

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE TOBACCO FARMER UPRISING IN THE PRESS

by
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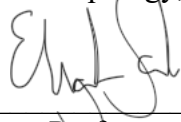
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis examines newspaper coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising in Nabatieh to reconstruct the Lebanese political landscape in 1973. By identifying how the newspapers frame the uprising—grant salience or obscure details to promote certain interpretations—the thesis seeks to identify the political issues that were the animating forces in public discourse at that period in Lebanese history. Examination of press coverage reveals that newspapers connected this labor protest to broader debates including those concerning the role of the security forces, economic policy, and the debate around whose interests the government serves. The thesis describes how the newspapers of left-wing parties framed the uprising as illustrative of the state’s adversarial policy towards southern communities and the working class, how right-wing government loyalist outlets framed the response of opposition parties to clashes in Nabatieh as a plot to destabilize Lebanon, and how *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar*, two of the most popular newspapers, framed the uprising and its fallout as evidence of government incompetence. The thesis also examines coverage of the 1973 teachers’ strike and protests in Hula to show how the newspapers connected social movements together, both explicitly and through shared frames. The thesis ends with a reflection on the insights and lacunae of examining press coverage and an examination of contemporary debates on the political significance of the tobacco farmer uprising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
ILLUSTRATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. Background	7
1.2. Literature Review	10
1.3. Sources & Methods	13
1.4. Outline	20
THE STATE STRIKES THE SOUTH	22
2.1. Plight of <i>Al-Janūb</i>	22
2.2. <i>Sulṭa</i> Versus <i>Sha ‘b</i>	30
GUARDING STABILITY AND THE <i>NIZĀM</i>	33
3.1. Avoidable Tragedy	34
3.2. Conspiring Opposition	35
DEFENDING LEBANON FROM THE GOVERNMENT	41
4.1. Multiple Frames	41
4.2. Responsibility of the State	42

PROTESTS IN THE HEADLINES	47
5.1. Background.....	47
5.2. Connecting Social Movements	48
5.3. Campaign Against <i>Al-Janub</i>	52
5.4. Manufacturing Chaos.....	55
5.5. Caught Between Radicals and the Government	58
CONCLUSION	61
6.1. Newspapers as Sources	61
6.2. Contemporary Debates	63
6.3. Researching During Protests.....	66
REFERENCES.....	69

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Kamel Asaad and Saeb Salam smoke foreign tobacco while farmers protest....	25
2. Delegation of agricultural workers in front of parliament.....	26
3. Journalists turn down an invitation to attend a weapons demonstration	28
4. Prime Minister Salam and his cannibal cronies.....	31
5. Karami and Joumblatt try to trip Salam.....	37
6. Joumblatt lights the fuse	42
7. The government invites tobacco farmers and teachers to reasonable dialogue..	49
8. Salam is the guardian of the <i>nizām</i>	50
9. Salam confronting Israel and social movements	51
10. Closing the school in Hula.....	53
11. Liberating Hula	55

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My decision to research the tobacco farmer uprising goes back to first learning about the event when it was mentioned in passing during a 2014 episode of *Al-Mashhad (The Scene)* on BBC Arabic when host Giselle Khoury interviewed *Sayyid* Hani Fahs, a cleric who was one of the protesters who occupied the Régie building in Nabatieh in 1973. The release of Mary Jirmanus Saba's 2017 documentary *Shu'ūr Akbar Min Al-Ḥubb (A Feeling Greater Than Love)* on the Ghandour factory strike, Tobacco Farmer Uprising, and the revolutionary milieu in Lebanon further piqued my interest in trying to understand the Lebanese political landscape in the years preceding the outbreak of the civil war. Building on my previous research into political rhetoric of leftist and Palestinian newspapers in 1973, I began examining how the press covered the strike. I wanted to identify what frames were adopted by newspapers for interpreting the motivations of the tobacco farmers and the implications of their mobilization. I also wanted to determine the extent of cleavage in Lebanon in the years leading up to the Lebanese Civil War and determine the political issues that may have polarized the country. While this approach is limited in its ability to truly reveal the experiences of the peasants and students who demonstrated and blocked roads in Nabatieh, it does provide insight into the economic and political interests that informed newspaper coverage. The political landscape in 1973 Lebanon conveyed through newspapers reveals a country profoundly divided over questions concerning whose interests the government serves, economic policy, and the inviolability of state security forces.

1.1. Background

In the early 20th century, as competition from the international silk market made Lebanese silk cultivation financially untenable, farmers abandoned sericulture for tobacco cultivation.¹ Local production experienced rapid growth during World War I as the naval blockade by the Entente Powers prevented the importation of foreign tobacco.² In addition to providing income for the farmers that cultivated the crop, sorting, curing, and cigarette production in factories provided employment for thousands of workers. In 1935, Damien de Martel, the French High Commissioner of the Levant, granted a concession to Régie Co-Intéressée Libanaise de Tabacs et Tombacs, a private company that held a monopoly over the tobacco industry and whose shares were divided between the company, former tobacco manufacturers, and “colonized subjects.”³ News of the monopoly was met with opposition by local manufactures and ambivalence from workers and peasants whose opinions were at times rooted in regionalist and sectarian considerations—Shiite cultivators were more likely than their Maronite counterparts to support the monopoly—though Christians and Shiites in Bint Jbeil were united in their opposition.⁴

The history of labor activism around tobacco can be divided between the farmers that cultivated the crop, and the workers that manufactured cigarettes in Régie factories. For farmers, the major grievances were unfair licensing, procedures governing the inspection of crops, the price Régie paid for tobacco, foreign competition, and lack of technical assistance. In southern Lebanon, cronyism allowed large

¹ Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse University Press, 2010): 3.

² Ibid, 13.

³ Ibid, 22.

⁴ Ibid, 25-29.

landholders and non-cultivating speculators connected to local *zu'amā* (leaders) to win cultivation licenses.⁵ On August 6, 1972, southern tobacco farmers formed *lajnat al-difā'* '*an mazāra'ī al-tabagh fī-l-janūb* (The Committee for the Defense of Tobacco Farmers in the South) and issued a list of demands that included Régie promising to receive all yields at a price agreed upon with farmers, ending licensing speculation, ending barriers to the formation of a syndicate for tobacco farmers, and transforming Régie from a private company dominated by foreign shareholders into a nationalized company.⁶

After failing to receive a positive response from Régie and government officials, southern tobacco farmers working under the banner of an unlicensed syndicate held a conference at a *ḥusayniyya* (Shiite congregation hall) in Nabatieh on January 12, 1973 to discuss raising the cost of tobacco to be commensurate with rises in the cost of living and ending the policy of farmers being absent when their crops were received and inspected.⁷ At the conclusion of the conference, the attendees vowed to not deliver their yields unless they would be sold at higher prices, giving Régie ten days to respond before they would hold a public protest and close roads.⁸ As Régie did not respond to the ultimatum, on January 22, more than 10,000 protesters largely composed of farmers and students held a public protest in Nabatieh as the city went on strike in solidarity.⁹ A group of protesters broke into and occupied the Régie building and formed a committee

⁵ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2012): 166.

⁶ Iliyiās al-Būwarī, *Tārīkh al-ḥaraka al-'ummāliyya wa-l-niqābiyya fī lubnān 1971-1980* [*History of the Worker and Syndicate Movement in Lebanon 1971-1980*], (Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 1987): 164.

⁷ *Ibid*: 165-166.

⁸ *Ibid*, 166.

⁹ *Ibid*.

composed of leftists, Baathists (linked to both Syria and Iraq), and Shiite clerics.¹⁰ On January 23, protesters tried to close the road between Nabatieh and Kafr Rumman with tires, cars, and utility poles, which the Army responded to by dispersing the crowd and arresting some of the protesters. On January 24, Nabatieh went on strike to condemn the suppression of demonstrations and the arrest of protesters. Groups of protesters marched from Nabatieh and Kafr Rumman to the Régie building where security forces were trying to forcefully remove protesters occupying the building. When the protesters arrived, they clashed with the security personnel who tried to prevent them from approaching the building and the security forces opened fire, injuring dozens and killing two protesters, Naim Darwich and Hassan Haik.¹¹

Protests were held throughout the country in solidarity with the protesters in Nabatieh. The attack on protesters was condemned by opposition figures like Rachid Karami and Kamal Joumblatt who called for the resignation of the government headed by Saeb Salam. Opposition parties called for a protest in Beirut that the government tried to prevent by announcing its intent to use force to disperse unlicensed demonstrations, though it backed down after the opposition declared its intent to persist in the protest irrespective of the position of the government.¹² Ultimately, the Salam government fell in April 1973, though for reasons separate from the events in Nabatieh.

¹⁰ Talīya‘ Hamdān, “*Al-sayyid hānī faḥṣ yitadhakkar...men aḏṭahad al-mazāra ‘īn aṣbaḥa za ‘īmaham ima b‘ad*” [“Sayyid Hani Fahas Remembers... Who Persecuted the Farmers Thereafter Became Their Leader”], *Janoubia*, May 8, 2013, <https://janoubia.com/2013/05/08/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%B5-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%B7%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B9%D9%8A/>.

¹¹ Ilīyās al-Būwarī, *Tārīkh al-ḥaraka al-‘ummālīyya wa-l-niqābiyya fī lubnān 1971-1980*: 166-167.

¹² *Ibid*, 169.

After President Suleiman Frangieh refused to dismiss Iskander Ghanem from his post as Army commander after being accused of negligence for failing to prevent an Israeli attack on PLO leaders, Salam resigned in protest. While Régie responded to the Nabatieh clashes by immediately conceding to the farmers' demands to purchase all yields at a 15% price increase and end the policy of receiving crops while the farmers were absent, the farmers and their allies had to organize and apply pressure on the government and Régie until they were finally able to form a union free of the influence of local *zu'amā* in 1979.¹³

1.2. Literature Review

This thesis builds on research into the history of labor activism in the tobacco sector. Malek Abisaab examines the 1936 uprising in Bint Jbeil which was led by tobacco farmers and explains how they articulated a critique against the tobacco monopoly, the French Mandate, and the separation of Jabal Amil from Syria to be part of the Grand Liban project.¹⁴ In addition to the radical politics of farmers, Abisaab explores the history of labor strikes by workers in the Régie tobacco monopoly, with an emphasis on the obscured role of women workers in labor movements and the relationship of these women with colonial authorities and the Lebanese state.¹⁵ Abisaab however, does not cover the 1973 uprising. In Munira Khayyat's work on the naturalization of war, she examines the legacy of the 1973 uprising as part of the history

¹³ Ibid, 168-183.

¹⁴ Malek Abisaab, "Shiite Peasants and a New Nation in Colonial Lebanon: The Intifada of Bint Jubayl, 1936," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2009): 483-501.

¹⁵ Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse University Press, 2010).

of “the crop of steadfastness.”¹⁶ Khayyat explores how the memory of that protest is a component of the environment of conflict inhabited by contemporary tobacco cultivators. Khayyat’s work demonstrates the enduring legacy of the tobacco farmer uprising for current residents of southern Lebanon, with southerners’ current perception of the event being shaped by events that transpired after 1973, particularly the Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon. While this is important to understanding contemporary debates concerning the tobacco farmer uprising, I am primarily interested in understanding how political parties and prominent publishers interpreted the events in 1973. Illiyas al-Buwari writes about the uprising in Nabatieh in his encyclopedic volumes on the history of labor activism in Lebanon, though the breadth of his endeavor to cover the history of labor activism in Lebanon necessitates a concise entry on the tobacco farmer uprising.¹⁷ Al-Buwari writes about the tobacco farmer uprising from the perspective of a communist partisan, providing one perspective of the strike—the primary source for the entry on the tobacco farmer uprising is press coverage by the communist newspaper *Al-Nida'*—while ignoring contestation around the event.

Examining the press’s construction of divergent interpretations of the tobacco farming uprising contributes to a body of work on the mediation of social movements. Naila Hamdy and Ehab H. Goma explore the different interpretations promulgated by semiofficial (government-affiliated) newspapers, independent newspapers, and social media to frame the Egyptian uprising, with interpretations ranging from a revolution for

¹⁶ Munira Khayyat, “A Landscape of War: On the Nature of Conflict in South Lebanon,” PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8V987D6>.

¹⁷ Illiyās al-Būwarī, *Tārīkh al-ḥaraka al-‘ummāliyya wa-l-niqābiyya fī lubnān 1971-1980* [*History of the Worker and Syndicate Movement in Lebanon 1971-1980*], (Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 1987).

social justice to a conspiracy against the Egyptian state.¹⁸ Marc Lynch demonstrates how the lack of independence of media outlets in the Arab world allowed for their exploitation by regional and local actors to highlight instability and precarity from the Arab uprisings to stymie efforts towards democratic transition.¹⁹ Outside the world of Arabic media, Ruud Koopmans writes on how the mass media sphere is a site of mediated encounters between political authorities and social movements, specifically looking at how far-right groups in Germany responded to their coverage in the media.²⁰ John V. Kane and Benjamin J. Newman write about the effect of anti-union rhetoric in the media on public opinion towards unions in the United States.²¹ This thesis also examines framing of social movements in different press outlets. However, though these scholars attempt to demonstrate the role of this framing in shaping public opinion and affecting the trajectory of protest movements, I use framing as a way of identifying political issues that animated debate and determining how newspapers situated the tobacco farmer uprising in broader debates.

Exploring how political and economic interests inform coverage in Lebanese newspapers builds on work on political factors that affect the media landscape in Lebanon. Douglas A. Boyd examines the roots of politically-linked television channels

¹⁸ Naila Hamdy & Ehab H. Gomaa, "Framing the Egyptian Uprising in Arabic Language Newspapers and Social Media," *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012): 195–211.

¹⁹ Marc Lynch, "Trashing Transitions: The Role of Arab Media After the Uprisings," in *Revisiting the Arab Uprisings: The Politics of a Revolutionary Moment*, ed. Stéphane Lacroix & Jean-Pierre Filiu (Oxford University Press, 2018): 93-110.

²⁰ Ruud Koopmans, "Movements and Media: Selection Processes and Evolutionary Dynamics in the Public Sphere," *Theory and Society*, vol.33, no. 3-4 (2004: 367-391.

²¹ John V. Kane & Benjamin J. Newman, "Organized Labor as the New Undeserving Rich? Mass Media, Class-Based Anti-Union Rhetoric and Public Support For Unions in the United States," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2019): 997-1026.

to the unofficial “pirate stations” that were established by militias during the civil war.²² Marwan M. Kraidy writes on the postwar licensing process to regulate the broadcast stations and how domestic and international political interests impact policy.²³ Sarah El-Richani inserts Lebanon into comparative media research and writes how the relationship between government officials and non-state actors impacts the Lebanese media system.²⁴ This thesis is a case study on the Lebanese media landscape and the role of political parties and the political interests in news coverage. While this thesis will not provide an exhaustive list of outlets and their affiliation like Boyd or attempt to diagnose the Lebanese media system like Kraidy and El-Richani, this thesis will demonstrate the role of political actors in shaping news coverage in Lebanon.

1.3. Sources & Methods

This thesis examines articles from six Arabic newspapers published in Lebanon that were recorded onto microfilm and stored at the Jafet Library. The selected newspapers are the following:

1. *An-Nahar* was established in 1933 by Gebran Tueni whose son Ghassan was editor-in-chief in 1973. The paper was published by the Press Cooperative House which was headed by the Tueni family. Ghassan Tueni served in the 45th government headed by Saeb Salam as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information and Education from October 1970 until his resignation in January

²² Douglas A. Boyd, “Lebanese Broadcasting: Unofficial Electronic Media During a Prolonged Civil War,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1991): 269-287.

²³ Marwan M. Kraidy, “Broadcasting Regulation and Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1998): 387-400.

²⁴ Sarah El-Richani, *The Lebanese Media: Anatomy of a System in Perpetual Crisis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

1971. In a 1971 review of Lebanese newspapers, Nabil Dajani stated that *An-Nahar* has “the highest circulation in Lebanon particularly among the intelligentsia.”²⁵ Dajani also described *An-Nahar* as “inclined to the right” and “critical of socialist trends.”

2. *Al-Hayat* was established in 1946 by Kamel Mrowa whose wife Salma Bissar Mrowa took control of *Al-Hayat* and the Dar Al-Hayat Publishing House after the assassination of Kamel in 1966. In 1971, Dajani stated that *Al-Hayat* relied “heavily on the support of conservative Arab regimes” and that the paper sold more copies outside of Lebanon, “particularly in Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.”²⁶ According to Dajani, *Al-Hayat* “rarely opposes any government but has led in supporting social reforms and economic development.”

3. *Al-Anba'* was established in 1951 by the Progressive Socialist Party. The Progressive Socialist Party was headed by Kamal Joumblatt and advocated for socialist reforms and the Arab identity of Lebanon. Joumblatt was a minister in multiple governments, including governments under Saeb Salam, though Joumblatt was an opponent of Salam in January 1973.

4. *Al-Nida'* was established in 1959 by the Lebanese Communist Party. Founded in 1924 as the Communist Party of Lebanon and Syria in 1924, the party advocated against granting concessions to foreign companies and tobacco workers were among the founders.²⁷ Though French Mandate and post-independence Lebanese authorities at times persecuted party activists, the party

²⁵ Nabil H. Dajani, "The Press in Lebanon," *Gazette*, vol. 17, no.3 (1971): 165.

²⁶Ibid: 166.

²⁷ Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse University Press, 2010): 3.

was able to operate with relative freedom until it was officially legalized in 1970 during Kamal Joumlatt's term as Interior Minister.

5. *Al-'Amal* was established in 1939 by the *Katā'ib* Party which was part of the Salam government in January 1973. Pierre Gemayel established *Katā'ib* as a paramilitary organization and political party styled after European fascist movements. Pierre Gemayel and the *Katā'ib* Party were adherents to Lebanese nationalism and anticommunism.

6. *Nida' Al-Watan* was established by Elias Ghriyafi in 1943. Ghriyafi was a supporter of former president Camille Chamoun and his National Liberal Party which was part of the Salam government in January 1973. Columnists included poet and Lebanese nationalist Said Akl.

In order to make this research project manageable I chose to examine just six newspapers out of the vast and diverse selection of newspapers that were published in Lebanon in 1973. The most prominent French newspaper *L'Orient-Le Jour* is not included because I do not have any proficiency in French. The English language *The Daily Star*, owned by the Mrowa-controlled Dar Al-Hayat Publishing House, is also not included as I chose to examine just Arabic publications as the majority of the newspapers were in Arabic. I wanted to include the most popular newspapers as well as political newspapers that represented a range of perspectives. According to the 1971 Dajani survey of Lebanese newspapers, *An-Nahar* and *Al-Hayat* were among the most popular and widely circulated periodicals.²⁸ I chose *Al-Anba'*, *Al-Nida'*, and *Al-'Amal* because they were published by political parties. I chose *Nida' Al-Watan* because, while

²⁸ Dajani, "The Press in Lebanon," *Gazette*, (1971): 165-166

it was not published by a political party, it had an explicitly Chamounist editorial view. While the six chosen newspapers represent a range of perspectives and have unique positions on the political spectrum, they are just a small fraction of the newspapers that were published at that time and I therefore cannot claim that this selection represents all factions and perspectives. For example, Palestinian periodicals like the Palestinian Liberation Organization's *Filastin Al-Thawra* and the Ghassan Kanafani-founded *Al-Hadaf* were also published in Beirut in 1973. Palestinian outlets would likely have a very distinct outlook on this event. However, in lieu of examining every periodical available at the Jafet Library, I chose to focus on this sample of six newspapers.

In addition to coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising, I also collected articles on the teachers' strike and protests in the border village of Hula. These protest movements were contemporaneous with the tobacco farmer uprising and I wanted to see how newspapers wrote about these movements in relation to one another and determine if they were connected explicitly or implicitly through shared framing. As one of the goals of this thesis is to see how newspapers situated the tobacco farmer uprising in broader debates, I wanted to see if these contemporaneous protests received similar treatment which would indicate that there were clear political positions which informed news coverage and editorial perspective.

With the exception of *Al-Anba'* which was a weekly periodical, all of these newspapers were published daily. I went through every issue of these newspapers from December 1972 (when tobacco farmers began plans for strike) through February 1973 (when there was a partial resolution to the dispute) and saved articles, editorials, photo essays, and political cartoons that were related to the tobacco farmers organizing in the weeks leading up to the 1973 clash, the protests in Nabatieh in January, protests

condemning the killing of farmers, discussion of tobacco farmer protests in parliament, the teachers' strike, and the protests in Hula. I collected over 750 articles, photo essays, and cartoons from all the newspapers. Approximately half of the sources were from *Al-Nida'* whose coverage of the protests was the most extensive.

This thesis is a textual analysis of newspaper coverage which attempts to reconstruct the political landscape by identifying frames that newspapers adopted to interpret protest movements. Gamson and Modigliani define a frame as “a central organizing idea...for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue.”²⁹ According to Entman, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.”³⁰ Identifying frames helps determine what were sites of contention for political parties and politically-connected publishers. Frames in texts “are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.”³¹ Tankard identifies the following as framing mechanisms Tankard:

1. Headlines and kickers (small headlines over the main headlines).
2. Subheads.

²⁹ William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 95, no. 1 (1989): 3.

³⁰ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.

³¹ Ibid.

3. Photographs.
4. Photo captions.
5. Leads (the beginnings of news stories).
6. Selection of sources or affiliations.
7. Selection of quotes.
8. Pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis).
9. Logos (graphic identification of the particular series an article belongs to).
10. Statistics, charts, and graphs.
11. Concluding statements or paragraphs of articles.³²

As I went through and examined the articles that I saved, I used this selection of framing mechanisms as a guide to help me as I looked for themes in coverage. I identified three distinct patterns in the ways the newspapers emphasized and elided details of the protest movements in their coverage. *Al-Anba'* and *Al-Nida'* had a guiding narrative about state violence and the complicity of the government with the capitalist elite against the working class. In contrast, *Nida' Al-Watan* and *Al-'Amal* wrote about the protest movements as examples of opposition parties, particularly leftist movements, exploiting grievances and tragedy for political gain. The final pattern that I observed was the coverage in *An-Nahar* and *Al-Hayat* that was critical of radical political currents as well as critical of the government which the newspapers saw as incompetent at

³² James W. Tankard, Jr., "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., & August E. Grant (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001): 100.

managing crises. Based on these patterns which I observed through my reading and inspection of the coverage, I chose to organize the chapters of this thesis around 3 pairs of newspapers that had similar framing in their coverage.

Just as I could not examine every periodical that was published in Lebanon in 1973, I am not able to write a description of every article on the protests let alone on every framing mechanism that I observed. As I prepared to write this thesis, I chose the articles, cartoons, photos, headlines, and quotes that I believed were the most compelling evidence for what I contend are three distinct patterns of press coverage. Of the more than 750 articles collected, this thesis only references 75 of them.

This thesis approaches protest movements differently than Abisaab or Khayyat. Rather than examining the workers and farmers directly, I explore how the tobacco farmer uprising was mediated, with newspapers identifying the motivations and aspirations on behalf of the farmers. I want to understand how political parties and major media outlets situated the tobacco farmer uprising alongside contemporaneous events and how they connected this labor strike to broader debates around the legitimacy of state policy concerning development, investment, and security. This is not meant to be a rejection of the concepts from Subaltern studies that challenge the imposition of narratives on people traditionally excluded from histories. I agree with Joel Beinin who argues that “the discursive power of states, social hierarchies, and national mystification” is undermined by histories of peasants; however, the goal of the thesis is to understand how political parties and major publishers interpreted a movement of poor tobacco cultivators.³³

³³ Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge University Press: 2001): 4.

While media coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising may have impacted public opinion or policy makers, I am unable to determine from available sources whether that happened or to what extent. Furthermore, the role of the newspaper as a site of mediated interaction and maneuvering between Nabatieh protesters and government officials is beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.4. Outline

In the second chapter I explain how *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* framed the tobacco farmer uprising as emblematic of government policy in the south and as part of a conflict between the popular masses and a venal state that served the interests of capitalists and feudal political families. I also describe how the newspapers depicted the Army and security forces as tools of state repression that failed to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression.

In the third chapter I describe the framing of *Al-'Amal* and *Al-Nida' Al-Watan* which presented the tobacco farmer protest and protests that followed the clashes as destabilizing unrest that threatened the stability of the economy and the state. I explain how these newspapers defended the traditional leadership of the south represented by Kamel Asaad and how they considered the Army to be an unassailable institution that protected the nation. I also describe how these newspapers suggested that left-wing parties and opposition leaders were hostile to Lebanese economic prosperity and the Lebanese nation itself.

In the fourth chapter, I examine how *An-Nahar* and *Al-Hayat* incorporated features from the frames described in the second and third chapters into their coverage,

showing how the newspapers shed light on the plight of southerners while also publishing articles that were critical of the opposition and so-called radical ideologies. I go on to describe how the newspapers primarily described the clash in Nabatieh as a consequence of government incompetence, showing how the newspapers blamed the government for creating the economic and social conditions conducive to the radicalization of classes that the newspapers believed would never have become politically engaged if not for the dire state they lived in.

In the fifth chapter, I situate the tobacco farmer uprising alongside the teachers' strike and protests in Hula. I describe how newspapers connected the teachers' strike to the tobacco farmer protest and how newspapers used the same frames to interpret the teachers' strike, with left-wing papers describing it as an example of state repression of a labor movement, right-wing papers describing it as another example of Marxists fomenting unrest, and *An-Nahar* and *Al-Hayat* describing the protest as a result of government incompetence. I explain how *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* wrote about Hula as another example of southern plight as well as an example of security forces being marshalled to defend political feudalism.

In the sixth and final chapter, I reflect on what newspapers reveal about the tobacco farmer uprising and Lebanon 1973 and what they elide. I also write on contemporary contestation over the uprising as it is invoked for political purposes as well as the enduring debate over state institutions, comparing coverage of Nabatieh protests to the protests that broke out in Lebanon on October 17, 2019.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE STRIKES THE SOUTH

The newspapers of the Lebanese Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party published articles condemning the Régie monopoly, the security forces, and the government of Saeb Salam. This chapter describes the two prominent frames that governed coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising in these newspapers. *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* framed the tobacco farmer uprising as emblematic of state policy concerning the southern communities and as a conflict between the popular masses and a venal government.

2.1. Plight of *Al-Janūb*

Al-Nida' and *Al-Anba'* adopted a frame that positioned the protests and clashes in Nabatieh as being part of a pattern of state neglect of communities in southern Lebanon. Through this frame, the newspapers describe *al-janūb* (the South) as a region that was economically undeveloped, exploited by *iqṭā'* (feudalism) and under threat from Zionist military aggression.³⁴ That tobacco-cultivating farmers and peasants decided to organize to improve their economic conditions was natural considering the dire conditions southerners were subjected to by the traditional leadership class. Furthermore, the violent suppression of this movement was part of a pattern of violent tragedies that characterized life in *al-janūb*. This conception of *al-janūb* as a land of

³⁴ See Joel Beinin's *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge University Press: 2001) for the argument against using "*iqṭā'*" as direct translation for "feudalism." There are differences between *iqṭā'* and European feudalism, however the use of "*iqṭā'*" pejoratively in political speech is meant to emphasize the supposed backwardness or pre-modernness of certain social relations.

suffering is exemplified by a headline from *Al-Anba'* that associates the region with “*iqṭā'*, *takhalluf* [backwardness], and Israeli ambitions.”³⁵

Articles on the ineluctable link between tobacco cultivation in *al-janūb* and misery preceded the violent January clash. In December 1972, *Al-Nida'* published an article on life in the village of Tallousa whose headline describes the village’s fate as being like the rest of the villages in *Jabal ‘Āmil*, a mountainous region in southern Lebanon, “*ḥirmān* [deprivation] and dominion of Régie over its farmers.”³⁶ The article describes Tallousa as lacking paved roads and schools and being under constant threat from Israel. The residents are destitute and cultivate tobacco at a loss, a fact that the article attributes to the monopoly system and the “absence of land reclamation or *al-mashrū' al-akhḍar* [the Green Plan],” the state program for agricultural development which the article contends “allotted projects for the benefit of *maḥāsīb* [cronies].”³⁷ According to an elderly man quoted in the article, “the state plans, but its plans are electoral.”

Derision of superficial concern for southerners is also present in a press release by the Committee of Tobacco Farmers in the South (*lajnat muzāri 'ī al-tabagh fī al-janūb*) published in *Al-Nida'* under a headline stating that agricultural workers suffer from “*istighlāl* [exploitation] by Régie and the despotism of *iqṭā'*.”³⁸ The statement

³⁵ “*Nedwa al-anbā': al-janūb...wa-al-iqṭā' wa-al-takhalluf wa-al-aṭmā' al-isrā'īliyya*” [“Al-Anba' Forum: The South..Feudalism, Backwardness and Israeli Ambitions”], *Al-Anba'*, Dec. 15, 1972.

³⁶ “*Tallūsa ka-ghairihā min qurā jabal 'āmil naṣībuhā al-ḥirmān wa taḥakkum al-rījī bi-muzāri 'ihā*” [“Tallusa Like Other Jabal Amil Villages is Fated to Deprivation and the Dominion of Régie Over its Farmers”], *Al-Nida'*, Dec. 3, 1972.

³⁷ For more on the ostensible goals of the Green Plan, see government website: <http://www.greenplan.gov.lb/>

³⁸ “*Al-'ummāl al-zirā 'iyīn yu 'ānūn min 'amaliyya istithmār muzdawija istighlāl sharaka al-rījī wa-ta'assuf al-iqṭā' wa-qam 'ajhizat al-sulṭa*” [“Agricultural Workers Suffer From Duplicate Investment

dismisses perfunctory calls for southerners to show “*ṣumūd* [steadfastness] and *thabāt* [perseverance] after every [Israeli] assault” as meaningless as long as *al-janūb* lives in “conditions of economic and social *takhalluf*.” The rising costs of housing, healthcare, and education, as well as the infeasibility of cereal cultivation makes the fates of southerners tied to tobacco, but distribution of licenses is a corrupt process and Régie “does not think about anything other than how to get more profit.” The press release states that cultivation licenses are distributed to “those with influence and *maḥāsīb*” who engage in speculation, selling the licenses to smallholder farmers at exorbitant prices. The press release states that those who are able to acquire licenses struggle to recover costs because of low prices for tobacco, a result of the failure of Régie to adhere to its legal obligation to encourage the export of Lebanese tobacco. In fact, Régie “does the opposite, opening the door for the import of foreign cigarettes, conspiring against the production of national cigarettes, and acts as an agent for foreign companies.” Furthermore, there are rumors that “negotiations are underway to sell Régie to a new American monopoly to eliminate tobacco cultivation for the benefit of foreign tobacco.”

The disinterest of the elite for the state of the domestic tobacco industry is lampooned in a cartoon in *Al-Nida'* (see figure 1) depicting Kamel Asaad, the Speaker of Parliament and most visible symbol of *iqṭā'* in *al-janūb*, smoking with Prime Minister Salam in a warehouse full of cigars and cigarettes, both unphased by tobacco farmers protesting, simply stating the “it doesn’t concern us, we smoke foreign [tobacco].” According to *Al-Nida'*, Kamel Asaad was a barrier to tobacco farmers achieving their demands. When the strike in Nabatieh began and tobacco farmers occupied the Régie building, a union described as “being under the control of Asaad”

Process, Exploitation by Régie, Despotism of Feudalism, and Oppression from sulṭa’s Agencies”], *Al-Nida'*, Dec. 9, 1972.

urged the farmers to end the protest, an act that the newspaper described as a “*mu‘āmarā*” (conspiracy).³⁹ In an article entitled, “Thus Asaad Aids Southerners,” the Speaker of Parliament is described as serving the interests of “wealthy farmers at the expense of smallholder farmers” who are left to “go up on *al-khāzūq* [the stake],” the equivalent of saying they are left to “take the shaft.”⁴⁰ According to *Al-Anba'*, his bias for wealthy landowners can be attributed to him being “from a family that is blessed with a large-scale tobacco cultivation license.”⁴¹



Figure 1. Kamel Asaad and Saeb Salam smoke foreign tobacco while farmers protest. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 23, 1973)

Accompanying an article covering the delivery of the demands the Committee of Tobacco Farmers in the South to the government is a photo of committee members in front of parliament holding picket signs (see figure 2), the most prominent sign

³⁹ “*Muzāri‘ū al-tabagh bil-janūb yetezāharūn wa-ya‘tašimūn bil-nabaṭiyya istinkāran li-zulm sharakat al-rījī*” [“Tobacco Farmers in the South Demonstrate and Hold Sit-in in Nabatieh to Condemn Injustice of Régie”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 23, 1973.

⁴⁰ Ibn Al-Janūb, “*Hakadhā yentešir al-ass‘ad li-abnā al-janūb*” [“Thus al-Assad Aids Southerners”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 28, 1973.

⁴¹ ‘Abdallah Faṭī, “*Al-waṭan le-nā kullnā*” [“The Nation is For All of Us”], *Al-Anba'*, Feb. 2, 1973.

describing the tobacco farmers as coming from not only *al-janūb*, but *al-qurā al-imāmiyya* (the frontline villages), a moniker that highlights their vulnerability to Israeli attacks and their importance in confronting Zionism. However, the article states that “many deputies and ministers entered and left without turning toward the farmers” who had come to deliver “petitions signed by 16,000 farmers representing 65 southern villages protesting the prevailing conditions there.”⁴² These farmers, at the frontline against Israel, are left to suffer under “the monopolistic Régie company and *iqṭā‘ siyāsī wa-ṭā’ifī* [sectarian and political feudalism].”



Figure 2. Delegation of agricultural workers in front of parliament. (“*Al-’ummāl al-zirā ‘iyīn fī al-janūb yetazāhrūn amām majlis al-nuwwāb wa-ya ‘qidūn mu’tamaran ṣhaḥfīan yetraḥūn fīhi awḏā ‘aham wa-maṭālibaham*” [“Agricultural Workers From South Demonstrate In Front of Parliament and Hold Press Conference Wherein They Share Their Condition and Their Demands”], *Al-Nida’*, Dec. 9, 1972)

According to a statement by the National Conference to Support the South (*al-mu’tamar al-waṭanī li-da’m al-janūb*) published in *Al-Anba’*, not only do politicians associated with *iqṭā‘* fail to protect southerners, their role in “keeping *al-janūb* in the

⁴² “*Al-’ummāl al-zirā ‘iyīn fī al-janūb yetazāhrūn amām majlis al-nuwwāb wa-ya ‘qidūn mu’tamaran ṣhaḥfīan yetraḥūn fīhi awḏā ‘aham wa-maṭālibaham*” [“Agricultural Workers From South Demonstrate In Front of Parliament and Hold Press Conference Wherein They Share Their Condition and Their Demands”], *Al-Nida’*, Dec. 9, 1972.

most extreme state of *takhalluf*, *ħirmān*, and *istighlāl*’ serves “Zionist plans to occupy *al-janūb* after its impoverishment and the expulsion of its residents.”⁴³ These politicians use *abwāq* (loyal media) and *azlām* (thugs) to attack anyone who challenges the supremacy of *iqṭā’*. According to *Al-Nida’*, government funds designated for projects in *al-janūb* are pilfered by *iqṭā’* politicians who distribute it to their clientelistic networks. “Funds of the *majlis al-juḡūb* [Council of Pockets],” a play on *majlis al-janūb* (Council of the South), “are wasted on the Bey’s *azlām* and entourage,” a reference to Kamel Asaad who used the honorific title.⁴⁴ Under Asaad, “development is done through neglect, starvation, promotion of ignorance, and *ħirmān*” and support for *al-janūb* is done through “the killing and displacement of farmers.”

Rhetoric connecting government policy with Israeli assaults on *al-janūb* escalated after security forces shot and killed Hassan Haik and Naim Darwish. Coverage compared extreme force used by the state against protesters to the purported timid responses of Lebanon to Israeli aggression, arguing that the degree of violence witnessed in Nabatieh should have been seen at the border through an attack against Israel. In an *Al-Nida’* editorial cartoon (see figure 3) journalists turn down Salam’s invitation to observe a shooting demonstration of new weapons stating that, “there is no need, we saw the weapons’ effectiveness in Nabatieh.” One article facetiously dismissed assertions that the security forces were poorly equipped.

Who still says that the government spends millions on useless weapons?
 Who would dare still say that? The weapons that are in the hands of the
 state’s forces had their effectiveness proven yesterday in Nabatieh. Yes, in
 Nabatieh and not at the border as one might have expected. As for “the

⁴³ “*Al-mu’tamar al-waṭanī li-da’m al-janūb*” [“The National Conference to Support the South”], *Al-Anba’*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁴⁴ “*Al-sulṭa teda’m al-janūb bil-irhāb wa-al-ħirmān*” [“The Sulṭa Supports the South with Intimidation and Deprivation”], *Al-Nida’*, Feb. 21, 1973.

enemy,” it was *jamāhīr* (popular masses) of tobacco farmers from the region and not Zionist forces.⁴⁵

When security forces were deployed in Beirut to ensure security during a protest in support of the tobacco farmers, a statement by the Committee of Tobacco Farmers published in *Al-Nida'* describes the government as “turning the squares of Beirut into battlefields as if the enemy was there and not lurking at the border, ready to strike at *al-janūb* and rip it from our beloved nation.”⁴⁶



Coverage went as far as saying the violence committed by Lebanese security forces was equivalent to Israeli military attacks or even complementary to Zionist expansion. While *ṣumūd* was necessary for southerners to endure life under Israeli

⁴⁵Fu’ād Kaḥīl, “*Suffāhūn*” [“Murderers”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁴⁶ “*Bayān lajnat muzāri ‘ī al-tabagh ḥawl muzāharat beirūt: arednāhu yawman li-intiṣār maṭālībā al-muḥiqqa*” [“Statement of Tobacco Farmer Committee Concerning Beirut Demonstration: We Want a Day in Support of our Justified Demands”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 28, 1973.

assault, this time it had to be shown in the face of the state.⁴⁷ A work of prose published in *Al-Nida'* the day after the clash included the following:

The girls in the tobacco fields will not tremble
We have known bullets and death
At the hands of the invaders from behind the border
Salutations to the land that every day gains a martyr
From an enemy, whether the invaders coming from the border
Or the guardians of the monopoly from within⁴⁸

Al-janūb is “between two hells: the hell of Israeli assault and the hell of the *irhāb* [intimidation, terror] of the *sulṭa* [ruling class]” which is only concerned with using force or exploiting the state of emergency in *al-janūb* “to save *iqṭā‘ siyāsī*.”⁴⁹ In an article whose headline describes the clashes as a “*majzara* [massacre] carried out by the *sulṭa* against the tobacco farmers,” the violent suppression of the protest is described as the state’s way of “reminding southerners that starvation and *ḥirmān* are its favorite policies” and that it wants to “empty the region of its residents so that the enemy can occupy it without resistance.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Fu’ād Kaḥīl, “*Saffāḥūn*” [“Murderers”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁴⁸ Ashraf. “*Al-liṣṣ wa-al-wuḥūsh*” [“The Thief and the Monsters”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁴⁹ “*Al-quwa al-taaddamiyya wa-al-waṭaniyya tudīn al-majzara al-waḥshiyya wa-ted’ū al-jamāhīr al-sha‘biyya li-istinkārihā*” [The Progressive and National Forces Condemn the Barbarous Massacre and Call on Popular Masses to Condemn it], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁵⁰ “*Sakhaṭ sha‘bī ‘ārim ‘alā majzara al-sulṭa didd muzāri‘ī al-tabagh bil-janūb; lajnat al-m’atiṣmīn tede’ū li-muzāhara sha‘biyya ṣubāḥ al-yawm bil-nabaṭiyya*” [“Unrestrained Popular Anger Over Sulṭa’s Massacre Against Tobacco Farmers in the South; Committee of Striking Protesters Call for Popular Protest Today in the Morning in Nabatieh”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

2.2. *Sulṭa* Versus *Sha‘b*

In addition to giving salience to the importance of *al-janūb* as a site of neglect and assault, *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* interpreted the tobacco farmer uprising through a frame that describes the *sulṭa* as inherently adversarial to the will of the *sha‘b* (people). Not only does the *sulṭa* pursue policy that serves the economic and political elite, it persecutes and kills those from the *jamāhīr* who challenge the supremacy of the venal cabal. As a writer in *Al-Nida'* wrote after the *majzara* in Nabatieh, because protest movements are challenging “the financial junta” and politicians, “the state is opening fire on workers and farmers.”⁵¹

With this frame, the newspapers emphasized the alienation of the *sulṭa* from the interests of the *sha‘b*. *Al-Nida'* wrote that after the *majzara*, the farmers became convinced that “the state is not their state, but rather it is the state of investment companies, the state of major traders and capitalists, the state of *iqṭā‘ siyāsī*.”⁵² In an editorial cartoon inspired by Kamal Joumlatt saying that the *majzara* in Nabatieh was returning the government to the primitive era (see figure 4), Prime Minister Salam is depicted as a caveman alongside a trader, a broker, and a monopolist, all of whom are identified by a nearby sign as being cannibals.

⁵¹ Muṣṭafā Al-‘irīs, “*Al-dawla turīd i‘ādat al-ta‘rīkh al-sayyi*” [“The State Wants the Return of Horrible History”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁵² Fu‘ād Kaḥīl, “*Saffāhūn*” [“Murderers”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.



Figure 4. Prime Minister Salam and his cannibal cronies. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 26, 1973)

According to *Al-Anba'*, this “*sulṭa* of repression and *irhāb* committed the most vile *majzara*” in Nabatieh in order to stop the farmers and “their struggle to improve their conditions.” This atrocity is part of a series of massacres “that confirm that the *sulṭa* represents that exploitive class and the lords of monopoly and that repression and *irhāb* form the essence of the *sulṭa*.” In an article entitled “The Era of Régie is The Era of Blood and Calamities,” *Al-Nida'* describes the history of Régie as replete with state violence against workers and farmers.⁵³ Since Régie’s establishment in 1935, not a year has passed “without the fall of a martyr, whether a peasant, a tobacco farmer, or a worker! And the dead fell either from the bullet of the company’s goons, or by the bullet of the state security forces tasked with defending the monopolistic company.”

Régie is able to exploit workers and farmers because “it enjoys the protection of the *nizām* [regime] and its repressive tools.”⁵⁴ Publishing an account of *Sayyid* Hani

⁵³ Abū Jamīl. “‘*Ahd al-rījī ‘ahd al-dimā wa-l-maṣāib*” [“The Era of Régie is The Era of Blood and Calamities”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 28, 1973.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad Shuqayr, “*Iḍrābāt shāmila bi-ṣaidā wa-ṣūr wa-al-nabaṭiyya wa-al-janūb; 7 alāf yetezāharūn bi-ṣaidā wa 3 alāf bi-ṣūr*” [“Comprehensive Strikes in Sidon, Tyre, Nabatieh, and the South; 7 Thousand Demonstrate in Sidon and 3 Thousand in Tyre”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 27, 1973.

Fahs, a cleric who participated in the occupation of the Régie building, *Al-Anba'* describes the “methods used by the *sulta*’s men as unbelievable: denying food and water to occupying protesters and forcing clerics to urinate inside and drink their urine from thirst.”⁵⁵ Any member of the “*sha*’*b* who raises their voice in opposition to injustice” is met with “violence, repression, and *irhāb*.” In its coverage of the Beirut protest after the “bloody majzara committed by the tyrannical *sulta*,” *Al-Anba'* says that the government imposed “fascistic and repressive measures” to deter protesters.⁵⁶ Furthermore, “the *sulta* summoned armored vehicles from *al-janūb* to confront the *sha*’*b* and protect the homes of officials who conspire against the interests of the *sha*’*b*.”

The two frames described in this chapter governed the interpretations promulgated by *Al-Anba'* and *Al-Nida'* on the motivations for the tobacco farmers and the government officials. The use of force against protesting farmers was part of a pattern of government conduct that was adversarial to southerners and the working class. Furthermore, the newspapers used coverage of the events in Nabatieh to comment on government policy on defense and development as well as the political power of the popular masses compared to political dynasties and their capitalist allies.

⁵⁵ “*Al-su’āl al-kabīr: limādhā ḥaṣala ma ḥaṣala wa-men hūa al-mas’ūl?!?*” [“The Big Question: Why Did What Happened Happen and Who is Responsible?!?”], *Al-Anba'*, Feb. 2, 1973.

⁵⁶ “*Asharāt al-ulūf tazāharū ta’yīdan li-muzāri’i al-janūb*” [“Tens of Thousands Demonstrated in Support of Farmers in South”], *Al-Anba'*, Feb. 2, 1973.

CHAPTER 3

GUARDING STABILITY AND THE *NIZĀM*

While coverage in both the *Katā'ib* Party's *Al-'Amal* and the Chamounist *Nida' Al-Watan* was sympathetic to the farmers' desire to improve their living conditions and described the death of protesters as a tragedy, articles in these newspapers were explicit in their rejection of strikes and the *takhrīb* (vandalism, destruction) that they contended accompanied street protests. This chapter describes how these outlets wrote that, at best, proponents of strikes and protests are engaging in *ghawghā'iyya* (demagoguery) and pandering to the *jamāhīr* and at worst, they are part of a leftist plot to subvert the *nizām*. Whereas the leftist press questioned the legitimacy of state policy around development and security—as well as question the legitimacy of the state itself—*Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan* fiercely defended government policy and the security forces. These newspapers believed that economic stability attracted foreign capital which was critical to the country's flourishing and that labor movement activism and the ascendance of leftist political currents would lead to capital flight. Additionally, these newspapers saw the military and security apparatuses as integral institutions of the nation that are beyond reproach. *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan* interpreted the tobacco farmer uprising and the subsequent protests through a frame that emphasized the need to preserve Lebanon from destabilizing unrest sowed by labor activism and leftist movements.

3.1. Avoidable Tragedy

While *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan*'s articulation of arguments against demonstrations focused primarily on the strikes and street protests that followed the Nabatieh clashes, these newspapers were also critical of the farmers' decision to protest in Nabatieh as well. *Al-'Amal* described the violence in Nabatieh as a contrived tragedy because according to Speaker of Parliament Kamel Asaad "the disagreement between Régie and the farmers had already been resolved at the time of the clash."⁵⁷ While *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* described Asaad as the enemy of the farmers, *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan* described Asaad as the legitimate representative of southerners. *Nida' Al-Watan* amplified the position of Kamel Asaad's Democratic Socialist Party and Democratic Reform Front parliamentary bloc, publishing statements warning against "tujjār al-ma'āsī" [tragedy-mongers] who exploit the farmers' misery "and do not care about the southerner getting his right."⁵⁸ The newspaper also quotes representatives heading delegations of tobacco farmers saying that "they put their trust in President Asaad."⁵⁹

Concerning the use of force against protesters, *Nida' Al-Watan* staunchly defended the army, claiming that soldiers were forced to respond after they were shot at by protesters. In an article written by poet and Lebanese nationalist Said Akl, the writer states that only a "superficial panderer of the *jamāhīr*" would ask "how is it permissible

⁵⁷ "Min ḥiṣād al-ayyām: li-yafahm al-ghaiyāra" ["From the Days' Harvest: For the Zealous to Understand"], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 27, 1973.

⁵⁸ "Ijtimā' li-ḥizb al-assa'd wa-nuwwābuhu...nidā' ilā muzāri'ī al-tabagh bil-janūb" ["Meeting of Assad's Party and Deputies...Call to Tobacco Farmers in South"], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 27, 1973.

⁵⁹ "Fī ḥiwār ma' wafd yetaqaddamuhu al-shaikh al-ṣādeq: al-assa'd yu'id muzāri'ī al-tabagh bi-tā'mīn ḥaqūqihim wa-yuḥadhdharahum min al-muḥarraḍīn wa-al-mutājirīn bi-qaḍiyyatihim" ["In Conversation with Delegation Headed by Sheikh Sadeq: Assad Promises Tobacco Farmers to Guarantee Their Rights and Warns Them Againsts Inciters and Those That Exploit Their Cause"], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 30, 1973.

for the army to open fire on the *jamāhīr*?”⁶⁰ That sort of thinking is a “legacy of the Turkish and French periods when the army was our enemy, an occupying army” claims Akl, but “today the situation is different and the army is ours and the most precious thing we have,” declaring the army to be “the epitome of our chivalry.” Since *al-janūb* is a military area, the army is tasked with ensuring the security of government institutions, “and one of those institutions was attacked by *jamāhīr* who were not fortunate enough to have among them sensible people who would hesitate before opening fire” on the army. Akl argues that “schools are negligent in indoctrinating the new generation on the inviolability of the army” and that clashes between the public and state forces can be avoided if Lebanese people learn that even if they “are overflowing with rage, they must reign in their anger when they encounter the army.”

3.2. Conspiring Opposition

Articles from *Al-'Amal* on the demonstrations that broke out throughout the country after the Nabatieh clash reflected the *Katā'ib* Party's opposition to calls for strikes and amplified statements released by party president Pierre Gemayel. *Al-'Amal* wrote that while the public was united in its sadness for what transpired in Nabatieh, there was also consensus in the belief that “calls for strikes are not innocent” and that these demonstrations would have a deleterious effect on Lebanon.⁶¹ The public is aware that the strikes are not about Nabatieh, but rather about “settling scores.” The left may be using “impressive slogans and captivating words,” but it only cares about “weakening both trust in the *nizām* and the *hayba* [prestige, dignity] of the state.” Calls

⁶⁰ Sa'īd A'ql, “*Wa-l-bādi' āzlam*” [“The Initiator is the Aggressor”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 30, 1973.

⁶¹ “*Al-istighlāl al-khāfi' yu'azzaz markaz hukūmat salām*” [“Mistaken Exploitation Strengthens Standing of Salam Government”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 26, 1973.

to protest and strike are part of a “concerted effort to undermine stability and to suspend the economic flourishing that the country is blessed with.”

In an article covering Gemayel’s speech against what he asserts are opposition calls for *takhrīb*, the newspaper quotes Gemayel as saying that “leftists are trying to promote *shaghab* [rioting] under the guise of defending tobacco farmers.”⁶² Gemayel emphasizes the economic consequences of unrest, saying that “the wealth of the country depends on security and stability” because Lebanon relies on “Arab and foreign capital which departs when stability leaves.” Gemayel says that calls for a strike should be replaced with calls for an investigation and that the opposition has the right to call for the ouster of Salam, but that this happens in “parliament and not through strikes or street demonstrations” which threaten the Lebanese economy.

Al-'Amal coverage framed demonstrations and strikes as part of opposition maneuvering against the Salam government. A cartoon depicting Rachid Karami and Kamal Joumblatt trying to trip Saeb Salam from the steps of the Serail (see figure 5) captures the *Al-'Amal* view that calls for strikes and protests had nothing to do with genuine solidarity with the tobacco farmers. In the column *Min Ḥiṣād Al-Ayyām* (From the Days’ Harvest), the writer asserts that while the opposition *al-aḥzāb wa-l-quwa al-waṭaniyya wa-l-taqaddumiyya* (Patriotic and Progressive Parties and Forces) think they are more committed to interests of the tobacco farmers in *al-janūb*” and act as if their opponents support “injustice, *takhalluf*, and *ḥirmān*,” they actually have no genuine sympathy for the struggles of the *sha‘b*.⁶³ Rather than calling for investigations, the

⁶² “*Al-Jimayyil yuḥadhdhar: sanuqāwam bi-shidda ayya muḥāwala takhrīb*” [Gemayel Warns: We Will Forcefully Resist Any Vandalism Attempt], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁶³ “*Min ḥiṣād al-ayyām: li-yafahm al-ghaiyāra*” [“From the Days’ Harvest: For the Zealous to Understand”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 27, 1973.

opposition is engaging in “*tahrīd* [incitement] of people to protest and strike” to “topple the Saeb Salam government as if injustice be would toppled along with the government.” What is happening is a “clear process of *tasīs* [politicization]” that causes “the essence of the issue to be lost” in a contrived battle between left and right.



Figure 5. Karami and Joumlatt try to trip Salam. (Editorial cartoon, *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 27, 1973)

In another article under the *Min Ḥiṣād Al-Ayyām* column, the writer goes further to state that Marxists working under the opposition *al-aḥzāb wa-l-quwa al-waṭaniyya wa-l-taqaddumiyya* are willing to “exploit all tragedies to reach their political and ideological goals.” For Marxists, “the ends justify the means,” so cynical exploitation of tobacco farmers is permissible. Their calls for protests are meant to lead Lebanon “towards the unknown and the void because Marxism can only be victorious in the void.” This “degenerate minority” is trying to “rule the silent majority” through the spread of “*fawḍā* [anarchy] and terror in the streets and markets.” This isn’t surprising because *al-aḥzāb wa-l-quwa al-waṭaniyya wa-l-taqaddumiyya* have never stood “with Lebanon in its position concerning Arab and humanitarian affairs. They are always with a party other than Lebanon.”

Nida' Al-Watan also warned of the dangers of allowing the opposition to harbor “promoters of destruction and *takhrīb*.”⁶⁴ The owner of *Nida' Al-Watan*, Eliyas Ghriyāfi, wrote that in an effort to go from being “the *za'īm* [leader] of the Shouf to the *za'īm* of Lebanon or the region,” Kamal Joumlatt has come to rely on *ghawghā'iyya* and has allowed his Progressive Socialist Party to “embrace destructive movements.”⁶⁵ Since the “*za'īm* of Mukhtara lacks a Lebanese base” he has to rely on an “alternative base found among agents of *takhrīb* and *fawḍā*.”

Ghriyāfi wrote of the grave danger of “foreign movements and alien forces that break through our borders to destroy our institutions.”⁶⁶ The right has been unable to tackle economic and social problems, leaving the left to “control the street with protests, strikes, slogans, and propaganda that attract a substantial portion of the public.” Out of a misguided policy of openness, Lebanon has granted a “bizarre equality under the law” for all movements, whether “native or foreign, patriotic or treasonous, beneficial or deleterious, constructive or destructive.”⁶⁷ It is not surprising that the government “stands helpless in confronting the uprisings and movements” or foreign political forces since it has “already granted them free reign to turn Lebanon into a theater for their conspiracies and plots against not only the Lebanese *nizām*, but other regimes of the region.” Lebanon cannot be allowed to suffer the same fate as democracies that collapsed as a result of a “policy of condonation that gave space for conspiracies and

⁶⁴ Eliyās Ghriyāfi, “*Al-wasā'il al-jiddiyya li-ṣiyānat nizām lubnān*” [“Serious Means of Safeguarding Lebanese Regime”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 27, 1973.

⁶⁵ Eliyās Ghriyāfi, “*Leiset al-nizām qaḍiyya tuṭrah*” [“The Regime is not the Issue to be Raised”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 29, 1973.

⁶⁶ Eliyās Ghriyāfi, “*Lā muwājaha bein al-yamīn wa al-yasār*” [“No Confrontation Between the Right and Left”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 31, 1973.

⁶⁷ Eliyās Ghriyāfi, “*Al-wasā'il al-jiddiyya li-ṣiyānat nizām lubnān*” [“Serious Means of Safeguarding Lebanese Regime”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 27, 1973.

coup plots.” The government must take responsibility and “combat suspect parties, starting with the cancellation of the reckless authorizations,” a reference to Joumblatt’s granting of legal status to parties like the previously dissolved Syrian Social Nationalist Party and Communist Party during his tenure as Interior Minister.

The framing of *Nida' Al-Watan* and *Al-'Amal* was not hostile to the tobacco farmers, though it may have been condescending in its depiction of the farmers as misguided or misled by provocateurs. Fundamentally, coverage focused on the Joumblatt-led opposition and leftist groups who were promoting protests and strikes to dislodge Salam. The coverage shows more than just the positions of Gemayel and Chamoun concerning this one labor protest movement, as the way the newspapers connected the tobacco farmer uprising to broader debates. Just as the framing in newspapers affiliated with left-wing parties revealed their political priorities, the stability-promoting framing in these right-wing newspapers evinces their sponsors' fears around labor organizing and the aspirations of growing radical movements in Lebanon. According to *Nida' Al-Watan* and *Al-'Amal*, opposition claims to defending the interests of the people were superficial as the opposition was more concerned with using demagoguery and fomenting anarchy to gain power than actually helping the people. For these newspapers, Kamel Asaad and the traditional leadership class in the south had more legitimacy than Joumblatt and his allies. The newspapers described leftist movements as not only destructive, but antithetical to the Lebanese project, as these movements stood with foreign ideologies and rejected Lebanon’s role as a financial center for Arab capital. These newspapers also held the Army and security forces up as incontestably sacrosanct institutions that represented the nation and could never be challenged, holding the victims of state violence responsible for not respecting the

inviolability of the Army. Whereas the leftist press presented the tobacco farmer uprising as evidence of the need to question the legitimacy of the state, connecting the story of the tobacco farmers to broader patterns of adversarial state policy *vis-à-vis* the working class and southern border communities, *Nida' Al-Watan* and *Al-'Amal* presented the tobacco farmer uprising as evidence of the need to defend Lebanon from radical leftist and labor movements that threatened to destabilize the state.

CHAPTER 4

DEFENDING LEBANON FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Al-Hayat and *An-Nahar* coverage incorporated features described in the second and third chapters. This chapter examines how the coverage in the newspapers at times followed the frames identified in the previous chapters, though *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* primarily interpreted the tobacco farmer uprising through a unique frame. While the newspapers were critical of violent protests and radical political currents, they held the state responsible for being derelict in addressing political and economic issues and thus precipitating crises. *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* framed the tobacco farmer uprising as a consequence of the failures of the state.

4.1. Multiple Frames

Coverage in *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* at times followed the frames described in the two previous chapters. A cartoon in *Al-Hayat* depicting Kamal Joubblatt lighting a bomb with a cigarette (see figure 6) is in line with the framing adopted by *Nidaa Al-Watan* and *Al-'Amal* that interpreted protests as part of an opposition plan to promote unrest for political gain. *Al-Hayat* writer Muhammad Humani wrote that opposition figures like Rashid Karami who criticize the government for using excessive force should remember that “he who lives in a glass house can’t throw stones,” as Karami was Prime Minister during the April 23 massacre in 1969 when government forces killed or injured over 60 people.⁶⁸ However, *Al-Hayat* also had coverage that followed the framing identified in *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'*, publishing articles on the intimate

⁶⁸ Muḥammad Al-Ḥūmānī, “*Khawāṭir al-jalsa al-niyābiyya*” [“Thoughts from the Parliamentary Session”], *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 27, 1973.

connection between *al-janūb*, tobacco cultivation, and poverty⁶⁹ and criticized *iqṭā'* politicians for interfering in the distribution of cultivation licenses. *An-Nahar* also published articles describing *al-janūb* as “exemplifying the tragedy of *ḥirmān*,” comparing Israeli assaults to exploitation of tobacco farmers⁷⁰ as well as drawing attention to the way the process of distributing cultivation licenses disadvantages poor farmers in *al-qurā al-imāmiyya*.⁷¹



4.2. Responsibility of the State

Despite their publishing of articles that adopted frames identified in chapters 1 and 2, the primary frame for the newspapers in interpreting the tobacco farmer protests is distinct. The frame can be encapsulated in the title to an *Al-Hayat* article written after

⁶⁹ Kāmal, Hāzim, “‘*Aūdat ilā mushkīla zirā‘at al-tabgh*” [“Returning to the Problem of Tobacco Cultivation”], *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 27, 1973.

⁷⁰ “*Al-janūb yakhtaṣir ma’sāt al-ḥirmān wa-yestaftiq fī al-sana muratein*” [“The South Exemplifies the Tragedy of Deprivation that Arises Twice a Year”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 30, 1973.

⁷¹ “*Jumūriyya al-tabgh al-lubnāniyya*” [“Lebanese Tobacco Republic”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 23, 1973.

the Nabatieh clashes, “The State is its Own Enemy.”⁷² In the article, published as an edition of the *Khawāṭir Lubnāniyya* (Lebanese Thoughts) column, Muhammad Humani argues that the quick completion of an Asaad-led resolution between Régie and the farmers shows that violence could have been avoided if the state had responded quicker to the farmers’ demands which had received media attention for months. The tobacco farmers “are the most in need among Lebanese” and their position as southerners who are in constant “confrontation with a fierce and covetous enemy” should have made them a priority when it comes to government support. However, “the state is its own enemy” so it ignored the problem until farmers decided to occupy the Régie building which the state incompetently responded to by committing a *majzara*.

Muhammad Humani writes in another edition of *Khawāṭir Lubnāniyya* entitled “The Responsibility of the State” that “confronting saboteurs is done through eliminating the conditions they use to attack the *nizām* of the state.”⁷³ Widespread “*istighlāl*, administrative corruption, out of control price increases, and the inability of the state to prevent Israeli assaults” have driven Lebanese citizens to “join the left or other political currents that put the state in constant danger.” Attempts at fundamentally reshaping the *nizām* may fail today, but radicalism will exist and threaten the state if the government fails to address chronic problems plaguing Lebanon. Humani argues that “when the state has sound administration” and there is “sufficient force to defend the land,” you will see that “all lebanese will become defenders of the *nizām* and natural enemies of those who seek to undermine it.”

⁷² Muḥammad Al-Ḥūmānī, “*Al-dawla ‘adūwat nafsihā*” [“The State is its Own Enemy”]. *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁷³ Muḥammad Al-Ḥūmānī, “*Mas ‘ūliyya al-dawla*” [“Responsibility of the State”]. *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 29, 1973.

Another *Al-Hayat* columnist, Jaqueline Nahhas, articulates a similar position in an edition of her *Fī-l-Madīna* (In the City) column entitled “The Tobacco Mafia.”⁷⁴ Nahhas emphasizes the pain of another tragedy occurring in *al-janūb*, “as if *al-janūb* is fated to endure all bloody events by itself” while also arguing that the tobacco farmers were wrong to occupy the Régie building and that is “the duty of security forces to repel the attack on state property.” However, the primary issue is not the question of southern misery or preserving stability, but rather the state neglecting the crisis of tobacco cultivation and allowing it to fester to the point that farmers clash with security forces. The tobacco farmers, as “true farmers who do not know the difference between the right and the left and if they heard of the left might think what was meant was the left hand,” would not have become radicalized if not for the state ignoring unfair licensing procedures that disadvantaged poor farmers. If the state truly wants to “combat destructive ideologies” then it must “fight them in the cradle by ending tobacco license speculation.”

Like *Al-Hayat*, *An-Nahar* coverage blamed the state for allowing corruption and poverty to leave Lebanon vulnerable to unrest. The newspaper attributed the deaths in Nabatieh to “the *sulta* being slow in engaging with the demands”⁷⁵ of tobacco farmers and creating the conditions for a mobilization that represented more than a protest, but “a near revolution against the *nizām*.”⁷⁶ Ghassan Tueni, the editor-in-chief of *An-Nahar* warned of the danger of people becoming radicalized by the government’s inability to

⁷⁴Jāklīn Nahhas, “*Māfiyā al-tabgth*” [“The Tobacco Mafia”], *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁷⁵ “*Qatīlān wa-36 jarīḥan fī al-nabaṭiyya*” [“Two Killed and 36 Injured in Nabatieh”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁷⁶ “*15 alfan yetezāharūn fī al-nabaṭiyya wa-yeḥtallūn mabnā al-rījī wa-yuhājimūn al-hukūma*” [“15 Thousand Demonstrate in Nabatieh, Occupy Régie Building and Attack the Government”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 23, 1973.

address poverty, writing that the country is in a “revolutionary state” where even “revolutionary parties are unable to absorb the resentment, weariness, and misery” of citizens who are beginning to “desire nothing more than destruction.”⁷⁷ The government uses the threat of political militancy and *takhrīb* to demonize opposition and justify repression of protests but Tueni asks, “what other than *hirman*, misery, and resentment transform a citizen into a rioter and a vandal?” Not only does “the violence of the *sulta* beget violence of the people,” but the heavy-handed response of the government to dissent threatens the Lebanese project because it is driving people “not just from the *nizām* or obedience to the government, but from the blessing of belonging to this nation.”

That the *nizām* or even the existence of Lebanon can be questioned by the public was a crisis, but not one that necessitated state repression. What is needed is reflection on the failures of the ruling class which undermined confidence in the *nizām*. Writing in another editorial, Tueni states that the existence of those “who doubt and spread doubt in Lebanon” is a consequence of “a generation of leaders whose long history has proven their impotence.”⁷⁸ The solution to this skepticism around Lebanon's capability to address poverty is not “repression or firing bullets, but more freedom and justice.”

Al-Hayat and *An-Nahar* coverage incorporated features reminiscent of framing in leftist newspapers as well as outlets loyal to the government. Like *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'*, both *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* focused on the unique plight of southerners who are exploited by the tobacco monopoly and under the threat of Israeli aggression. Like *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan*, *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* were skeptical of the intentions

⁷⁷ Ghasān Tuweinī, “*Al-Jahal al-akbar*” [“The Greatest Ignorance”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 27, 1973.

⁷⁸ Ghasān Tuweinī, “*Al-muntaṣr lubnān*” [“The Victor is Lebanon”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 28, 1973.

of Joumlatt and the opposition. However the primary argument articulated by *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* was unique: while radical ideologies and protests were threats to Lebanon, it was the incompetence and failed policy of the government that was responsible for making these destructive political currents seem attractive to citizens. The newspapers were critical of radical movements as well as the government which they accused of inflaming the situation through its mismanagement of economic crises and its inability to resolve a labor dispute. Both newspapers saw government incompetence as the primary threat to the *nizām*. If government policy could improve the living conditions of peasants and the working class as well as defend them from Israeli assaults, then these classes would not be attracted to movements that threatened the state.

CHAPTER 5

PROTESTS IN THE HEADLINES

The tobacco farmer uprising was not the only protest grabbing the headlines in January 1973. Labor strikes and student protests were contemporaneous with the tobacco farmer uprising. This chapter examines newspaper coverage of public school teachers striking and residents in the border village of Hula protesting the appointment of an Asaad loyalist as the school administrator. Newspapers connected the teachers' strike and Hula protest to the tobacco farmer uprising and adopted the same frames to interpret the events though coverage of the Hula protest was nearly entirely restricted to the leftist press.

5.1. Background

In November 1972, students in Hula announced a strike to condemn the appointment of a school administrator that they alleged was unqualified. Students and residents opposed to the administrator claimed that he was appointed because of his connections to Kamel Asaad, the Speaker of Parliament. In December 1972, the Ministry of Education dismissed the administrator but reappointed him after several days. In January 1973, a detachment of security personnel was deployed by the government to ensure the return of the administrator. In the same month, the municipal council was dissolved by the governor, ostensibly for insufficient revenue, though

protesting residents asserted that it was punishment for their continued opposition to the school administrator.⁷⁹

15,000 public teachers working in elementary and middle schools went on strike on January 23, 1973. The strike came after teachers' demands of salary increases, the right to unionize, and recognition of degree-holders were not agreed to by the Ministry of Education. On January 27 and 29, the government issued Decrees No. 4820 and No. 4824 which declared that the government considers 309 teachers to have resigned by their participation in the strike, effectively dismissing them. On January 31, the government appointed 252 teachers to replace the resigned/dismissed teachers. High school and university students went on strike in solidarity with the dismissed teachers and clashed with security forces.

5.2. Connecting Social Movements

Al-Anba' and *Al-Nida'* published articles on how government antagonism towards striking teachers was part of state policy against the *sha'ib*. Not only did newspapers interpret the teachers' strike through the same frame they used in coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising, newspapers were explicit about how these events were connected. *Al-Anba'* referred to the dismissal of striking teachers as a *majzara* that was, like the *majzara* against tobacco farmers in Nabatieh, part of a policy of "strangling democratic freedoms" adopted by a government of "hysteria and *irhāb*."⁸⁰ A cartoon

⁷⁹ "*Al-sulṭa taḥall baladiyya ḥulā ka-tadbīr ḍaḡḡ wa-intiqām: nidā' min ṭullāb ḥulā ilā al-ra'y al-'āmm*" ["The Sulṭa Dissolves Houla Municipality as a Measure of Pressure and Revenge: Call from Students of Houla to Lebanese Public"], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 13, 1973.

⁸⁰ "*Al-naqma al-sha'biyya tataṣā'ad didd ḥukm al-histeirā wa-al-irhāb lubnān lā yuḥkim bil-sawṭ wa-nihāyat al-ṭuḡhyān maḥtūma*" ["Popular Anger Against Rule of Hysteria and Intimidation Grows, Lebanon Isn't Ruled by the Whip and the End of Tyranny is Inevitable"], *Al-Anba'*, Feb. 2, 1973.



Figure 7. Government invites Tobacco Farmers and Teachers to Reasonable Dialogue. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 24, 1973)

Al-Anba' and *Al-Nida'* claimed that the state attacks striking teachers and farmers because it is committed to defending a corrupt system. An article in *Al-Anba'* argued that the state sees tobacco farmers and teachers as *mukharribūn* (saboteurs) just as it sees “all classes of the *sha'b*” who challenge inequality and profiteering as threats to the ruling class who must be punished through “detaining, repressing, beating,

⁸¹ Muṣṭafā Al-'irīs, “*Al-dawla turīd i'ādāt al-ta'rīkh al-sayyi*” [“The State Wants Return of Horrible History”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 26, 1973.

killing, and *irhāb*.”⁸² Similarly, *Al-Nida'* contended that the state sees “tobacco farmers who demand freedom from the injustice of Régie and *iqṭā' siyāsī*” and “teachers who demand their rights and improved quality of living” as *mukharribūn* because “the state looks at the struggles of the *jamāhīr* with anger and works to sabotage them for the benefit of the financial junta and the *niẓām*.”⁸³ *Al-Nida'* derided the hardline posture of the government and Salam’s claim to being “the guardian of the *niẓām*” in a cartoon (see figure 8) depicting three diminutive, military uniform-clad Salams defending a crumbling building with signs marking what Salam is defending: bribery, high prices, scandals, massacres, and the dismissal of teachers.

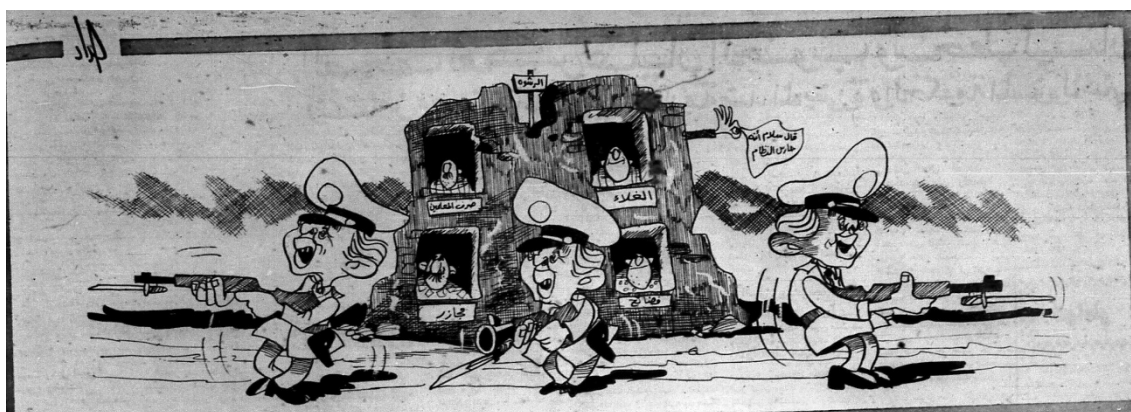


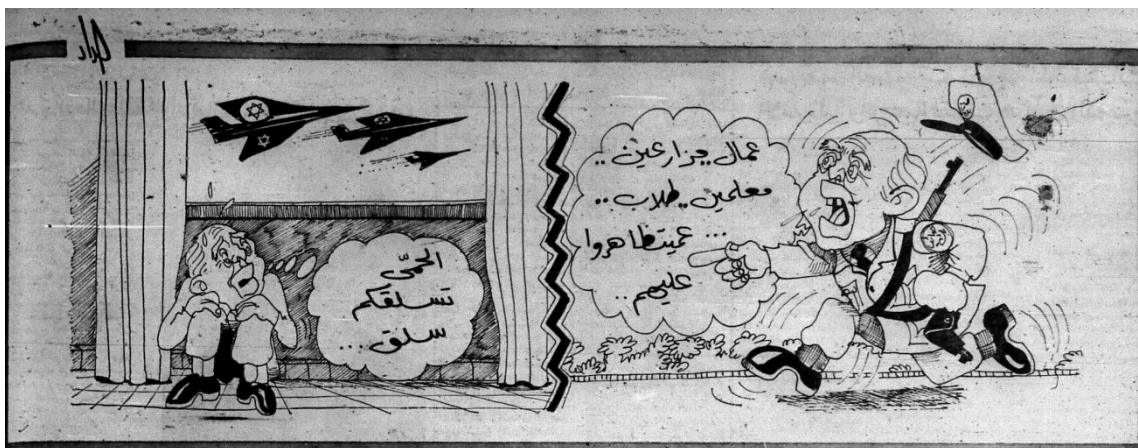
Figure 8. Salam is the guardian of the *niẓām* (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 27, 1973)

This aggressive stance is further criticized by comparing the amount of force used by the government when confronting citizens to the Lebanese government response to Israeli assaults. A cartoon (see figure 9) shows Salam as fearless when rushing to fight protesting workers, farmers, teachers, and students but a cowering

⁸² Fāyēzā Al-Faqīh, “*Mukharribūn*” [“Saboteurs”], *Al-Anba'*, Feb. 2, 1973.

⁸³ Muṣṭafā Al-'Airīs, “*Ra'īs al-ḥukūma wa-al-mukharribūn*” [“The Prime Minister and the Vandals”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 28, 1973.

coward when Israeli jets fly above. Like the case of tobacco farmers, teachers organizing politically was framed as a southern issue, with Parliament Speaker Kamel Asaad described as pursuing his enemies in *al-janūb* so the region remains his fief. *Al-Nida'* published an article saying that the “peasants of *al-janub* are subjugated by the thugs of Régie” and “teachers are sent to disciplinary councils” for “daring to revolt against *uṭūfa* [His Grace], the Speaker of Parliament.”⁸⁴ The article alleges that the means of persecution are reminiscent of the aggressive methods employed by the *Deuxième Bureau*, the military intelligence apparatus that was expanded during the presidency of Fuad Chehab. The paper described the attitude of Asaad towards the farmers as one of extreme vindictiveness. One article covering dismissed teachers requesting Asaad to intervene on their behalf, quotes Asaad as saying that he “respects prostitutes more than those whose mission is *takhrīb* of the young generation through indoctrination in communism and atheism.”⁸⁵ The article also quotes Asaad as saying that he must now stand against “the injustice of the peasant” who, like the teachers, is promoting baathism and communism and revolting against Asaad in elections.



⁸⁴ “*Mu’arīḍat kāmīl beik jarīma yu’āqib ‘aleihā mu’allamū al-janūb*” [“Opposition to Kamil Bey is Crime that Teachers in the South are Punished For”], *Al-Nida’*, Jan. 12, 1973.

⁸⁵ “*Kāmal al-assa’d yeḥterim al-mumisāt wa-yeḥteqir al-mu’allamīn*” [“Kamel al-Assad Respects Prostitutes and Despises Teachers”], *Al-Nida’*, Feb. 16, 1973.

Figure 9. Salam confronting Israel and social movements. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Feb. 22, 1973)

5.3. Campaign Against *Al-Janub*

Like the teachers' strike, *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* connected the protests in Hula to the tobacco farmer uprising, interpreting the protests as a conflict between southerners and *iqṭā' siyāsī*. An article in *Al-Nida'* mockingly states that “Kamel Asaad’s engagement with tobacco farmers by standing against them does not take all of his time, so he has some spare time to closely follow the Hula strike.”⁸⁶ Another article on the Hula strike describes Régie and the Ministry of Education as “tools to pressure and control citizens” to preserve the rule of Asaad, who can only win in elections through “*irhāb* and fraud.”⁸⁷ The article continues with the following:

The methods of the Chehabist security agencies, which would not have been defeated without the bloody struggle waged by the Lebanese *jamāhīr* and the progressive vanguards, particularly in *al-janūb*, have returned to serve the lords of *iqṭā'* and clientelism.

According to *Al-Nida'*, Asaad uses government bodies to “repair his collapsed fortress in *al-janūb*” and maintain the region’s status as his fief.⁸⁸ The intervention of *iqṭā' siyāsī* into education was particularly insidious because “state education policy is

⁸⁶ “*I’tidā’ mujrim ‘alā ṭullāb ḥūlā; azlam al-assa’d yejrehūn ṭālibatan wa-ṭāliban*” [“Criminal Assault on Students of Hula; Al-Assad’s Thugs Injure a Female Student and a Male Student”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 30, 1973.

⁸⁷ “*Ḥūlā: al-istifzāzāt tefshil wa-al-ṣumūd yetezāyed; al-haraka al-waṭaniyya wa-al-niqābiyya bi-ṣaidā-teteḍāmun ma’a ḥūlā*” [“Hula: Provocations Fail and Steadfastness Increases: National and Labor Movement in Sidon Stands in Solidarity with Hula”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 20, 1973.

⁸⁸ “*Mushkila madrasat ḥūlā tatafāqim ba’d ruḍūkh al-wizāra li-daghṭ al-assa’d*” [“Problem of Hula School Exacerbates After Ministry Submits to Pressure from al-Assad”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 4, 1973.

one of the means of imposing ideological control over the *jamāhīr* of the Lebanese *sha‘b*.”⁸⁹ *Al-Anba’* published an article arguing that the “*iqṭā’* plan to strike at schools through the politicization of their administration” is part of an effort “to impose a siege on liberated intellectuals.”⁹⁰ *Al-Nida’* wrote that the intervention of *iqṭā’* cronies in education amounted to “the slaughter of students’ future at the altar of Asaad’s interests.”⁹¹ Like in coverage of the teachers’ strike, Asaad is portrayed in *Al-Nida’* and *Al-Anba’* as adversarial to education, using ignorance as a tool in maintaining power. In one comic (see figure 10), Salam is depicted talking to Asaad, saying “the school in Hula will close, ok?” Assad responds by asking “what about the remaining schools in *al-janūb*?”



Figure 10. Closing the school in Hula. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida’*, Jan. 21, 1973)

⁸⁹ Ṭawnī. “*Hūlā wa-sulṭa al-bakawār*” [“Hula and the Bey Authority”], *Al-Nida’*, Jan. 26, 1973.

⁹⁰ “*Mu‘tamar waṭanī li-da‘m al-janūb yuṭālib bi-ilghā’ ḥālat al-ṭawāri’ wa-yuḥadhdhar min mawjāt irḥāb jadīda yumārisuhā al-iqṭā’ fī al-janūb wa-al-biqā’*” [“National Conference to Support the South Demands to Cancel State of Emergency and Warns of New Wave of Intimidation Practiced by Feudalists in the South and Beqaa”], *Al-Anba’*, Jan. 12, 1973.

⁹¹ “*Ahāli wa-ṭullāb hūlā yuḥammilūn al-sulṭāt al-rasmiyya al-mas’ūlaiyya farḍ mudīr assa‘dī ‘alā al-madrasa bi-ḥimāya rijāl al-amn*” [“Residents and Students of Houla Hold Official Authorities Responsible for Imposing Assad-Linked Administrator on School with Protection of Security Forces”], *Al-Nida’*, Jan. 9, 1973.

Hula's status as one of *al-qurā al-imāmiyya* informed the framing in the leftist press. As they did with coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising, *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'* drew attention to the vulnerability of *al-janūb* to Israeli incursions and attacks, highlighting both the unwillingness of the state to defend border villages and the similarities between Israeli and Lebanese security forces. *Al-Anba'* published a statement by the National Conference to Support the South that said the *sulṭa* is exploiting the state of emergency in *al-janūb* to subjugate Hula while failing to build shelters for border villages.⁹² When security forces were sent to Hula to remove protesting students and residents from the school, *Al-Nida'* wrote the following:

Hula is occupied. The village of 93 martyrs is not occupied by Zionist forces this time. Security forces occupy it to guarantee safety and order in the fief of the Speaker of Parliament, in other words, to guarantee submission to Kamel Bey.⁹³

The article goes on to describe Hula as “the living embodiment” of state policy towards *al-janūb*, vulnerable towards attack with agencies like the Council of the South working in service of Asaad rather than aiding victims of Israeli aggression. Hula, like all border villages, must show *ṣumūd* in face of both “abuse by Israeli forces and the *ḥirmān* imposed by *iqṭā' siyāsī*.”⁹⁴ An illustrative example of the conflation of Lebanese security forces with Zionist desires to displace southerners is an editorial cartoon (see figure 11) in *Al-Nida'* that depicts Asaad contacting a soldier by radio who says to him

⁹² “*Mu'tamar waṭanī li-da'm al-janūb yuṭālib bi-ilghā' ḥālat al-ṭawāri' wa-yuḥadhdhar min mawjāt irḥāb jadīda yumārisuhā al-iqtā' fī al-janūb wa-al-biqā'*” [“National Conference to Support the South Demands to Cancel State of Emergency and Warns of New Wave of Intimidation Practiced by Feudalists in the South and Beqaa”], *Al-Anba'*, Jan. 12, 1973.

⁹³ “*Qaḍiyyat ḥulā qaḍiyyat al-dīmuqrāṭiyya*” [“Question of Hula is Question of Democracy”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 5, 1973.

⁹⁴ “*Quwwāt al-amn teqme' ṭullāb ḥulā bil-waḥshiyya*” [“Security Forces Repress Houla Students With Barbarousness”], *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 10, 1973.

“we are at your command Bey, we have occupied Hula and will liberate the school from the students and the village from the residents.”



Figure 11. Liberating Hula. (Ḥabīb Ḥadād, editorial cartoon, *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 5, 1973)

5.4. Manufacturing Chaos

Like the leftist newspapers, *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan* connected the tobacco farmer protests to the teachers' strike. This connection was articulated through the adoption of the frame interpreting the teachers' strike, like the tobacco farmer uprising, as an example of the opposition fomenting social unrest for political gain. In addition, articles in the newspapers explicitly associated the events with one another. *Nida' Al-Watan* described the tobacco farmer protests and the teachers' strike as evidence of Joumblatt's maneuvers against Salam “moving from the corridors of parliament to popular quarters.”⁹⁵ The newspaper also described the protests as the two fronts threatening security of the government and the country.⁹⁶ *Al-'Amal* published articles

⁹⁵ “*Inqāṭa 'a ḥiwār muṣālaḥa nihā 'tan bein sha 'mūn wa-karāmī wa-junblāṭṭ*” [“Complete Suspension of Reconciliation Dialogue Between Chamoun, Karami, and Joumblatt], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 25, 1973.

⁹⁶ “*Al-ḥukūma tuḥaqqaq intiṣāran kabūran...bi-ṭarḥ qaḍīyyat al-nizām!*” [“Government Achieves Huge Victory...By Raising Question of Regime!”], *Nida' Al-Watan*, Jan. 27, 1973.

that argued that both protests were examples of contrived scandals meant to make the absurd claim that “the government is responsible for years of apathy.”⁹⁷ The newspaper also amplified speeches by *Katā'ib* president Pierre Gemayel that placed “responsibility for the victims in Nabatieh and the dismissal of some teachers” on those who exploit protest movements “to promote certain ideologies” and to engage in “*takhrīb* for the sake of *takhrīb*.”⁹⁸

An article from the *Al-'Amal* column *Min Hiṣād Al-Ayyām* entitled “The Beneficiaries of Misery” claimed that marxists are behind unrest and the waves of strikes.⁹⁹ These marxists spread misery because their ideology considers it “a necessity for class conflict.” They encourage class antagonism to preclude “rapprochement between class interests” because it is not in the interest of marxists to allow “problems and conflicts to be resolved without clashes and strikes.” They want to accelerate fighting to bring about a revolution that will mean “the death of freedom and human dignity.” Another *Al-'Amal* article claimed that the “project of confrontation between the left and the state” has been able to continue because the state has failed to withdraw legitimacy from the parties legalized by Kamal Joumlatt when he was Interior Minister.¹⁰⁰ While Joumlatt claims that “all street protests only seek to reform and

⁹⁷ Ibrāhīm Najjār, “*Gharība hadhahi al-aḥdāth*” [“These Events are Strange”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 28, 1973.

⁹⁸ “*Al-jimayyil: fi 'āt da' buhā al-takhrīb istaghalat al-kādiḥīn wa-asā' t qaḍāyāham bāta 'alā al-ḥukūma an tunṣif men lehu al-ḥaqq*” [“Gemayel: Segments who are Committed to Vandalism Exploited Working Class, Injuring Their Movements and it is Has Become an Imperative of Government to be Just to Those Who are Right”], *Al-'Amal*, Feb. 6, 1973.

⁹⁹ “*Min ḥiṣād al-ayyām: mistfidūn min al-ya's*” [“From the Days' Harvest: Beneficiaries of Misery”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 30, 1973.

¹⁰⁰ “*Mashrū' al-muwājaha al-akhīra taṭraḥ al-su'āl bi-ikāḥ: ilā matā mahzala al-tarkhīṣāt al-junblāṭṭiyya?*” [“Latest Confrontation Project Raises Urgent Question: How Long Will the Farce of the Joumlatt Authorizations Last?”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 30, 1973.

develop the *nizām*,” his radical allies “want to use the freedoms offered by the *nizām* to topple the *nizām*.”

While *Al-'Amal*'s coverage suggested suspicion of the motives of striking teachers, the newspaper was sympathetic to protesters in Hula. An article on the protest in Hula describes “the suspension of the school and the displacement of more than 650 students” as a consequence of pressure exerted by Asaad to “impose an unqualified administrator.”¹⁰¹ The framing in the article bears similarities to coverage in newspapers like *Al-Nida'* and *Al-Anba'*, emphasizing Hula's status as a border village and the collaboration between security forces and members of Asaad's parliamentary bloc to quash dissent. The critique, however, was not so scathing as to question the legitimacy of Asaad or suggest that the state was fundamentally adversarial towards southerners or working class. I found no coverage of the Hula protest in *Nida' Al-Watan*, *Al-Hayat*, and *An-Nahar*. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Perhaps a dispute over school administration in a small village in the peripheries was not considered as newsworthy by these newspapers. Perhaps the incongruence between these newspapers' support for traditional leaders in the face of radical movements and the story of villagers confronting the clientelist network of the speaker of Parliament, Kamel Asaad, was a factor in these newspapers choosing to not publish articles on the dispute.

¹⁰¹“*Al-siyāsa al-intikhābiyya fī al-madārisa: 650 tāliban fī ḥulā - al-janūb - qāṭa 'aū al-madrasa munhu thalāthat ashhur*” [“Electoral Politics in Schools: 650 Students in Hula in the South Have Boycotted School for Three Months”], *Al-'Amal*, Jan. 9, 1973.

5.5. Caught Between Radicals and the Government

As they did in coverage of the tobacco farmer protests, *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* articulated a position on the teachers' strike that held the government responsible for mismanagement and aggravating tension with critics while also rejecting radical currents in the opposition. *Al-Hayat* columnist Jaqueline Nahhas warned that striking teachers and tobacco farmers lacked "mental clarity" that impeded them from achieving their demands while also damaging the interests of the nation through subjecting Lebanon to a series of strikes.¹⁰² She argued that the demands of teachers and farmers are just, but that it is unrealistic to expect change "with a stroke of the pen under pressure or in a matter of days." However, Nahhas held the government responsible for procrastinating in dealing with demands of teachers.¹⁰³

Al-Hayat columnist Muhammad Humani accused the teachers of "announcing a strike without caring about the damage inflicted on students" which will alienate the teachers from "guardians who are not pleased to have their children thrown onto the streets."¹⁰⁴ However, Humani still argued that this does not justify the adversarial stance taken by the Ministry of Education towards teachers. Furthermore, while the state may be well-intentioned in combating radicalism, "dismissing teachers of a certain color" to "protect the young generation from their ideologies," Humani argues that "combating destructive ideologies" is done through "spreading social justice, achieving equality,

¹⁰² Jāklīn Nahhas, "*Maṣlaḥa al-waṭan fawq al-jamī*" ["Interest of the Nation Above All"], *Al-Hayat*, Feb. 2, 1973.

¹⁰³ Jāklīn Nahhas, "*Waqa 'at al-wāqi 'a*" ["It Came to Pass"], *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 24, 1973.

¹⁰⁴ Muḥammad Al-Ḥūmānī, "*Idrāb al-mu'allamīn*" ["Teacher Strike"], *Al-Hayat*, Jan. 25, 1973.

development projects, and combating *iqṭā'*, corruption, and *istighlāl* wherever it is found.”¹⁰⁵

Ghassan Tueni wrote in *An-Nahar* that the government was showing its impotence and incompetence when it responded to protests by opening fire on tobacco farmers and dismissing striking teachers.¹⁰⁶ *An-Nahar* published a call for a “constitutional revolution” as an alternative to violent confrontation to address the failures of the Lebanese state.¹⁰⁷ The fundamental problem was the incongruence between the written constitution and the application of the law. *An-Nahar* argued that the quasi-constitutional practices known as *al-mīthāq al-waṭanī* (The National Pact), or what the newspaper called *al-ta'āqud al-jahannamī* (The Infernal Contract), limited the authority of the state and led to the “inseparability of party politics and sectarian tribalism.” *An-Nahar* called for reforms that included the direct election of the president, clear delineation of their authority, changing electoral law, establishing a non-sectarian economic council, ending sectarianism in employment, strengthening municipal power, and establishing complementary defense and development policies.

The civil disobedience and clashes that came with the tobacco farmer uprising were not unprecedented. Workers, farmers, teachers, and students in 1973 were organizing to challenge the state’s agrarian, labor, and educational policies. Newspapers connected these social movements to one another, including with the tobacco farmer uprising. These outlets explicitly connected the tobacco farmer uprising

¹⁰⁵ Muḥammad Al-Hūmānī, “*Qalīlan min al-hudū'...wa-al-hikma?*” [“Short on Peace...and Wisdom?”], *Al-Hayat*, Feb. 3, 1973.

¹⁰⁶ Ghasān Tuweinī, “*Al-Jahal al-akbar*” [“The Greatest Ignorance”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 27, 1973.

¹⁰⁷ “*Al-inmā' wa-al-thawra al-dastūriyya keifa nukhṭaṭ li-niẓām siyāsī afdal?*” [“Development and Constitutional Revolution: How Do We Plan a Better Political System?”], *An-Nahar*, Jan. 30, 1973.

to the teachers' strike, either to frame them as struggles against a corrupt state, threats to stability, or evidence of the need for reform. However, examining the case of the Hula demonstrates that generalizations cannot be made about the stances of newspapers concerning protest movements. While *Al-'Amal* was suspicious of protests and strikes associated with the Nabatieh clashes or the dismissal of teachers, it was sympathetic to the residents of Hula challenging the imposition of an Asaad loyalist, though its critical coverage did not suggest that Asaad and the state were antagonistic towards southerners as the leftist newspapers claimed. Furthermore, *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar*, which were critical of the state's heavy-handed use of security forces when confronting protesters, ignored the village's occupation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Newspapers as Sources

Newspaper coverage of the tobacco farmer protest revealed the priorities of political parties and publishers in Lebanon in 1973. The Lebanese Communist Party and the Progressive Socialist Party saw the protest as part of a larger dynamic, a state policy of ignoring the Israeli threat to southern communities and allowing *iqtā'* families to impoverish the region. To guarantee security in *al-janūb*, Lebanon must prioritize confronting Israel, improve the lives of southerners, and the clientelistic network of Asaad must be dismantled. Additionally, both parties saw labor organizing as an expression of political power that challenged a state dominated by the economic elite. The *Katā'ib* Party and the Chamounist *Nida' Al-Watan* were suspicious of protests because their primary concern was protecting the nation from radicals who wanted to impoverish Lebanon or dismantle the *nizām*. *Al-Hayat* and *An-Nahar* also wanted to protect Lebanon, but through reforms that they thought would temper radicalism rather than through quelling opposition. These positions were also conveyed in coverage of the teachers' strike and protests in the border village of Hula, demonstrating how contestations over labor activism, political power, development, and state security forces animated political discourse and informed press coverage of social movements.

Newspapers, however, cannot reveal everything. Despite similar framing in their newspapers, the Lebanese Communist Party and the Progressive Social Party were still distinct parties with distinct aspirations. Communists sought to pave the way for socialism through the disentanglement of Lebanon with the West and strengthening ties

with the Soviet Union and Communist Bloc¹⁰⁸ while Joumblatt's followers rallied behind his fusion of socialism with traditional *za'im* politics.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, a shared frame between *Al-'Amal* and *Nida' Al-Watan* is not evidence of uniform political stances between the *Katā'ib* and National Liberal Party in parliament. *Al-'Amal* criticizing Kamel Asaad for his interference in Hula while *Nida' Al-Watan* did not cover the event illustrates that the papers and their sponsors were not indistinguishable.

Newspaper coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising may reveal more about the motivations of newspaper sponsors than the event itself. Coverage centered around prominent organizers, party leaders, and government officials while eliding the voices of farmers. All of the newspapers focused on the implications of the protest on the longevity of the government, whether they framed it as a threat to the government or the final tragedy of a corrupt cabal. Were the farmers invested in electoral politics as a route to improving their economic conditions? What were the forums of discussion for the farmers?

A glaring omission is the gendered dimension to tobacco cultivation. Absent from newspaper coverage of the tobacco farmer uprising is any reference to the enormous role women play in the tobacco sector. Women make up “the majority of the labor force engaged in the agricultural production of tobacco”¹¹⁰ but other than a line in a poem published in *Al-Nida'* that mentions “the girls in the tobacco fields,” there is no

¹⁰⁸ Michael W. Suleiman, “The Lebanese Communist Party,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Jan. 1967): 148.

¹⁰⁹ Farid al-Khazen, “Kamal Jumblatt, The Uncrowned Druze Prince of the Left,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 24, no.2 (1988): 178.

¹¹⁰ Samira A. Attallah, “Factories Without Walls: Women's Labor and Tobacco Production in Lebanon,” *Al-Raida*, vol.15, no. 79 (Fall 1997): 16

attention given to women.¹¹¹ What role did women play in the Nabatieh protests and the occupation of the Régie building? Did women help articulate demands given to the government and Régie? What are the implications of challenging the exploitative practices of a private monopoly, landlords, and license speculators while ignoring inequality in household relations? Relying on the newspaper accounts of the protest leaves these questions unanswered.

6.2. Contemporary Debates

Some of these questions are getting answers through contemporary reflections on the tobacco farmer uprising. The film *Shu'ūr Akbar Min Al-Ḥubb* attempts to capture the revolutionary moment and draw attention to the role of women in labor activism.¹¹² Participants and organizers of the Nabatieh protest have written about dimensions of the uprising that are often overlooked. *Sayyid* Hani Fahs wrote about the tobacco farmer uprising being a major moment that caught the attention of Yassir Arafat's *Fataḥ*, and how many organizers went on to establish the *Fataḥ*-allied *al-tanzīm al-sh'abī al-lubnānī* (the Popular Lebanese Organization).¹¹³ Organization of Communist Action partisan Fu'ad Al-Muqaddam criticized “the exaggeration of the role of parties and

¹¹¹ Ashraf. “*Al-liṣṣ wa-al-wuḥūsh*” [“The Thief and the Monsters”]. *Al-Nida'*, Jan. 25, 1973.

¹¹² *Shu'ūr Akbar Min Al-Ḥubb* [*A Feeling Greater Than Love*], directed by Mary Jirmanus Saba (2017; Beirut, Lebanon: Tricontinental Media).

¹¹³ Hanī Faḥṣ, “*Kuntu fī fataḥ*” [“I was in Fatah”], *Filastīn*, Jan. 2011, <http://palestine.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=2084>

individuals” in the uprising, describing it as an “iteration that followed dozens of movements organized by farmers throughout the decades.”¹¹⁴

Al-Muqaddam argued that despite the presence of clerics in the protest, the uprising was distinct from “sectarian protest movements calling for the eradication of *hirmān* in certain sects,” a likely reference to the Shiite *ḥarakat al-maḥrūmīn* (Movement of the Deprived) led by *Sayyid* Musa Al-Sadr.¹¹⁵ However, the *Amal* Movement, the party-cum-militia that emerged from Al-Sadr’s movement, currently claims the mantle of defender of tobacco farmers. Current Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri gave a speech at the Annual Tobacco Festival in 2002 where he said that he was speaking “from the platform of Hassan Haik and Naim Darwich, the martyrs of the 1973 tobacco uprising.”¹¹⁶ Berri also invoked the martyrs of the 1936 Bint Jbeil Uprising and the first tobacco farmers to form unions in 1931 to convey his authority to speak for tobacco farmers who live “between bullets and rocket shells, between landmines and aerial raids.” Tobacco cultivation represents “*ṣumūd* in the face of *hirmān*, occupation, and Israeli aggression.”

¹¹⁴ Fu’ād Al-Muqaddam, “*Dayā’ shu ‘ūr akbar min al-ḥubb: shahādatī*” [“The Loss of ‘A Feel Greater Than Love’: My Account”], *Almodon Online*, May 23, 2018, <https://www.almodon.com/culture/2018/5/23/%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%81%D8%A4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Nabih Berrī, “*Kalimat nabih berrī fi mahrajān al-tabgh al-sanawī*” [“Speech of Nabih Berri at Annual Tobacco Festival”] (speech, Tyre, Lebanon, July 7, 2002), <https://www.nabihberry.com/%D9%83%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%81%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%83%D8%B1/>.

Berri stated that since Régie is now nationalized and under the control of the Ministry of Finance, it is not an enemy, but an asset that is simply mismanaged by the government. In the speech, Berri criticized the Ministry which at the time was headed by Fu'ad Siniora for “implementing a deliberate plan to eliminate tobacco cultivation,” drawing attention to the important role tobacco cultivation plays in his *Amal* Movement. Defending Régie is now synonymous with defending the resistance. How else have changing political dynamics influenced the memory of the tobacco farmer uprising? With the political landscape of Lebanon’s southern border communities transformed by war, occupation, migration and the emergence of new political parties—with some former leftist partisans adopting an Islamic alternative to third world liberation—how do those who experienced the protest in 1973 now see what transpired and what significance do they give to the role of communist and Baathist organizations to the protest?

The political legacy of January 1973 continues to be debated. Contestation over the tobacco farmer uprising was present in media coverage of the protests that erupted on October 17, 2019. In a segment meant to warn viewers of the link between protest movements and war, *MTV* commentator George Ghanem listed the tobacco farmer uprising as one of the events responsible for creating an unstable sociopolitical environment that made Lebanon vulnerable to the civil war that ultimately broke out in 1975.¹¹⁷ In contrast, the NGO Legal Agenda published an article on an activist

¹¹⁷ “*Jawrij Ghānem li sār al-waqt: a ‘tadhr min kul al-fuqarā wa-l-mu‘atarīn wa-l-muhammishīn aladhīn ya ‘taburūn āna adhahi ak-thawra satātīhum bi-l-khabaz wa-l-rakhā...kul al-ḥurūb fī lubnān badā’t bi thawrāt.*” [“George Ghanem to *It’s About Time*: I apologize to all the poor, destitute, and marginalized that think that this revolution will bring them bread and prosperity...all wars in Lebanon began with revolutions.”] Facebook clip, 14:11, posted by “MTV Lebanon, November 8, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/mtvlebanon/videos/vb.158056104212380/1390416571131603/?type=2&theater>

participating in the sit-in in Kafr Rumman who had participated in the 1973 protests as a child, framing the October 17th movement as being part of a legacy of citizens organizing against a corrupt government.¹¹⁸

6.3. Researching During Protests

The October 17th protests broke out while I was collecting and reading the articles examined in this thesis and while I tried to not project my analysis of the tobacco farmer uprising onto the events that were unfolding, I felt that there were similarities between the two protest movements in the way they were mediated and analyzed. While there were many features of the October 17th movements that were distinct from the tobacco farmer uprising, reviewing old press coverage of protests helped me understand the ways the protests were being interpreted by media outlets.

Newspapers, TV channels, and social media sites with divergent political positions presented competing interpretations on the roots of the October 17th movement, its goals, and its trajectory. Depending on which media outlet was covering the events, the protests were either the result of reconstruction-era economic policies, the influence of Iran in Lebanese politics, or the public's exhaustion with the traditional political leaders. Some placed blame on the political class in its entirety along with powerful institutions like the central bank and armed forces or they were selective in their indictment of the constituent forces of the *niḏām*.

¹¹⁸ Bādiyya Faḥṣ, “‘*Adhra qānṣū: qalb kafrumān al-thā’ir min arba ‘in ‘āmmān!*’” [“‘Adhra Qanso: Rebellious Heart of Kafr Rumman for 40 Years!’], *Legal Agenda*, November 29, 2019, <https://www.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=6186>

Just as in 1973, the October 17th protests precipitated debate over economic policy and state security apparatuses. The banking sector and Riad Salameh, the governor of Banque du Liban, were seen by some people as pillars of economic stability while others held banks and Salameh responsible for burdening Lebanon with debt. Security forces were portrayed as either protectors of protesters—or at least described as off-limits as targets of protester rage—or as the primary weapons of the state in violently quashing protests. A massive spontaneous protest that was powerful enough to paralyze the country for days was subjected to co-option and mediation by explicitly political or politically connected outlets, each one trying to claim protests as their own.

There were also political parties and media outlets that, while adopting a position that was ostensibly sympathetic to the protesters, suggested that infiltrators and agents provocateurs were steering the protests away from focusing on legitimate grievances to serve the interests of foreign and domestic enemies. Hezbollah, its *Al-Manār* satellite channel, and *Al-Nūr* radio channel claimed that civil society organizations funded by western embassies were conspiring to disarm the resistance and leave Lebanon vulnerable to Israel. The Free Patriotic Movement, founded by President Michel Aoun, and its *OTV* channel claimed that many protesters were partisans from Lebanese Forces—a competing party whose base, like the Free Patriotic Movement, primarily comes from Lebanon's Christian community—that were exploiting the protests for their own political gain. *OTV* presenters and commentators also considered the use of profanities by protesters against the President as an unacceptable assault on a Lebanese state institution, considering the Presidency to be an inviolable symbol of the nation.

From 1973 to today, the tobacco farmer uprising has been contested over its origins and trajectory. Political parties, publishers, activists, and artists have sought to interpret the Nabatieh protest and its fallout, imposing their political perspective and aspirations onto the events. Examining the interpretations proffered by political actors on the tobacco farmer uprising and its competing representations provides insight into the motivations of the mediators. Identifying frames that guided the interpretation of the protest reveals the issues that animated political discourse, particularly questions concerning political power, economic policy, and the role of state security forces. The Lebanon that is conveyed through these competing frames and interpretations is one with deep cleavages around the legitimacy of the state itself. However, while this research provides insight into the key debates among political parties in 1973, it is unable to reveal the motivations of the protesters who participated in what was a revolt of the marginalized against a powerful monopoly.

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