of control to enforce its own vision of the camp's new governance, other non-state actors intervened to re-assert their past sovereignty over NBC. Resisting the militarization of the planning process, NBC refugees counteracted the state's project by developing various acts of resistance, the most mature of which was the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC). By mobilizing the community against the government's plan and through its partnership with UNRWA, NBRC openly exposed the political logic of the state's technologies of control and succeeded to alter the spatialization rules they imposed. The UNRWA-NBRC partnership contributed to the uniqueness of the scene in post-conflict NBC. By embracing NBRC and the political activism conveyed by its campaign, UNRWA was perceived as revising its apolitical mandate and finally fulfilling its commitment to meaningful participatory partnerships with Palestinian refugees, as articulated in the Geneva Conference (2004) and the agency's Mid-Term Plan (MTP) for 2005-2009.

Based on these observations, this chapter looks at the role of UNRWA in the re-establishment processes of the NBC society in terms of the potential changes the 2007 conflict had brought to the agency as well as the influence of latter's interventions in the development of events in post-2007 NBC. Moreover, the chapter is particularly interested in the genuineness of the UNRWA-NBRC relationship and its gains and pains for each side of the partnership.

I start this chapter by providing a brief overview of UNRWA in general and its history in pre-2007 Lebanon in specific and then move to examine the agency's role in the recovery and reconstruction of NBC, particularly through its partnership with NBRC. Later, I highlight the various traditional and innovative acts of resistance utilized by NBC refugees to hinder the state's project, with a special focus on NBRC, the concessions it secured from the Lebanese state, and its general evolution from July 2007 till the date of writing. Finally, I leave the final say to the NBC refugees and evaluate through their lenses the successes and failures of UNRWA and NBRC in echoing the voices of the population they claim to represent.

UNRWA's Political Cauldron

Operating in a highly political environment with its political voice silenced, controversies have always accompanied UNRWA. This paradox, originating from its humanitarian mandate -the by-product of the breaking of identities between the human and the citizen²²⁶ - has rendered the agency's *raison d'être* and its actual role illogical together. An

²²⁶Agamben, *Means without Ends*, 21.

imperialist tool, a de facto Palestinian state, a “phantom sovereignty”²²⁷, the scapegoat of refugee-host political wrangling, and many other images illustrate UNRWA in the eyes of the population it serves. UNRWA also appears as an “organizational anomaly”²²⁸ in the UN, being the only agency fully dependent on voluntary contributions to fund its activities. Because of this, UNRWA had experienced financial crises throughout its history, often regarded by Palestine refugees²²⁹, and even by UNRWA local staff²³⁰, as politically motivated.

As the right to return or compensation guaranteed by UNGA Resolution 194 has not been achievable, UNRWA’s mandate has been renewed every three years since the establishment of the agency in 1949. UNRWA’s longevity is an indicator of the international community’s failure to resolve the Palestinian problem or more precisely the product of the nonexistence of a durable solution for Palestinian refugees who chose repatriation as the one and only solution to their plight, at least in their political mantras. The 1956 Suez War, the 1967 Arab defeat, the 1987 Palestinian Intifada²³¹, and the 1993 Oslo Accords²³² are all constitutive moments in the life of UNRWA that have remodeled the agency’s working definition and scope of programs. However, at all stages, UNRWA’s apolitical mandate

²²⁷ Hanafi, *Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp*.

²²⁸ Schiff, 6.

²²⁹ UNRWA, *UNRWA Past, Present, and Future*, 16.

²³⁰ Schiff, 155.

²³¹ Schiff.

²³² Jalal Al Hussein and Riccardo Bocco. “Dynamics of humanitarian aid, local and regional Politics: the Palestine refugees as a case-study,” in *Palestinian Refugees: identity, space, and place in the Levant*, ed. Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

persists, pending another UNGA resolution. Yet, attempts to grow beyond a mere service provider were noticed in UNRWA in the last decade, even if not framed as part of a revision of the agency's mandate. In June 2004, UNRWA, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), organized the Geneva Conference marking "the starting point of a new humanitarian mobilization in support of the Palestine Refugees"²³³ and emphasizing the "active participation" of the refugee communities as a key element for the agency's success. Tracing the evolution of UNRWA in the past 63 years, Rempel argues that the agency has revised its definition of "refugee participation" considered today as an essential human right rather solely a means to facilitate the implementation of programs.²³⁴ Recently, Palestinian refugees were seen actively participating in the complete cycle of some UNRWA programs, especially in the camp upgrading strategies proposed by the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) first established in 2006,²³⁵ instead of "being participated" as was obviously the case in the early years of the agency with its "top-down approach to development"²³⁶.

It is hard to judge the genuineness of UNRWA's community driven planning approach, taking into consideration that the concepts of participation, advocacy, and protection have invaded the field of development and imposed themselves on modern relief or development organizations. In its early years and to a lesser extent now, UNRWA's

²³³ UNRWA and SDC, "Meeting the Humanitarian needs of Palestinian Refugees in the Near East: Building Partnerships in Support of UNRWA" (Paper presented at the Geneva Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, June 7-8, 2004): 19.

²³⁴Rempel.

²³⁵Philip Misselwitz and Sari Hanafi, "Testing a New Paradigm: UNRWA's Camp Improvement Programme," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2&3 (2010): 361.

²³⁶Rempel, 7.

role was described as paternalistic treating refugees as “needy victims”²³⁷ and engaging in disciplinary practices such as cutting ration rolls for refugees who did not obey its regulations.²³⁸ Also in the early years, Palestinian refugees, even UNRWA local staff, were frustrated by the chauvinistic attitude of the international staff and their colonial backgrounds.²³⁹ It is interesting to note that Latif detects a similar dynamic in the relationship of Palestinian refugees and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRSC) operating in Palestinian camps before UNRWA.²⁴⁰

Another example illustrating how Palestinian refugees were “being participated” instead of actively participating in UNRWA activities is the agency’s appointment of camp representatives to facilitate its mission. Traditionally, UNRWA camp officers were perceived by the refugee community as a ruling authority rather mediators between the people and their agency.²⁴¹ This phenomenon inspired Hanafi to call UNRWA “a phantom sovereign” to illustrate the gap between the agency’s actual role as dictated by its mandate and its perceived role for Palestinian refugees. Establishing itself as a governmental technology with associated disciplinary practices, UNRWA was conflated to a state-like power in the eyes of its subjects. Surveys by Al Hussein and Bocco support Hanafi’s observation: In all areas of operation, except for Gaza, Refugees consider the proof of

²³⁷ Misselwitz and Hanafi, 375.

²³⁸ Ibid, 378.

²³⁹ Benjamin N. Schiff, “The Development of UNRWA Administration 1950-1990: Paper Presentation, 1998(?),” TMs (photocopy), Special Collections, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Library, American University in Cairo, Cairo, 66.

²⁴⁰ Latif.

²⁴¹ Misselwitz and Hanafi, 375.

registration status as the main advantage of their registration with UNRWA.²⁴² Thus, they appreciate the political value of the agency more than its role as a service provider.

But is UNRWA really a surrogate *de facto* state for Palestinians, prevented by its apolitical mandate to disclose its truth? With the Oslo Accords 1993 and the prospect of a Palestinian state looming on the horizon, talks about UNRWA's near dissolution or absorption by the Palestinian Authority were heard for the first time. The UNGA held a similar discussion in 1995, as it renewed the agency's mandate.²⁴³ When the creation of a Palestinian state – that does not seem to touch upon a solution for its refugees – marks the dissolution of UNRWA, a similarity in the functions of the two institutions is noticed. It is not surprising then that Palestinian refugees regard their blue cards as a “passport to Palestine”²⁴⁴ or that non-registered and non-ID Palestinian refugees are trapped in a heavier legal limbo. Between phantom and surrogate sovereignty, it would be more precise to say that UNRWA is a temporary/protracted sovereign that resembles exactly the refugees it serves.

UNRWA in pre-2007 Lebanon

Lebanon has always been an exceptional field of operation for UNRWA. Additional challenges faced the agency in the Lebanese field with the host state's legal and socio-economic exclusion of Palestinian refugees, popular resentment against the refugee

²⁴² Al Hussein and Bocco, 137.

²⁴³ Schiff, 285.

²⁴⁴ Al Hussein and Bocco, 132.

population motivated by sectarian and security concerns, the civil disorder from 1975 to 1990, and the heavy armament of camps.

The PLO's golden age in Lebanon (1969-1982) reveals the uniqueness of UNRWA's experience. As it gained power following the signing of the Cairo Agreement, the PLO's "state within a state" suspended the temporary sovereignty of UNRWA: PLO's militants stored their arms and ammunitions in the basement of the agency's center and provided military training for Palestinian kids in its schools.²⁴⁵ UNRWA staff had to clear their visits to camps with the PLO as militants could deny them entry on many occasions.²⁴⁶ Exploited by the PLO, these actions provided the excuse for Israel to bomb UNRWA's facilities in camps.

With the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, UNRWA's operations became more complicated. Afraid of kidnappings and assassinations, UNRWA evacuated its international staff from Lebanon in June 1976 and the agency's headquarters was fully relocated in Vienna by 1978. UNRWA was able to provide its services, benefitting from Syrian protection in North and East Lebanon²⁴⁷ and its good relation with the Israeli occupying forces in the South.²⁴⁸ However, on many occasion, UNRWA found itself at the mercy of Lebanese militiamen, as it was the case during the Camps War 1985-1987.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Schiff, 106.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 104.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 71.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 72.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 74-75.

With the PLO's departure from Lebanon in 1982 and the end of the civil war in 1991, many obstacles hindering the agency's operations and threatening its staff's safety vanished. Although the agency's mission was never easy in Lebanon, UNRWA knew a period of relative tranquility in post-war Lebanon. Today, the agency operates in all areas across the county and employs over 3,000 staff.²⁵⁰ While the majority of the agency's staff is Palestinian, UNRWA's senior management and other high ranked officials are all international.

In 2007, UNRWA found itself facing a new challenge: a 58 year old camp, home to 27,000 refugees, was literally razed to the ground. UNRWA former Commissioner General Karen Koning Abuzayd articulated the complexity and newness of the mission ahead of UNRWA when she considered the reconstruction of NBC "by far the biggest single project undertaking by UNRWA".²⁵¹

The NBC Conflict: a Turning Point for UNRWA?

By the end of the 2007 NBC War, UNRWA had seemingly endured the trauma of massive destruction and displacement, just like the afflicted community of NBC. Today, five years after the crisis, talk about the exceptional role of UNRWA in the re-establishment of the post-conflict NBC society is often heard in the camp and reflected in academic research.

²⁵⁰ UNRWA, *Nahr El Bared Palestine Refugee Camp: UNRWA Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework 2008-2011*, 15.

²⁵¹ UNRWA, "Statement by the UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning Abuzayd on Nahr El-Bared Master Plan: Press Conference with Prime Minsiter Siniora, 12 February 2008," (accessed April, 21, 2012) <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/179D2516C1A65508852573EE005AC272>

UNRWA's partnership with NBRC was perceived as an embrace of refugees' acts of resistance against the state's project and is thus regarded as a sign of the agency's revolt against its apolitical mandate. Did UNRWA establish itself as another sovereign competing over NBC and how did it contribute to the remodeling of the state's project? Did the NBC crisis inspire UNRWA to change its paternalistic approach in the camps or are the observed initiatives a form of soft-disciplining? Was the agency's cooperation with NBRC a pragmatic choice or an ethical obligation, and what were the pains and gains for UNRWA? Finally, is UNRWA's support of the community campaign advocating for Palestinians right to employment motivated by NBC lessons or is it part of the agency's "new humanitarian mobilization" announced in 2004?

With the fall of the camp in 2007, NBC returned to its original foundation, calling to mind the breaking of identities between the citizen and the human. A similar destruction would not go unnoticed if it occurred in a "Lebanese space". As NBC refugees raised voice against the state's technologies of control, they brought the Lebanese securitization approach into crisis. Did a parallel crisis occur within UNRWA, exposing the illogical distinction of humanitarianism and politics in its mandate? The NBC conflict necessitated innovative approaches for that what worked with refugees in a camp in 1949 cannot work with a protracted refugee community in 2007. Addressing the erasure of a space, rich in social meanings and home to thousands of highly politicized refugees, required a comprehensive strategy that could not disregard the political aspects of the problems. UNRWA could not afford to remain merely a service provider²⁵², as its mandate entails, for that any attempt that ignored the political rage of the community was doomed to failure.

²⁵²Hanafi, *Reconstructing and Governing Nahr el-Bared Camp*.

When he talks about prioritizing participatory design in the NBC reconstruction project, UNRWA staff articulates a similar logic: “We can never take any step without consulting with the community first. This is the one and only priority for us, even senior management here can never take a decision if it is rejected by the people. We cannot but do what the people want or else we will have daily demonstrations here (outside UNRWA offices in Tripoli).”²⁵³

The innovative approach conveyed by the 2004 Geneva Conference and UNRWA’s MTP (2005-2009) is an indicator of a similar revelation that the agency had prior to the NBC conflict. In 2006, UNRWA publicly announced its intention to improve the physical and social environment of the camp through “a participatory and community-driven planning approach, rather than relief” and remodel refugee spaces to “meet the needs and priorities that community groups themselves define”²⁵⁴. Yet, UNRWA insisted that this new approach did not make the agency the party responsible for administering Palestinian refugee camps, determined not to project itself as another governmental technology in the complex governance of camps in Lebanon. Accordingly, the NBC conflict, another eye-opener, presented a fundamental test for UNRWA’s intentions rather than a moment of transformation for its practices.

With the outbreak of the NBC War in May 2007, UNRWA’s first response was to establish the Emergency Coordination Team (ECT). By December 2007, ECT became the Nahr El Bared Project Management Unit (PMU). Yet, the agency’s apolitical mandate seems

²⁵³ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012

²⁵⁴ UNRWA, “Infrastructure and Camp Improvement,” <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=31> (accessed May 5, 2012).

to have prevented it from initiating contact with political actors. However, UNRWA's phantom sovereignty apparently infected the Lebanese government, too. When the latter approached the agency in the early stages of the conflict, UNRWA officials sensed that the state was seeking to make the agency the "sole representative" of Palestinians and the government's exclusive "interlocutor on Palestinian issues", probably because it was the only sovereign body through which it was able to painlessly "sell its line" to the Palestinians.²⁵⁵ Aware of the political value of this role, an UNRWA official rejected the politicization of his agency: "We tell them we are not their representative; we are a service agency, and in the case of Nahr al-Bared we are the government's agent in rebuilding the camp in partnership with the international community."²⁵⁶

"A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between the Government of Lebanon and UNRWA for the reconstruction of NBC,"²⁵⁷ suggests the Vienna Document. This proposal, although never materialized²⁵⁸, would constitute the first formal agreement between the Lebanese state and the agency if it ever came into being. Yet, the proposed MoU limits UNRWA's mission to the reconstruction works in the Old Camp, the relocation of NBC displaced, and data collection. UNRWA is kept at a distance from the New Camp, having the Lebanese state as its *de jure* sovereign.

²⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, 16-17.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Government of Lebanon, 50.

²⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, 16.

Aware of UNRWA's political value in the eyes of the Lebanese state, NBRC knocked on the doors of the agency's headquarters in Beirut, as the NBC War was still ongoing. "UNRWA was lost, or this is at least what they showed us. They had no data, no maps, no plans, nothing," recalls NBRC former member.²⁵⁹ The independent community-based commission, lacking a political voice, was searching for an institutional power enjoying official recognition from the sovereign state, through which it could challenge the state's project. A potential partnership seemed doubly accommodating. As UNRWA linked NBRC with its network of decision makers, NBRC provided a well-timed opportunity for the agency to prove its "community-driven planning process." "They needed us; we represented their 'participatory approach'," added a NBRC member.

If NBRC had not existed, or had it not approached UNRWA, what steps would the agency have taken to ensure the involvement of the NBC community in the re-establishment of their camp? When asked this question, UNRWA staff expects that UNRWA, had it not encountered NBRC, would have chosen the same alternative it adopted to ensure participatory design, following the closure of NBRC in 2011. "We asked the inhabitants of each bloc to elect their representatives and we are now aware of the community's demands by communicating with these representatives."²⁶⁰ Moreover, UNRWA has today replaced former NBRC members with representatives of political factions, popular committees, and Community-based organizations in the technical and appeal committees of its reconstruction project. This structure, which resembles the complex structure of the NBC

²⁵⁹ Interviews with NBRC former member, April 2012.

²⁶⁰ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012.

old governance, is the “best possible scenario”²⁶¹ for UNRWA. However, NBRC’s intervention was so fast that it left no time for UNRWA to pass along the fundamental test of NBC. It is also not possible to judge the genuineness of the mediation role UNRWA played between the Lebanese government and NBRC, as both sides approached the agency before it had taken any step towards any of them. Therefore, it would be imprecise to draw conclusions as to whether UNRWA views NBRC’s participation as an instrumental benefit for its difficult mission in NBC or as a guarantee of the essential right of the NBC community to craft the identity of their space. Facts on the ground indicate that UNRWA, caught in the middle of the real sovereign and its subjects, was forced into the role it assumed in NBC. Although UNRWA staff assures that partnership with NBRC was perceived by UNRWA as both an instrumental benefit and an ethical obligation, participatory design appears in his statements as more of a preventive strategy through which UNRWA seeks to avoid a communal rebellion against the agency in NBC.

It can be argued that, even if originating from a cynical intention, UNRWA’s embrace of NBRC in a way or in another provided the young and independent commission with a protected space for activism. While the nature of the UNRWA/NBRC partnership remains ambiguous, UNRWA’s support for the Committee for the Employment of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (CEP) in its 2010 campaign that called for the cancellation of the legal restrictions surrounding the right of the Palestinian refugee to work is a clearer example of UNRWA choosing to be the genuine sponsor of the political advocacy and

²⁶¹ Ibid.

activism of the refugees it serves.²⁶² While the CEP movement looks economic in nature, the demands of the campaign are highly political, taking into consideration the sectarian and political pressures preventing the relaxation of legal restrictions on the right to employment of Palestinians. There is a good chance that the UNRWA/NBRC partnership has proved to the agency the political power it possesses and inspired it to lead similar initiatives, hoping to secure additional concessions from the Lebanese state.

Looking at the different tasks of UNRWA's area officers in camps and the respective time share of these tasks, Hanafi found out that 40-50 percent of UNRWA's field operations are dedicated to meetings and negotiations efforts with the camp's committees, Lebanese security agencies, and other stakeholders.²⁶³ Perhaps unconsciously acting politically, or purposely hiding behind its solely humanitarian mission, UNRWA is unquestionably a key element of the complex structure governing Palestinians in Lebanon. The apolitical mandate of UNRWA seems self-serving for the agency, helping it justify its failures and keep its political profile low. In UNRWA's Tripoli office, staff does not seem restrained by their agency's apolitical mandate. On the contrary, "our apolitical character helps us gain the trust of all stakeholders," says UNRWA staff.²⁶⁴ To fashion itself as an apolitical actor seems an integral part of UNRWA's political mode of operation.

²⁶² Sergio Bianchi, "Community Participation and Human Rights Advocacy : Questions arising from the Campaign about the Right to Work of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," (Paper presented in the AUB ISI-UNRWA conference in October, 2010).
http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/pal_camps/pc_events/Documents/20101008ifi_unrwa60_conference/conference_papers/day2/ifi_unrwa_conf_day2panel1_paper2_bianchi.pdf (accessed April 21, 2012)

²⁶³ Hanafi.

²⁶⁴ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012.

Bodies Resist the State's 'Technology of Body'

Although we may be the effects of power relations, Foucault tells us that we are more than “docile bodies” and that we can choose at anytime to resist or react to the “governmental practices of power and normalization” directed at us.²⁶⁵ A similar logic rules camps. Refusing their unconditional subjection to the sovereign, refugees respond to those undermining their politicization by developing counter technologies or acts of resistance, through which they seek to “render themselves existent and present while simultaneously exposing the web of strategies and technologies of otherness that attempt to render them inexistent”²⁶⁶.

In the World Press Photo 2004, Paul Vreeker's picture won second place at the contest. The picture is the portrait of an Iranian asylum seeker in the Netherlands who had sutured his lips and eyelids to illustrate the effect of Dutch Asylum laws. Refusing to surrender to the silencing strategies underlying these laws, the Iranian immigrant reclaims his freedom of expression – his political subjectivity, by rendering his body a symbolic demonstration of his forced silence.²⁶⁷ In NBC, refugees point out similar silencing effects of aid and the dependency culture it encourages. “I feed you, but shut up,” says a NBC refugee, exposing the logic of UNRWA and other relief services in the camp. “Aid is like painkillers; they think it will make us shut up and forget,” he adds.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Danaher et al, 128.

²⁶⁶ Isin and Rygiel, 193.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 189.

²⁶⁸ Nahr El Bared: Between Past and Present.

Did NBC refugees shut up and forget? Throughout the past five years, a multitude of classic and innovative acts of resistance were noticed in NBC. During the war, refugees refused to be the passive subjects the state wants them to become by utilizing a traditional form of resistance, that of transforming one's very body/life into an act of resistance. Though the LA publicly considered all persons who remained in the camp in the second week of the conflict as "terrorists,"²⁶⁹ 3,000 NBC refugees²⁷⁰ still refused to leave their homes one month after the eruption of violence. Aware that the LA's statement stripped them of their civilian identities and thus denied them the right to protection as well as justified military actions against them, the 3,000 refugees insisted on staying in the camp to prove they were the real "owners" of its territory and challenge Lebanese sovereignty over "their" camp. Many of those who decided not to resist their subjection seem to regret their choice: "I learned from this experience that we should never leave our homes, but be prepared to die in camps," said a NBC refugee.²⁷¹

A similar form of resistance was evident in the 28th of June peaceful demonstration in the Baddawi camp, organized by Palestinian communities in solidarity with those refugees still residing in the camp. On the second day of the protest, three civilian demonstrators were shot dead by the LA and 45 were injured, among them women and children. The LA official story states that the protestors carried clubs and were approaching the LA; soldiers were obliged to fire on protestors when they stood ten meters

²⁶⁹ Mansour and Yassin, 27.

²⁷⁰ Abott.

²⁷¹ International Crisis Group, 11.

away from the army's checkpoint. Caoihme Butterly, an Irish activist and co-organizer of the peaceful demonstration challenged this version of the story:

We went from the beginning to the end of the demonstration. We saw it all, and no one was carrying clubs ... Protestors were just shouting ... as if shouting is enough to legitimize open fire ... We were possibly at a distance of a few hundred meters, and definitely not ten meters. We were far away from the checkpoint.²⁷²

After the fall of NBC, entry to NBC – a strict militarized zone then - seemed very difficult. In the first day of the Eid, celebrated by Muslims after the fasting month of Ramadan, NBC refugees went to the camp to visit the cemetery. The LA did not allow them to enter all at once for “security reasons” and instead restricted each entry to five refugees. “The regulations were illogical and we could see that someone had messed with the graveyard,” recalls NBC refugee. The frustrated community opposed the regulation of their collective bodies and started pushing soldiers, until they all entered the cemetery. “People want to burst, and the camp will soon implode, if only the day of the Eid is repeated,” he predicted.²⁷³

Yet, acts of resistance among refugees are not always reactive, but can also be preemptive. The tendency to armament has been increasing across the country's camps, as a direct result of the NBC crisis. The conflict and the military siege that followed revived the history of violence against Palestinians and called to their minds Tal Al Zaatar (1976) and Sabra and Shatila (1982). “I say the issue of weapons is a matter of dignity, because I don't

²⁷² Under the Holly tree.

²⁷³ Nahr El Bared: Transitions.

sense there is a dialogue between us,"²⁷⁴ said a Palestinian refugee in Baddawi, distressed by the trauma of his counterparts in the NBC neighboring camp. For him and many others, armament – being a political problem -- proves that Palestinian refugees are more than bare lives and docile bodies and remind any alien governmental technology of their power to resist its disciplinary practices.

For many refugees in NBC, the definition of resistance is a much simpler one and can be merely equivalent to survival. The words of the groom celebrating his wedding in the middle of the town of ashes in destroyed NBC in October 2007 articulated this definition. As his wife stood next to him on top of the rubble mountain, he addressed the invitees: "The most important thing to us is that we're married and we've returned to the camp. It felt like a kind of resistance, to celebrate and dance despite everything we suffered."²⁷⁵ With politics invading their life at every moment, even weddings and deaths, refugees prove constantly the politicized figures they are.

NBRC: a Mature 'Act of Resistance'

Besides traditional forms of counter-technologies of control, the NBC community presented an exceptional act of resistance in the very early weeks of the NBC War, embodied in the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC). NBRC's

²⁷⁴ Long and Hanafi, 686.

²⁷⁵ Adam Ramadan, "In the Ruins of Nahr al-Barid: Understanding the meaning of the camp," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 1 (2010): 60.

maturity came as a reflection of the adulthood of the NBC refugee society. Refusing the monopoly of the Lebanese government in the planning process, around 23 NBC engineers, social workers, and different professionals met in their place of displacement in the Baddawi camp in early July 2007 in order to develop a common vision of their camp's future²⁷⁶ and retrieve their "active rights". In his classification of human rights, French theorist Sieyès considers two groups of rights: passive rights referring to natural or civil rights *for* "whose preservation" a society is formed and active rights referring to political rights *by* which a society is formed.²⁷⁷ By reclaiming their active rights, NBRC wanted to prove that the refugees it aimed to represent were not a mass of bare lives but political subjects par excellence. Although parallels can be drawn between the frustration of the NBC community towards the state's project and the reactions of the Palestinian refugee communities of Gaza and Jenin to the physical rehabilitation of their destroyed spaces,²⁷⁸ none of these reactions has culminated into a structured and technocratic organization like NBRC, that may have been able to grow independently of Palestinian national institutions because of the relative weakness of the PA and Hamas in Lebanon. In this case, NBRC appears as a unique "professional sovereign" whose political say was largely inspired by professional expertise.

Coinciding with this communal initiative, a group of architects and social scientists visited the Baddawi camp regularly to interact with the displaced community. When they met the grass-root actors behind this communal project, the two groups decided to

²⁷⁶ Interviews with NBRC former members, March 2012.

²⁷⁷ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 130.

²⁷⁸ Misselwitz and Hanafi.

organize their efforts. Together, they formed NBRC. After close consultation with the camp community, NBRC developed ten principles and guidelines reflecting “the needs and way of life”²⁷⁹ of NBC residents, which should be respected in any plan touching upon the reconstruction of their space. By the end of July 2007, NBRC’s first general assembly, comprising 37 members, carried these guidelines and principles and visited UNRWA to inform it of its intention to develop an alternative reconstruction plan replacing that of the Lebanese state and its consultant K&A. On that day, NBRC left the headquarters building in Beirut as a partner of UNRWA.

A visible clue of the commission’s high political awareness is its insistence on rebuilding NBC as a “camp” with the positive connotations of the word.²⁸⁰ Therefore, NBC needs to reflect its inhabitants’ definition of their relationship with Palestine, their right to return, their communal memory, and all the other socio-political dimensions of their space. The right to return, a constitutive element of Palestinian refugees’ political existence, has always conditioned camps’ physical and housing infrastructure.²⁸¹ Echoing the temporariness of their *de facto* statelessness in the spatialization of their camps is a coping mechanism for the Palestinian refugee society.

²⁷⁹ Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil action and Studies, “Reconstruction Principles and Guidelines,” Daleel-madani.org (accessed May 5, 2011)
http://daleelmadani.org/sites/default/files/old/resources/NahrElBared/NBC_Reconstruction_Commission_Guidelines.pdf

²⁸⁰ The Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Actions and Studies, 3.

²⁸¹ Al Hussein and Bocco, 128.

Another “red line”²⁸²for the NBC community is the social fabric. When they fled Palestine, refugees settled in camps by regrouping themselves along familial and village lines, and so they did in the UNRWA schools of the Baddawi camp in 2007. To be asked to return from Baddawi to regroup in housing blocs according to the size of their nuclear families, as the K&A proposal suggests, is a non-negotiable option for the NBC community. “As a Saasaa, I can never live with a Saffouri,” says a NBC resident half-jokingly to highlight the significance of the social fabric in NBC. NBRC’s guidelines acknowledged this concern and placed it as the starting point of all reconstruction works, when it asked for the recreation of the exact same social geographies of pre-2007 NBC. Even more important than the right to return, the Palestinian family appears as an “exceptional reality” in refugee camps and gatherings.²⁸³ Compensating for their trampled political sovereignty, the Palestinian family presents itself as a sovereign institution with powerful rights and obligations, and thus serves as a “survival strategy”²⁸⁴ or as another coping mechanism.

Yet, NBRC’s intervention was not only confined to the physical re-arrangement of the camp but also sought to correct the Lebanese state’s approach to the crisis and its discursive practices on NBC. In its list of guidelines and principles, NBRC stresses the importance of involving the camp inhabitants in all the stages of the reconstruction cycle, by adopting a transparent approach and utilizing whenever possible the local expertise and

²⁸² Interviews with NBC refugees, March 2012.

²⁸³ Sylvain Perdigon, “The one still surviving and viable institution,” In *Palestinian Refugees: identity, space, and place in the Levant*, ed. Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

labor force of NBC. Moreover, NBRC refuses the division of NBC into an Old Camp and a New Camp and reclaims it as one entity with a unified social fabric.²⁸⁵

Committed to these guidelines and principles, NBRC, with the support of UNRWA, developed an alternative plan and presented to the former Prime Minister Siniora in the Grand Serail of Beirut in February 22nd, 2008. In the nine months that preceded this agreement, NBRC build on the 1999 UNRWA base map and recruited volunteers, who knocked on the doors of every NBC resident to end up with a mental map illustrating the old sketches of the camp and a detailed record of the asset losses.²⁸⁶ This field work allowed the design of the alternative plan, known as the Master Plan, which almost reproduced the pre-2007 camp.

Yet the Lebanese-Palestinian agreement, conveyed by the concessions NBRC has secured from the Lebanese government, was not easy to achieve. NBRC, being a Palestinian association, was first confronted by the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, like many other Palestinian NGOs.²⁸⁷ Considered as foreigners by Lebanese law, Palestinians are deprived from their right to association, unless registered as a Lebanese NGO. Thanks to its partnership with UNRWA, NBRC could make its way to the negotiating table. There, the commission succeeded to cancel the K&A grid pattern and replace it with one criterion, the sacred social fabric of NBC, meaning that extended families and old neighbors will be

²⁸⁵ The Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Actions and Studies, 3-4.

²⁸⁶ UNRWA, *Preliminary Master Plan and Guidelines for the Reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Palestine Refugee Camp*.

²⁸⁷ Long and Hanafi, 679.

reunited in the new NBC. Resisting the large reduction of private spaces to obtain wider streets, the NBRC negotiators compromised the width proposed by the LA by less than one third. “They (the LA) wanted 16 to 17 meters-wide streets, we told them: ‘where are we in Paris?’”²⁸⁸ recalls NBRC former member. Interestingly, the urban politics of Paris, constructed during the Second Empire reforms (1850-1870) by Napoleon III and the French civic planner Baron Haussman, were also criticized for serving as a tool for an authoritarian regime. In account of historians, the exaggerated wideness and straightness of Paris avenues are perceived as intended to ensure NBC a more effective military policing of the French capital.²⁸⁹ In the approved Master Plan, the streets’ width, previously 1.5 meters on average, is now 4.5 meters.²⁹⁰ The increase guarantees the minimum standards of natural lighting and ventilation.

“Justice and not equality,” was the motto of NBRC. The 58 years’ hard work of refugees and the economic assets they accumulated were not acknowledged in the K&A plan, in which the space for each family was related to its size. Highlighting the injustice of this equality, NBRC members changed the K&A formula by recognizing the economic past of the NBC community and at the same time limiting the loss of the private space of each family to a maximum of 15 percent, as the result of the wider streets and the maintenance

²⁸⁸ Interviews with NBRC former members, March 2010.

²⁸⁹ “The Gate of Paris,” The New York Times archives, May 14, 1871. (accessed May 12, 2012)
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F40E1FF734541B7493C6A8178ED85F458784F9>

²⁹⁰ UNRWA, *Preliminary Master Plan and Guidelines for the Reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Palestine Refugee Camp*, 11.

of acceptable living standards to all the families of NBC.²⁹¹ Yet, some injustices were carried on by the final Master Plan: adding balconies to buildings, increasing the ceiling height of shops, and installing ramps on streets were all regarded by the LA as non-negotiable demands.

The role of NBRC did not stop with the approval of the Master Plan and its incorporation in the Vienna Document in May 2008. As the last report covering rights' violations in NBC issued by a rights' organizations dates to October 2007,²⁹² NBRC continued to act as the watchdog of the NBC community and compensated for the advocacy void. With the Lebanese cabinet decision to build an army regiment and naval base inside the Old Camp, NBRC mobilized the community to send a letter to former Prime Minister Siniora in January 2009 protesting the securitization logic of the two decisions and their impact on the spatialization of the camp. In the same letter, NBC residents reasserted their political right to shape the identity of their space when they opposed the state's "community policing" project, by exposing its high cost (five million USD), the euphemistic character of the term "governance" framing this project, the Lebanese side (the ISF) implementing it and, most importantly, its promotion "without the knowledge and consent" of the NBC community.²⁹³

The mobilization power of NBRC, comprising 63 members in 2009, was even more evident in the March 2009 demonstration that protested the suspension of reconstruction

²⁹¹ Ibid, 12.

²⁹² File on the Reconstruction Progress and the Security Situation in Nahr EL Bared Camp – A Discussion with the Inhabitants, 4.

²⁹³ Ibid, 2.

works as a result of the discovery of archeological ruins under the site of the Old Camp. “We knocked on every single door in NBC and their presence in the protest was urgent. On that day, all NBC was in the protest,” recalls a former member of NBRC. Yet NBRC was not more flexible with its partner. The commission’s members regularly asked UNRWA for budget reports. In its second year, NBRC refused to sign UNRWA’s British grant as the fund covered some expenses not mentioned in the proposal.²⁹⁴

What is NBRC doing today? In NBC, refugees will tell you that the commission that “used to echo their existence” has turned today into “the executive arm” of UNRWA. As we pass by UNRWA’s office at the outskirts of the Old Camp, refugees point at the small construction next to it on which a signboard reads in Arabic: the Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies. One of the refugees tells the other: “did you hear about the man who threatened to burn himself and his family in front of NBRC? He was here all day, just yesterday”.²⁹⁵ The incident sounds like another refugee act of resistance, but this time directed at NBRC, itself an act of resistance. Actually, this Mohamad Bouazizi-like incident is not the first of its kind in NBC. According to UNRWA staff, protests of NBC returnees to Package stand behind the closure of NBRC in Spring 2011. “We had to close the NBRC office for safety issues. Protestors were turning violent and two UNRWA staff were hospitalized after some protestors poured fuel over them threatening to burn them.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Interviews with NBRC former members, April 2012.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012

What the NBC general public does not know about NBRC is that a great number of its founding members resigned from it in April 2011 and that the 63 volunteer members of the commission in 2009 are only six today, employed by UNRWA to participate in the technical and appeal committees of the NBC reconstruction project. We realized that we were exploited by the 'NGOs mafia' and that UNRWA saw in us a way out to transfer popular complaints," says one of the NBRC former members. He adds: "Once they [some members of NBRC] were done with their research, they left ... Whenever we opposed a wrong approach, UNRWA and some members will accuse us of obstructing the reconstruction works ... Worst of all was seeing aspects in the implemented work that we have never approved ... How could we defend something we did not know about in front of the community? We realized that we can either be UNRWA, or NBRC, but never both. We can't accept to be a cover."²⁹⁷ In UNRWA, staff tell a different story: "those who left have misinterpreted the monitoring and evaluation regulation introduced by UNRWA as a reduction of their prerogatives, whereas the agency was solely trying to eliminate cases of clientelism in order to ensure the just distribution of spaces among returnees. NBRC employees are still today the voice of the people and they never compromise their community's demands," says UNRWA staff.²⁹⁸ Before they left the scene, those who quit handed their responsibilities over to the Popular Committee of the camp, the most important Palestinian actor in the old governance structure of the camp. This might explain why some call NBRC today a "political factions' Commission" (*haya'a fasa'iliyah*). For UNRWA staff, reconstruction mistakes are to be blamed on the lack of resources and

²⁹⁷ Interview with NBRC former member, April 2012.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

organization of the early periods of the NBRC/UNRWA partnership. “When this partnership was born, UNRWA did not have an office in Tripoli. Engineers would discuss reconstruction plans in separate suites in Quality Inn Hotel in Tripoli. There was no structure, no hierarchy, and no monitoring and evaluation guideline and it was normal then for some reconstruction mistakes to occur. We learnt important lessons from Package one and two and we have applied fundamental improvements to the remaining packages and UNRWA will be working now on getting the approval of the LA on the improved Master Plan.”²⁹⁹

“We tried our best, but we failed drastically,” this is how some of the former NBRC members describe their journey in NBRC. But does their withdrawal from NBRC constitute another act of resistance, as they realized it was no more “their” commission? In the final section of this chapter, I leave the word to the NBC refugees to evaluate UNRWA, NBRC, and their partnership.

UNRWA and NBRC: Refugees Evaluate

UNRWA as ‘a Dusty Protective Shield’

When discussing UNRWA’s role in the reconstruction of NBC with the camp’s community, the Palestinian agency appears as a warranty of survival for the refugees it serves. “UNRWA

²⁹⁹ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012.

is our protective shield, no matter how dusty it gets,” says NBC refugee.³⁰⁰ UNRWA seems aware of its “phantom sovereignty” among the refugee community. “Palestinian refugees will tell you that they have no one but UNRWA,” says UNRWA staff. “For a Palestinian refugee to be employed by UNRWA, this is a dream; it is like securing a state-contract job,” he adds exemplifying his observation.³⁰¹ In NBC, there is a general consensus on the significant role UNRWA had played in leading emergency relief operations the first days of the war as well as a popular appreciation of the challenging commitment the agency has accepted not only in being responsible for the whole reconstruction process in the Old Camp but also in suggesting to build new schools and a NGOs compound.

UNRWA’s “phantom sovereignty” is also very present in the discussions touching upon the role of the agency in the camp. As he chooses his words carefully to frame his dissatisfaction with the housing quality of package one to which he relocated with his family in October 2011, NBC refugee says straightforward: “I recently applied to one of UNRWA’s programs, I don’t want this interview to affect their decision”.

Although the agency’s positive contributions are recognized by NBC refugees, UNRWA’s share of popular criticisms is much bigger. NBC refugees mostly complain about the lack of reform within the agency and they hold responsible the “passive” Palestinian local staff “who are not interested in the ‘cause’ but in prestigious posts and high salaries”. However, UNRWA staff portrays the agency’s local staff in a different light. For him, Palestinian staff in UNRWA are the watchdog of their communities’ rights and have an

³⁰⁰ Interview with NBC refugees, March 2012.

³⁰¹ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012.

obligation of ensuring the protection and the promotion of these rights.³⁰² When speaking of the internationals, NBC refugees do not make generalizations. “We will never forget Cook; he wore gumboots and accompanied construction workers. He was one of us; we called him Mohamed Cook,” says a NBC refugee, recalling the days of Richard Cook, former UNRWA Director General in Lebanon.

“Tomorrow Salvatore³⁰³ and Charlie³⁰⁴ will leave, who we will hold responsible for today’s mistakes?” asks a NBRC former member, pointing to the lack of accountability systems within the agency. He goes further and asks a rhetorical question: “Why did UNRWA choose Rafic Khoury as its contractor even before starting the bidding process? When Rafic Khoury³⁰⁵ did not hand over package one on time, why didn’t UNRWA charge him 16,000 USD daily as stated in the contract? Or was he given a two months’ extension because he has close ties with two Lebanese political leaders?” To this, UNRWA staff responds as follows: “choosing a contractor is a delicate and long process in UNRWA. Rafic Khoury is not our only contractor. We do a new bidding each time we start with a new bloc, and we have another in-house consultant as well.” About UNRWA’s accountability system, he adds: “UNRWA follows closely contracts’ terms. We may not force contractors to pay penalties very often, but we always threaten to do so and try to reach a compromise.”³⁰⁶

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Salvatore Lombardo, UNRWA Director General in Lebanon, 2012

³⁰⁴ Charles Higgins, UNRWA’s Project Director in Nahr El Bared

³⁰⁵ UNRWA’s construction contractor

³⁰⁶ Interview with UNRWA staff, May 2012.

Reconstruction delays are by most accounts the major source of frustration towards UNRWA in NBC. “They returned to Package one just this year, five years after the war. My house is in package five, should I wait for thirty years?” asks sarcastically a NBC refugee to illustrate his pain of waiting. For NBC refugees, it is the institutional laziness and the absence of political will of UNRWA and not its lack of funding that are responsible for these delays. “Till date, UNRWA has not designed package three yet, what are its twenty engineers doing? And why don’t they channel their salaries to reconstruction efforts?” asks NBC refugee. “They don’t possess the necessary funds, I know. But why don’t they call for another donor conference or at least decrease salaries or give up their fancy cars and offices?” asks another one. For UNRWA staff, the Palestinian agency has definitely acted beyond its mandate and “has done much more than it is required from her”. “We are now communicating with the LA and the DGU to find a solution for the old camp’s interface problem and this is not our responsibility,” says UNRWA staff who complains about the total absence of the Lebanese government in the reconstruction implementation phase and its replacement by the LA. Responding on refugees’ judgments of the agency’s financial situation, UNRWA staff says that these criticisms are often not based on concrete evidence: “First of all, we have a strict salary scale like all UN agencies and look at our office here. What is fancy about it? We are working in caravans.” Commenting on reconstruction delays, he adds: “We may have been slow before, but in the past four months, we have finished designing package three and four and some blocs of package five as well.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

NBRC 'Representative...not anymore'

In NBC, refugees are astonished at the exceptional work of NBRC. "We owe them what we have now," they say, especially appreciating the social fabric they have regained thanks to NBRC efforts. However, UNRWA seems to undermine the political achievements of NBRC on the negotiation table and reduces the commission to a mediator between the agency and the NBC community. "NBRC would have never developed a Master Plan alone. All the concessions were actually secured thanks to UNRWA's high level political connections and its diplomatic approach. Yet, all accounts sadly highlight the performance decay of the community-based commission and they all refer to a same turning point: "the moment UNRWA got involved".

"They were good listeners, active and quick, and they transferred every single concern and made no concessions," says a NBC refugee, remembering the early days of NBRC. "As soon as UNRWA got involved, they started giving up to its demands and made concessions to the state," he adds. "UNRWA weakened NBRC; the agency polluted it with its bureaucracy and turned it into its executive arm; the commission lost its representativeness," states another NBC refugee. However, UNRWA thinks that it has strengthened NBRC which owes to UNRWA the Palestinian agency "its technocratic and structured nature"³⁰⁸.

Other refugees go further to suggest that NBRC members have exploited their representative position to benefit from the reconstruction resources: "Look at them now,

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

they ride fancy cars and are paid high salaries,” says NBC refugee. NBRC former members deny this accusation and assert that they have never taken anything in return to their voluntary services, “not even a pre-paid phone card”. What the NBC refugees are referring to here are probably the six “NBRC employees” in UNRWA, of whom two only are founding members.

Because of its partnership with UNRWA, NBC refugees hold NBRC equally responsible for the agency’s mistakes, or more precisely for the Lebanese state’s security agenda. “My house’s area was originally 125 square meters and NBRC made me sign on 95 square meters when I came here, I found out that its area is 83 square meters only including the stairs. The stairs is another story; my child fell five times because of its strange architecture. When we first came here, we asked them: how are we supposed to get the fridge into the house? They sarcastically answered: from the window. I don’t understand this house, no balconies and an entrance facing the restroom, and then why all these columns in the living room?” complains NBC refugee who has returned to his house in package one in October 2011. Responding to this complaint, NBRC former member explains that during the negotiations, the partners agreed on an area range for each room and that UNRWA seemingly chose the minimum area possible. “We did not know about that, and we were surprised like refugees by the extremely tight width of the stairs,” he clarifies.

More informed members of the NBC community also blame political factions for polluting NBRC’s mission. “When the implementation started, members of political factions and the camp’s committees realized that the work was serious and they wanted to benefit.

They got involved and brought with them their corruption and clientelism,” thinks a NBC refugee.

Conclusion

When “they found themselves in a social network not of their making”³⁰⁹, NBC refugees – determined to reclaim their sovereignty over their space - have utilized traditional forms of counter-reaction and developed an exceptional act of resistance through NBRC. Would UNRWA have adopted a participatory approach if it did not encounter NBRC? And would NBRC have secured all these concessions if it did not lobby for them under the protective umbrella of UNRWA? By approaching the Palestinian agency, NBRC has definitely remodeled UNRWA and itself. The partnership, seeming doubly accommodating at its early periods, reflected negatively at both sides in later stages. Yet, the UNRWA/NBRC union has presented a solid competing power that has prevented the Lebanese state to establish itself as the absolute sovereign in the post-conflict governance of NBC. The complex governance structure of the future refugee regime in NBC is still blurry. With NBRC handing its mission over to the popular committee of the camp, another question arises: is NBC slowly reproducing its old governance?

³⁰⁹Latif, 19.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of this thesis, I asked: *“How does the NBC crisis constitute a transformative moment for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and what are the factors shaping the new refugee regime in NBC?”* It would be more precise to say that the NBC crisis acted as wake-up call exposing the exclusion of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the spaces of exception that their camps constitute rather than describe the conflict as a constitutive moment of the Palestinian journey in Lebanon. Despite the many particularities of the NBC War and the effects observed in its aftermath, the NBC crisis served as a red flag of a situation that prevailed in camps since their establishment in 1948 and that has escaped the Lebanese scene with the de-domestication of camps in 1969 and the departure of the PLO in 1982.

Coming now to the factors shaping the new refugee regime in NBC, a complex nexus of sovereignties, be it traditional or new, seemed competing to reassert their ownership of the camp’s territory and its subjects and thus prove the validity of Foucault’s conceptualization of power as a relationship rather a substance. Although it seems that the Palestinian journey in Lebanon is being repeated in NBC following the conflict and that the pre-2007 governance in NBC is being reproduced - starting with the Lebanese state copying its pre-1969 securitization approach and recently with the popular committees

regaining their “legitimacy” in the camp -- the last years’ socio-political developments in Lebanon and the region have thrown their weight around NBC and have contributed to the re-establishment mechanisms in the camp. With the closure of NBRC in spring 2011, reproducing the camp’s old governance seems the best available alternative in NBC. The recent political stance of the Lebanese Sunni street, influenced by the rising Sunni-Shiite tensions and the fading popularity of Pan-Arabism, has provided the necessary public support to the military solution in NBC and its securitization later on. Yet the Lebanese government, which publicly announced that it had turned over a new leaf in its handling of the Palestinian file following the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005, found itself in an embarrassing position in Nahr El Bared, which made it soften its tone as the “national victory” euphoria faded. Adding to these factors is the solid competing power of the UNRWA/NBRC partnership, as the Palestinian agency’s lobbying for the alternative Master Plan helped to frame the community’s demands as “humanitarian” needs.

Although it is not likely that the NBC War was a planned conspiracy prepared by the Lebanese state, given the bloody price the LA has paid, it seems as if the NBC War has allowed it to kill two birds with one stone by offering the opportunity to boost the moral and the public image of the LA after the July 2006 War and at the same time present a deterrent example to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon. This logic has dominated the state’s reconstruction planning processes, built on preemptive measures that impose its own trajectory on the lives of NBC refugees. While the technologies of control employed by the Lebanese state to regulate the individual and collective bodies of the NBC “subjects” seemed like the tools of a new urbanized refugee model, the state’s approach in NBC is

simply a euphemistic reinstatement of its pre-1969 approach, substituting securitization with “governance” and the Second Bureau with “community policing”.

Does UNRWA’s “participatory approach” in NBC serve as another euphemism covering a soft-disciplining technique? As it can never be said that the NBC War marks a constitutive moment for the agency and that its partnership with NBRC has politicized its mandate unless it had kicked off the process advocating for the political representation of the NBC community in the planning process, it seems that UNRWA has been “forced” to welcome NBRC as its partner, both metaphorically and in the strict sense of the word. While the Lebanese state saw UNRWA as relatively the best ally in the NBC field and thus chose it as its interlocutor on Palestinian issues, the Palestinian community’s mistaken perception of UNRWA’s role made NBRC seek refuge under the “phantom sovereignty” of the agency. When the NBC War exposed the space of exception that NBC constituted, the weakness of UNRWA’s mandate was simultaneously uncovered and the illogical separation of humanitarianism and politics looked even more unreasonable. As the Palestinian refugees’ perception of UNRWA is central to the agency’s view of itself, UNRWA couldn’t but embrace the NBRC initiative, just as NBC refugees accept UNRWA even as “a dusty protector shield”.

It looks as if NBRC is the most distinctive particularity produced by the NBC crisis. The maturity of the act of resistance presented by this refugee grassroots initiative is a clear reflection of the maturity of the Palestinian refugee society. As NBRC appears as if it surrendered itself to the popular committees of NBC in 2010 and thus reinforced the pre-2007 sovereign in NBC, the NBRC mission cannot be simplistically judged as unsuccessful;

its power has faded rather than failed. As NBC appears like a political microcosm of the society of Palestine, NBRC looks like many communal initiatives that fall short in front of political divisions. Actually, NBRC seems the only gain of the costly War of Nahr Al Bared boosting the community belief in self-empowerment and reasserting to the NBC refugees their ownership over their lives.

What is the best solution for NBC? “The best solution is rejected in advance,” answers a NBC refugee who already knows that any attempt to re-assume his civil rights will be conflated with a permanent resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon. This refugee, who prefers to be “a dog in Sweden rather than a refugee in Nahr Al Bared” is unknowingly echoing Arendt’s perception of the real calamity of the stateless person. Just like Arendt’s stateless person, this refugee knows that his “right to have rights” is for the state and its citizens, equivalent to political representation. So what is the best solution for NBC? Agamben seems to have an answer: “Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been thus perforated and topologically deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is – only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable.”³¹⁰

I conclude this thesis with the words of a NBC refugee, who aware of the inescapable exclusion of his camp in this world – as noted by Agamben, he writes: “One day, I will enter the camp filled with hope... I will then shut the door behind me and imprison the whole world, outside the camp.”

³¹⁰Agamben, *Means without Ends*, 26.

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