

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

“A CONTINUING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE”?:  
PEACE-RELATED NGOS IN LEBANON  
THROUGH A DECOLONIAL LENS

by  
MIZUKI KATO

A thesis  
submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
April 2023

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

“A CONTINUING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE”?:  
PEACE-RELATED NGOS IN LEBANON  
THROUGH A DECOLONIAL LENS

by  
MIZUKI KATO

Approved by:



---

Dr. Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, Assistant Professor  
Political Studies and Public Administration &  
Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies

Advisor



---

Dr. Karim Makdisi, Associate Professor  
Political Studies and Public Administration

Member of Committee



---

Prof. Giorgiandrea Shani, Professor  
Division of Arts and Sciences,  
College of Liberal Arts,  
International Christian University

Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense: April 28, 2023

# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

## THESIS RELEASE FORM

Student Name: Kato Mizuki  
Last First Middle

I authorize the American University of Beirut, to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes:

- As of the date of submission
- One year from the date of submission of my thesis.
- Two years from the date of submission of my thesis.
- Three years from the date of submission of my thesis.

Mizuki Kato May 9, 2023  
Signature Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words cannot express my gratitude to my professor and chair of my committee for his invaluable patience and feedback. I also could not have undertaken this journey without my defense committee, who generously provided knowledge and expertise. Additionally, this endeavor would not have been possible without the generous support from Ito Foundation for International Education Exchange, who financed my study at AUB and this research.

I am deeply indebted to the warm cooperation of the participants from the local NGOs for interview in their busy time.

I am also grateful to my classmates and cohort members, especially colleagues at the Center of Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, for their consultation, feedback, and consistent mental and emotional support. Thanks should also go to AUB professors, who gave knowledge and expertise and also educate me to be a Master student in Middle Eastern studies from the beginning.

Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my family, especially my mother. Their belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during this process.

# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Mizuki Kato

for

Master of Arts

Major: Middle Eastern Studies

Title: “A Continuing Cycle of Violence”?: Peace-related NGOs in Lebanon through a Decolonial Lens

Lebanon is well known in the post-conflict context because of its civil war from 1975-1990 and is widely described as “the continuing cycle of violence.” This evaluation allows the remarkable development of ‘conflict resolution’ and ‘peacebuilding’ activities, which are understood as crucial to overcoming the situation and bringing peace, not only by the international actors but also by the local Lebanese. However, it is unclear how the Lebanese understand ‘peace’ and ‘security.’ Here, we can find a black box regarding peace and violence in Lebanon. This black box should be unpacked first before starting off a discussion regarding peace work and the solution to violence.

This thesis particularly attends to the Lebanese peace-related NGOs and explores how they formulate and define the idea of violence as a problem for peace. For the examination, this thesis particularly employs the decolonial lens to closely look at the power dynamics between the international donors and the local NGOs for the local NGOs’ activities. Thus, this thesis aims at answering the question of whether it is possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and, if so, where the space for the possibility can be found. through the investigation of international donors’ discourse and the local peace-related NGOs’ situations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	1
ABSTRACT.....	2
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	6
TABLES.....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	8
A. Overview.....	8
B. Theoretical Framework.....	11
1. Colonial Character in a Concept of ‘Peace’ from Its Birth.....	11
2. Development of the Idea of Peace with the Influence of Orientalism.....	13
3. Gap between the Local Reality .....	15
4. Local Trapped in Colonial Formation of Peace.....	16
5. Decolonial Peace.....	19
C. Research Question .....	22
D. Rationale .....	23
1. Lebanon .....	23
2. NGOs .....	24
3. Peace-related .....	25
E. Literature Review .....	26
1. Critique of International peacebuilding .....	26
2. Critique of international influence on Local peacebuilding .....	30
3. Lack of critical examination of local peacebuilding.....	32
F. Methodology .....	34

1. Critical Anthropological Approach .....	34
2. Discourse Analysis .....	36
3. Semi-Structured Interview .....	38
<b>RESEACH FINDING AND ANALYSIS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>39</b>
A. International Doners' Calls for Proposal .....	39
1. UN Agencies' Calls for Proposal.....	39
2. State Agencies' Calls for Proposal .....	52
B. The Local Peace-related NGOs' Publications .....	68
1. Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace .....	69
2. Peace Labs .....	72
3. March.....	75
4. Fighters for Peace .....	78
5. ACT for Disappeared.....	82
6. UMAM Documentation and Research .....	85
7. ALEF .....	89
8. ABAAD .....	92
<b>RESEACH FINDING AND ANALYSIS: SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW .....</b>	<b>95</b>
A. Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace .....	95
B. Peace Labs .....	98
C. March.....	101
D. Fighters for Peace .....	105
E. ACT for Disappeared.....	109
F. UMAM Documentation and Research .....	113

G. ALEF .....	117
H. ABAAD .....	123
<b>DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>127</b>
A. Supplementary Questions .....	127
1. What kind of peace are these dominant practices trying to fix as colonial peace?.....	127
2. Epistemologically, do the local NGOs incorporate colonial peace? .....	130
3. How do the power relationships within the matrix of colonial power influence the local NGOs, and how do the local NGOs collide with the influences?.....	141
B. Primary Question: Is it possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and if so, what role can they play in the process?.....	148
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>154</b>
A. Limitation.....	156
B. Contribution .....	159
<b>APPENDIX I.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>APPENDIX II .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>167</b>



## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figure

1. Global Peace Index .....	8
2. Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions .....	60
3. List of donors of ABAAD .....	94
4. Equipment founded by the UK to the Center .....	103

## TABLES

### Table

1. Summary of the reasons for the local peacebuilding being trapped in the colonial peace ..... 19
2. Summary of the discussing points ..... 148

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Overview

Lebanon is well known in the post-conflict context because of its civil war from 1975-1990. The post-conflict context is defined as “having past experience with outbreaks of violence and the manifestation of societal divides through violent means...[and] the messiness even the absence of fighting” (Habyarimana and Leonardsson, 2022:210). Given its history, Lebanon is believed to not have a “durable peace” (Ramsbotham and Picard, 2012). The Global Peace Index was launched in 2009, 20 years after the end of the civil war in Lebanon. This index has marked Lebanon as having a “low state of peace.”

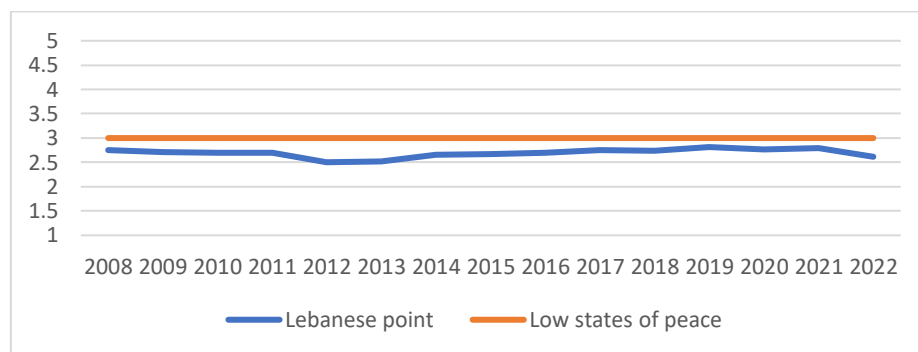


Figure 1: Global Peace Index  
(Created by the author, from “Lebanon - global peace index 2022”, (n.d.))

In reality, people’s life and peace in a positive sense in Lebanon do not match what is indicated in the index, which does not consider the economic and humanitarian

indicators<sup>1</sup>. For the last three (almost four) years, Lebanon has been experiencing a crisis in three senses: economic, political, and humanitarian. More than half of the population lives below the poverty line. According to World Food Program data, a considerable percentage of the population lives in food insecurity (WFP Lebanon country brief, 2021). Recently, individuals have robbed banks throughout the whole country as “the only option” to get access to their own money, which “has been held hostage for three years” (Mounzer, 2022). This divergence between what the global peace index shows and people’s life on the ground reveal an imperfection of the well-relied and referred index and illuminate that every indicator or evaluation of violence and peace has an underlying political and ideological stance.

Instead of repeating arguments of the index’s imperfection, which critical post-colonial scholars have critiqued, it is valuable to look at and unpack how the evaluation of violence is used for peacebuilding in Lebanon. Since Lebanon is seen as post-conflict, ‘conflict resolution’ and ‘peacebuilding’ are understood as crucial to overcoming the situation and bringing peace. Internationally Lebanon has received higher Official Development Assistance per capita compared with peer countries in the

---

<sup>1</sup> The index is calculated based on 23 quantitative and qualitative indicators and evaluates the state of peace according to three main pillars, namely the level of societal safety and security, the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict, and the degree of militarization. The first pillar composes number and duration of internal conflicts, number of deaths from external organised conflict, number of deaths from internal organised conflict, number, duration and role in external conflicts and intensity of organised internal conflict, which all are analyzed Conflict Data Program. The second pillar have level of perceived criminality in society (qualitative assessment by EIU analysts), number of refugees and internally displaced people as a percentage of the population, political instability (qualitative assessment by EIU analysts), Political Terror Scale, impact of terrorism (IEP Global Terrorism Index), number of homicides per 100,000 people, level of violent crime (qualitative assessment by EIU analysts), likelihood of violent demonstrations (qualitative assessment by EIU analysts), number of jailed population per 100,000 people, number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people. The third pillar consists in military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, number of armed services personnel per 100,000 people, volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as recipient (imports) per 100,000 people, volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as supplier (exports) per 100,000 people, financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions, nuclear and heavy weapons capabilities, ease of access to small arms and light weapons (qualitative assessment by EIU analysts). (What are the 23 indicators of peace used by the global peace index?, n.d.)

MENA region, upper-middle-income or refugee hosting status (2021 UN country annual results report Lebanon, 2022:27). Moreover, Lebanese NGOs also follow international framing. For example, one of the international NGOs (INGO) based in Lebanon describes the country as “the continuing cycle of violence” (“Confronting the legacy of political violence in Lebanon,” 2014) as an aggregated view of ‘Lebanese civil society’ and emphasizes the role of civil society. In reality, the Lebanese civil society and NGOs have been actively engaged in the peace-related field since the civil war, and the number of NGOs in Lebanon marked range between 1500 and 4000 (Kingston, 2012:342).

On the other hand, some qualitative data shows that the majority of Lebanese are optimistic about prospects for peace. According to the Peace Perceptions Poll 2018, 53% of people in Lebanon think that peace and security would improve over the next five years, while it differed by the region (“Majority of Lebanese optimistic about prospects for peace, says the new poll,” 2018). At the same time, the readers have to be critical of what ‘peace and security’ means. The poll was closed-ended research, and therefore, it is unclear how Lebanese understand ‘peace’ and ‘security.’ Here, we can find a black box regarding peace and violence in Lebanon. This black box should be unpacked first before starting off a discussion regarding peace work and the solution to violence. This thesis particularly attends to the Lebanese peace-related NGOs and examines how they formulate and define the idea of violence as a problem for peace.

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

In order to examine this issue, this thesis employs the idea of decolonial peace. This section explains the background of the idea of decolonial peace and reason why I employ the idea.

### ***1. Colonial Character in a Concept of 'Peace' from Its Birth***

In order to examine this issue, this thesis employs the idea of decolonial peace. To start, it is essential to investigate the concept of 'peace.' Peace is seen as horizontal and universal, but theoretically, it is not. Atalia Omer (2020) outlines the trajectory of the development of the concept of peace. She argues that the genealogy of peace goes back to Immanuel Kant, whose discussion of cosmopolitan peace was developed in the context of not only European modernity but also the blueprints of its colonial infrastructure (277). Kant's concept of perpetual peace, which is recognized as a foundation of peace theory, emphasizes the interconnection of peace, commerce, and democracy, which are based on notions of self-interest, autonomy, and international cooperation (ibid.). Here, "capitalism and colonialism are both constitutive dimensions of modernity and are entangled in multiple 'peace' currencies that have roots in intra-Christian and intra-European developments" (ibid.). The idea of 'peace' itself was not naturally developed but politicized from the start.

In fact, with the development of the European intra-expansion, the idea of peace was politically exploited. The expansion of Europe as a form of colonization started in the fourteenth century and was justified by a theory of civilizing mission. Civilizing

mission meant intervention against the “uncivilized” by the “civilized” to bring “the greater good” (Wallerstein, 2008:6-11), peace and order (Watt, 2012:1). Contrary to that justification, the colonization led to military conquest, economic exploitation, and massive injustices in most regions of the world in order to pursue the interests of the dominant strata (Wallerstein, 2008:xii). Thus, the idea of peace was politically exploited to justify colonialism.

This politicization of the idea of peace was further reinforced after “liberalism [was] triumphant” (Wallerstein, 2011) in the post-Cold War period. The idea of peace became “a model through which Western-led agency, epistemology, and institutions have attempted to unite the world under a hegemonic system that replicates liberal institutions, norm, and political, social and economic systems” (Richmond, 2014:1). The modeled peace has consisted of four main components: security sector reform, economic liberalization, political liberalization, and transnational justice (Shani, 2019:45). Since the model promoted them as “universal framework for emancipation” (Richmond, 2014:1), it “rarely is commensurate with that of the specific context they are applied in [and also] makes the post-conflict society subservient to global capital and northern state security interests” (Richmond and Pogodda, 2016:3). Ultimately, the colonial aspect exists in our current time under the name of “coloniality .” This coloniality is an expression coined by Anibal Quijano to name the colonial structures of power, control, and hegemony. He argues that this coloniality of power is reproduced in

all daily life aspects of the new independence projects, emphasizing the same prevailing idea, Western Europe as modernism (2000:777–797 translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:276). Specifically, the colonial matrix of power has been described in four interrelated domains: control of economy, control of authority, control of gender and sexuality, and control of subjectivity and knowledge (2000, translated and cited in Mignolo, 2017:157). Yet, Quijano focuses on economy and authority produced by the matrix (ibid). Walter Mignolo (2007) develops this argument that the matrix of colonial power causes ontological and epistemological inferiority in relation to the universalized European modernity (75-116, translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:275). The structure to justify the colonial intervention has not changed from the age of colonization but has transformed into a matrix of colonial power in the same hands.

## ***2. Development of the Idea of Peace with the Influence of Orientalism***

This structure of colonial power perpetuates even after academia started dealing with peace as an academic subject. In fact, academia’s study of peace contributes to this structure by defining ‘peace’ in opposition to ‘violence.’ John Galtung (1969, 1990), a founding father of Peace Studies, constructs the idea of peace as an axis of multiple types of violence, such as physical, structural, and cultural. Even though one of Galtung’s motivations for the development of the theory was to overcome the colonial and structural power dynamics (1990), this notion of violence has been trapped in and exploited by the matrix of colonial power. Theoretically, it is criticized that Galtung’s formulation of peace is intertwined with a normative set, specifically of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Hinton, Shani, et al, 2019:xv). Simon Springer (2015) points out that the thesis of violence as the opposite of peace foments an idea that “



authoritarianism and violence are configured as ‘barbarian’ principles that only the ‘civilizing’ logic of neoliberalism may conquer” (61-62). This mindset reflects an Orientalist perspective which differentiates ‘peaceful us’ following the liberal principle and ‘savage and violent others’ in the Global South (65). Springer (2015) notes that linking Orientalism and liberalism “may seem somewhat counterintuitive,” yet, the thesis of violence feeds into the liberal definition of peace and promotes its development by bridging it with traditional Orientalism (65).

Here, it is indicated that ‘violence’ is formulated as a ‘problem’ in the current liberal world. Robert Cox (1981), a pioneer of critical theory, discusses that a ‘problem’ is not something natural but instead constructed by actors who gain from the problem’s outcomes. People positioned in the global power structure intentionally define global problems of peace in order to preserve their positions of power (128-129). These actors have historically been the West (141). Therefore, by locating peace in the problem of violence, the Western academic theory itself preserves the matrix of colonial power.

In fact, Vivienne Jabri (2013) clearly demonstrates that the current idea of peace in today’s world is a value “condition[ed] in a modern global order” (7). On this basis, peacebuilding became a set of norms and practices developed on “an international consensus on responses to violent conflict...as an extrapolation of what in International Relations is referred to as ‘democratic peace theory’ or indeed the ‘liberal peace project’” (8). Therefore, peacebuilding’s aim is to transform societies into “a reflection of

liberal democracy” (ibid.). From the post-colonial critique, therefore, it is “a re-shaping that would correct, so to speak, the ‘failure’ of states” (10). This argument illuminates that ‘violence’ as a ‘problem’ is intentionally constructed in the context of today’s prevailing power structure, which is the liberal democratic order. Nikolas Kosmatopoulos (2022) further advances the argument that the idea of violence can be hegemonically crafted and defined by the geopolitical context (44-53). When one community is placed as an enemy to great powers, for example, under the Cold War, the community “serves as the battleground for broader geopolitical antagonisms” (53) and becomes a target of being labeled as violent (44-45). In sum, the idea and definition of peace and its opposite of violence are not objectively depicted but more formulated by the (post)colonial matrix of the power structure that Omer (2020) undauntedly names the “Eurocentricity that imbues the concept of peace with a violent totality” (279).

### ***3. Gap between the Local Reality***

However, this argument does not necessarily grasp the whole reality. It is shown that in deeply divided societies, commonly recognized as “problematic...communities” (Mac Ginty, 2014:553), the people do not always behave violently nor passively endure the violence. But, “in their everyday lives, they must negotiate a way through a complex range of social norms, practices, and aspirations that shape their inter- and intracommunal experience” (ibid.). Roger Mac Ginty (2014) frames it as “everyday peace,” which avoids and manages conflict and builds peace on the ground. Even

though it is fluid, there is a certain peace on the ground, which is “possible at some periods” (552). Therefore, it is highly questionable whether post-conflict societies are a ‘violent’ and ‘problem,’ as defined in the matrix of colonial power.

#### ***4. Local Trapped in Colonial Formation of Peace***

Nevertheless, critical scholars also point out that the local peacebuilding workers who are living in the same societies are not free from this matrix of colonial power but trapped in or even enhance the matrix. Springer (2015) conducted research on NGOs in Cambodia and revealed that many of them “have adopted a neoliberal mandate” because they take the liberal principle at “face value” (62). A Cambodian NGO leader, in his interview, points the local workers’ dilemma,

Our culture...represents the people for a long time, not just now, so it is unfair to say we have a culture of violence. [However], unfortunately lots of these experts and these so-called leaders who are working in Cambodian NGOs and civil society, they tend to discount the difficulty they are facing with some of the accusations they make themselves, and that’s terrible that most of these phrases come from people like that.... It’s really degrading . . . If you have that kind of preconceived notion of people, you are not going to be able to work with them, you can’t expect them to do things on their own, you cannot empower them because you don’t believe that they can be empowered (Ou Virak, President, Cambodian Center for Human Rights, personal interview. July 4, 2007, in Springer, 2015:73).

It shows that the local worker realizes the gap between the defined ‘problem’ and the reality and is upset with the colonial peace framing of violence.

Kosmatopoulos (2021) adds another perspective. He argues the local peacebuilding field holds an idea of “master peace” (261), from which experts acquired hierarchical morals. The hierarchical morals arise from consensus on human rights, liberal democracy, and secular globalization. Liberal peacemaking efforts feel justified to intervene in a society if that society does not align with the hierarchical moral system (259-260). By referring to the hierarchical morals, they believe that they get international legitimacy “to redefine and reconfigure other essential notions as well, such as civil society, democracy, development, and, of course, peace” (262) and “upon debates, actions and solutions duly put in place to address the *violence problem* today” (261. emphasis added). He criticizes that this structure encapsulating this hierarchical power is a reproduction of (post)colonialism (264-265), in which an essentialist image of disease and “inherently violent, and potentially ‘uncivil society’” (270) requests and justifies the civilizing mission and intervention. Shani Giorgiandrea (2019) has a similar point but even advances further the argument that even though the local peace workers do not refer to hierarchical morals, this structure would be reproduced. He argues that the local peacebuilding “reproduce[s] its central tenets while simultaneously constructing a space outside of its interventionary practices [by] fail[ing] to engage with the ‘local’ target population on *their own terms*” (47). Hartmut Behr (2019) clarifies the meaning of “constructing a space” in the same book of Shani. He argues that this interventionary practices are designed and implemented on “the perception and stigmatization of all actors, cultures, people and peoples outside the ‘self’ as different and as ‘the’ ‘other’” (184). He analyzes this perception reducing ‘the other’ to the

‘self’/‘Self’ and his or her experiences (179). He connects this idea to a concept of “ontological imperialism” (ibid.). In other words, the process of construction of the ‘problem’ in ‘other’ communities to justify their intervention to the communities to build ‘peace’ by the local peacebuilding workers shares the same structure with colonial peace. In this sense, the ‘local’ peace workers are not representative of the communities but rather, another intervener to the communities. These points suggests that the local workers do not only blindly take liberal principle at “face value” (62), as Springer examines, but they enhance the matrix of coloniality of power.

At the same time, local peace work does not just adopt the principle of master peace for epistemological reasons. Springer reveals its adoption is for “attracting donors” (ibid.), as well. The practical reason does not only mean financially following the donors but also following the practices of colonial peace, as Kosmatopoulos (2021) gives insight. He examines that the “master peace” also emerges from the hierarchical technique of peacebuilding, which is brought from the West as universally deployable everywhere in the world without adopting it into the local context (268). By referring to the Western technique of peacebuilding, they believe that they get domestic and international legitimacy. This argument indicates that they adopt the practice of liberal peacebuilding for practical reasons to earn legitimacy from international donors who hold the same ideas of hierarchical peacebuilding. In sum, as Table 1 shows, the local peacebuilding workers are trapped in the colonial peace for the two reasons: epistemological and practical. Furthermore, the epistemological reason consists of two aspects, taking the liberal value as “face value” and taking peacebuilding hierarchy into

account, and the practical reason is formulated also by two aspects, following practice and following finance of the colonial peacebuilding.

<b>Reasons for the local peacebuilding being trapped in the colonial peace</b>	
Epistemological	1. Taking the liberal value as “face value”
	2. Taking peacebuilding hierarchical position
Practical	3. Following the practice of colonial peacebuilding
	4. Following the finance of colonial peacebuilding

Table 1: Summary of the reasons for the local peacebuilding being trapped in the colonial peace

### 5. *Decolonial Peace*

In order to overcome the reproduction of (post)colonialism, critical scholars suggest constructing ‘decolonial peace.’ Decolonialism is generally understood as the “process of undoing colonial worldviews, institutions, and impacts” (Schirch, 2022:2).

Therefore, it is essential to overcome the traps of the colonial peace summarized above to construct decolonial peace.

Firstly, let us explore the meaning of overcoming the epistemological reason. Walter Mignolo, who discusses the concept of the matrix of colonial power, and his colleague argue that that realizing decoloniality is to “delink” ourselves from the structure of knowledge imposed by the West (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018:120). Kosmatopoulos (2022) also argues knowledge structure. He argues that global knowledge production is bonded in the matrix of colonial power. Examples include think tanks and global NGOs dealing with crisis resolution, “exoticizing war while

ignoring or downplaying violence in formal times of peace” (213-214). In order to transform the power balance, decolonial peace needs to be critical of the idea of peace and its opposition, violence, epistemologically (2022:209). He discusses that by being “acutely aware of the geopolitics of knowledge involved in representing peace and peacemaking” (ibid.) and “re-socializing the problem with violence” (2022:210), we can frame decolonial peace. This point suggests that decolonial peace sheds light on violence in formal times of peace. For some, this analysis might sound like a rehash of Galtung’s theory of positive peace, which concerns not only direct and physical violence but structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 2008), which the above explained as being exploited.

However, Juan Daniel Cruz (2021) clarifies that decolonial peace is “finding a voice of its own outside of Northern theories...[like]Galtung” (280). She mentions, “We undoubtedly turn to Galtung, Jares, Fisas or Lederach as a source to categorize the peace of these communities because we think that without them, we could not talk about peace” (ibid.). Since we undoubtedly and uncritically keep relying on the Northern theories, the peace field “of course, comes the orientalist characterization of the ‘Other’ from the great South” (Fontan, 2012:176 translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:280-281), even though it talks about positive peace, it also causes “ignorance, invisibility, contempt and marginalization of non-western knowledge, building a way of thinking and doing that violates even the same peace rhetoric and interculturality in

basic categories such as recognition” (281). Therefore, she defines decolonial peace as “recognizing the epistemology of peace belonging to native peoples (ibid.). It is vital to confirm that she does not insist that the global South does not have ‘violence’ that people challenge, and then, the count is not the result of what the locals consider as ‘violence’ and ‘peace’ but rather the process of how they can or cannot frame ‘violence’ and set the ‘problem’ by themselves with the critical view on the matrix of colonial power. Cruz (2021) notes that the decolonial peace movement starts by asking questions about the concept of peace inherited by the colonial power, such as

What kind of peace are these dominant practices trying to fix? How do they (the locals) mutate and reproduce in the internal colonial logic? What communities, social movements, or subjectivities have collided with these dominant peace discourses? How does the power relationship function as it incorporates the colonial peace heritage? (285).

While most of her questions relate to the epistemological question, the last question cuts into another aspect, the practical power relationship. The last question indicates that examining the influence of the practical power relationship on forming the local understanding of peace and violence is equally important. Considering the previous theoretical arguments, it would be fair to understand the practical power relationship as two practical reasons, practice and finance.

At the same time, it should be also noted that Cruz particularly names “communities, social movements, or subjectivities” as the actors of the decolonial peace movement although she does not explicitly reveal the reason for the selection. As explored in the previous section, the centralized and institutionalized peace work has



the tendency to fail to “engage with the ‘local’ target population” because of the epistemological reasons (Shani, 2019:49) and conceivably the practical reasons. From this point, it can be read that for Cruz, “native peoples” (2021:281) who hold the epistemology of decolonial peace and form the decolonial peace are not the ‘local’ peace NGO workers but non-centralized and non-institutionalized communities and individuals. Nevertheless, Cruz urges the decolonial thinkers to answer these questions to examine the decolonial peace movement in different regions (285), and therefore, would not necessarily fully exclude the centralized and institutionalized peace workers from the target of the examination.

### **C. Research Question**

In order to respond to Cruz’s request, I break it down in the Middle Eastern, particularly the Lebanese context as followed and set as research questions for the thesis; **Is it possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and, if so, where can the space for the possibility be found? Supplementary, narrowing Cruz’s questions down, 1) What kind of peace are these dominant practices trying to fix as colonial peace? 2) Epistemologically, do the local NGOs incorporate colonial peace? 3) How do the power relationships within the matrix of colonial power influence the local NGOs, and how do the local NGOs collide with the influences?** By exploring these questions, this research aims to better understand the idea of colonial and decolonial peace in Lebanon.

## **D. Rationale**

This thesis focuses on the local workers of Lebanese local peace-related NGOs in order to answer Cruz's request, which acknowledging her intention not to name the institutionalized organizations. In this section, I clarify the reasons for choosing Lebanon and local NGOs for my research. I also define the term 'peace-related'.

### ***1. Lebanon***

To start, I am now based in Beirut, Lebanon, and have done internships in local peace-related NGOs. In both my research and my experience, I argue that Lebanon situates herself within a modernizing framework of a nation-state that looks towards the 'developed' West and formulates Lebanese subjectivity on separatism from the Arab context (Maasri, 2016:126-127 and more such as Kassem, 2021; Nair, 2013). Lebanon's context aligns with what Jabri (2013) discusses as the concept of the 'local' who "come[s] on board" (9) in the places where "the post-colonial subject carries the memory traces of the colonial era and as such places value on the international as a domain that accrues recognition to the political subjectivity that emerges through anti-colonial struggle" (8). Thus, this context makes curbing the picture of 'the local' difficult but, at the same time, valuable (its detail will be argued below).

In addition to the normative point, it can aim at contributing to suggesting a context of colonial peace and decolonial peace in the Middle East in which shares the context of the region's long-standing entanglement with (post-)colonialism. Of course, there is country-specificities for the development of civil society that other societies do

not share, such as the history of freedom for assembly and self-organization (“Mapping civil society organization in Lebanon,” 2015:5) and the function as alternative to the government mechanism (Safa, 2007:5). the lack of well-function. Nevertheless, the exploration of various experiences and has developed complex dynamics in Lebanon would be able to provide a regional insight. As the region, sharing the context of the region’s long-standing entanglement with (post-)colonialism, it can aim at contributing to suggesting a context of colonial peace and decolonial peace in the Middle East.

## 2. *NGOs*

Secondly, the selection of local workers of the local peace-related NGOs as a target of research for decolonial peace might be controversial. As introduced above, peace-related NGOs that specialize in and acquire peace expertise could be trapped in the matrix of colonial power. Roberto Belloni and his colleagues (2016) criticize NGOs that are “often engineered by internationals, have failed to offer support to plenums or even to sympathize with their cause” (41). Gezim Visoka (2016), who examines peacebuilding in Kosovo, points out that being local NGOs does not mean that these organizations “have a clear idea about how their projects contribute to peacebuilding, nor do they engage in conflict sensitivity and impact-assessment exercises” (11). This critique is also raised in the case of Lebanese NGOs. Dima El Hassan (2014) argues that most of them are established to receive funds from international donors without having proper visions and development programs. Thus, they work under “international organizations’ agenda rather than the actual needs of the community.” Even with those

critiques, it is valuable to examine the possibility of decolonial peace by the local NGO. Lebanese local NGOs are perceived to play a significant role in peace work (“Lebanon: Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Lebanon”), and actually, a remarkable number of NGOs are working in the peace-related field (Kingsto, 2012:342). Moreover, as it will be pointed out later, the local peace works are evaluated as the alternative to the colonial peace in the previous literature. Therefore, revealing how they understand peace and violence and examining the possibility of forming decolonial peace is significant.

### **3. *Peace-related***

Here, it is also significant to explain why this thesis targets peace-related NGOs, not peacebuilding organizations. In peace and critical studies, there is a debate on the definition of peacebuilding. Oliver Richmond and Sandra Pogodda (2016) argue that peacebuilding has, by its nature, “inherent biases of northern, rational, compliance-oriented, problem-solving theory” (9). In other words, by saying peacebuilding is naturally associated with liberal peace. This argument is, to some extent, understandable since an attitude of ‘building peace’ itself has an assumption that there is no ‘peace.’ This formulation is a ‘problem’ in post-conflict societies until peacebuilding activities intervene, which is a ‘solution.’ In this sense, the term peacebuilding “has become a confusing term representing colonialism and Western military intervention to some, and local empowerment, social justice and nonviolent protest movements to others”

(Schirch, 2022:3). Since the aim of this thesis is to capture the NGOs' understanding of regarding peace and violence, the target should not be reduced to peacebuilding. Therefore, this thesis sets a target in a broader sense to peace-related NGOs, who identify themselves as addressing violence and contributing for peace.

## **E. Literature Review**

There is a profound amount of literature analyzing and discussing peacebuilding in Lebanon, and many of them cast questions on the underlying idea of peace and violence in peacebuilding carried out by internationals, but not much by the locals. Here, I outline the previous literature based on by whom peacebuilding was implemented.

### ***1. Critique of International peacebuilding***

Firstly, international peace work has been largely and dominantly implemented in Lebanon, and the critiques against it are also widespread. Ta'if peace agreement at the end of the Lebanese civil war was not only an agreement for the end of violent fighting but also had a role in security reform, which is the first component of liberal peacebuilding. This specific security reform stipulated the disarmament of all private militias except Hizballah. The security sector reform has been maintained through the assistance of the Lebanese Arms Force (LAF) by the United States and other Western partners to strengthen national security and identity, making Lebanon one of the largest recipients of foreign assistance in the Middle East (Shah and Dalton, 2020). Marie-Joe lle Zahar (2009) argues that this intervention into the disarmament of militia and into the support of the LAF aimed to move Lebanon away from Syria's custodianship at

a time when the US had growing tension with Syria after September 11. Tamirace Mühlbacher (2009) also shares this view that the international community put great pressure on the Syrian authority to securitize Lebanon in the region in an anti-terror context and to “remov[e] the obstacles inherited after the US-led offensive against Iraq” (263-268). The US Department of State listed Syria as one of seven states supporting terrorism in 2002 and urged EU allies to rethink their partnership with Syria (Zahar, 2009:298-299). This was the main motivation that the US and French pushed the UN Security Council to issue Resolution 1559 in 2004, calling for ‘the strict respect of Lebanon’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country’ (300). While Council members abstained from voting for UNSC 1559, which can be interpreted by the text of the Resolution as an intervention in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state in the absence of a clear and present danger (301). The US and Western powers pushed it through, and the Western intervention into Lebanese politics intensified.

This critique is also applied to the second component of liberal peacebuilding, economic and political liberalization. After the conflict, Lebanon adopted a template neoliberal reform agenda to attract foreign investment to fund reconstruction and was viewed by the IMF as a resilient economy (Abdo and Aouad et al, 2020:8). Zahar (2009) demonstrates that this push is also out of the Western geopolitical interest. During the Syrian occupation, Syria had an economic interest in Lebanon because Lebanon provided Syria access to resources which was not available in its own socialist system and the labor market (296). In return, it was important for the West to get rid of

Syria from the Lebanese economy. Therefore, the internationals, especially the US and France, incentivized the liberal-minded exigencies of the donors for privatization, structural reform of the administration, and improvement of the investment in order to threaten the Syrian elites' interest in profit "through shady business deals" and to "put Syria on its own collision course with the West" (ibid.). From this point, the scholars demonstrate that the 'problem' of 'violence' of Syrian authority was intentionally framed for the benefit of US geopolitics because this 'problem' provided the justification for 'problem-solving' intervention.

This geopolitical framing of violence was also demonstrated in the case of the third component of liberal peacebuilding, free election. As a result, UN Security Council issued Resolution 1559 in 2004, which expressed the necessity of conducting free and fair elections devoid of manipulation or foreign intervention (Mühlbacher, 2009:267). Then, the 2005 parliamentary elections marked the first elections since 1972 that took place without outright Syrian interference and were "depicted as free and fair, [which] signaled the rise of a liberalizing system in the country" (ibid.:294). On the other hand, Zahar (2019) points out it was not a free and fair election. With the Western recognition of Hezbollah as terrorists, the US refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Shi'a demands a fairer share in the Lebanese political system and, in the 2000 Election Law, the US helped draw constituency boundaries in favor of Christian candidates (306-307). This time, their 'problem' and 'violence' targeted Hezbollah, and the

Western powers refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Shi'a demands a fairer share in the Lebanese political system (306).

Today, in the age of economic crisis, even the news headlines of the last three years are filled with the negotiation with IMF and depict the Lebanese population as long awaiting IMF reform. As Bogaert (2013) argues, "These kinds of reforms are still uncritically and almost automatically associated with the process of democratization" (218). This process, on the contrary, is heavily criticized by academics and activists. After the establishment of the neoliberal economy, which "married with the sectarian governance of the country [and] was a perfect recipe for elite capture" (McCloskey, 2021). Lebanon experienced one of the world's worst economic and financial crises in the last 150 years. The IMF still pushes the "neoliberal playbook" (ibid.). Some point out that unlocking IMF requirements for financial support for the crisis resulted in cuts to public services, lifting of subsidies, which put a further burden on the working class and led to even higher levels of poverty in Lebanon rather than fixing the problem (Ghreichi, 2022). Moreover, although the requirements also ask for political liberalization by pushing the Lebanese government to enact political reforms in which "enhanc[ing] transparency must be centered on strengthening the anti-corruption framework" (Lebanon and the IMF, n.d), this requirement is also not favored by protesters and civil society groups because it "bail[s]... out Lebanon's ruling class" by discouraging any fundamental political change (Bazzi and Hassan, 2020) and also bring benefit to the private sector (McCloskey, 2021). These arguments show that liberal



peace does not address the root cause of people's suffering if those who are in the leading position in today's prevailing power structure can maintain the benefits and advantages of the structure.

## ***2. Critique of international influence on Local peacebuilding***

Meanwhile, peacebuilding by the locals has been widely explored.

Kosmatopoulos (2021) indeed built his theory based on his ethnography of the local Lebanese peacebuilding practitioners. He describes one of his ethnographical fields, the Summer School on Conflict Resolution in 2007, where he argues that the Lebanese local NGO workers have "the appropriation of technical skills, mostly included within the understanding of peacemaking as an emergent domain of specialized knowledge and a professional field and faith in 'Eurocentric and Western notions' underlying the understanding of peace and technics" (2014:537-539). Then he urges us to be critical of the idea of peace and its opposition, violence, epistemologically (2022:209). He discusses that by being "acutely aware of the geopolitics of knowledge involved in representing peace and peacemaking" (ibid.). However, his argument limits itself to formulating a theoretical argument of colonial peace from practical ethnography. He ends his piece by calling for decolonial peace and has not gone beyond to examine the practical cases to explore decolonial peace.

Yet, reviewing the previous literature shows that it focuses on criticism of international intervention in local peacebuilding. Lina Haddad Kreidie and Hussein Itani (2016) illuminate that meeting donor interests are the center point of an NGO's

purpose and that “funding agencies shape their goals, objectives, and tactics” (17). Paul Kingsto (2012) argues that although there used to be “indigenous initiat[ives]” to challenge and make Lebanon less sectarian (342-344), the new intervention of international donors undervalued the local initiatives and empowered inequitable forms of governance (350). For instance, the USAID project for community development chose international NGOs as partners and ignored a local pre-existing institutional infrastructure (346) with its preference for working with someone working “according to classic liberal theories of modernization with their depoliticized [stance]” (349). As a result, the international NGOs could not handle internal bureaucratic constraints and were forced to make some sacrifices(346). In conclusion, he criticizes international interference, which has not done “their homework and to do the kind of time-consuming research into local circumstances and power relations” in order to prevent undermining the local initiative (350). Estella Carpi (2014) also shows the international post-coloniality feature in its interference. She conducts qualitative ethnographic fieldwork on humanitarian assistance in Lebanon and names the international attitude as “humanitarian orientalism” (12). She demonstrates this argument with testimony from a local NGO worker in Beirut, saying, “We basically served the international NGOs as a guarantee that they are relying on internal forces” to disguise colonialism (13). Tschunkert and Mac Ginty (2010) then criticize the international donor workers who

claim their legitimacy by hiring local employees to show that they respond to the local needs without “ha[ving] really...much consider[ed]” the local situations (253-255).

### **3. *Lack of critical examination of local peacebuilding***

One commonality shared among these previous papers is an assumption that the local initiative can contribute to peace if they do not have to “abide by the political interests of their donors” but “become individuals to speak to” (Carpi, 2014:18).

However, these studies do not demonstrate how the local workers set and frame the problem of violence, what kind of peace they are trying to fix, and how they negotiate with the donors regarding peace and violence.

It is noteworthy to introduce two studies in the previous literature. First, Ahmet Serdar Günaydin (2018) is more suspicious of local peacebuilding’s framing. He examined some peacebuilding organizations in Lebanon and one of which was the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training. It is a local NGO established in 1997 that works in Lebanon’s Baalbek-Hermel region. After the regional sectarian division from 2005 to 2006, “conflict resolution became popular” (30). The author shows that this conflict is why this organization “has also started to focus on conflict transformation” (31). The organization’s approach to the clashes was first to go to Northern Ireland for a workshop where they were hosted and trained by an NGO that had experience in conflict resolution from the Northern Ireland conflict. The Lebanese NGO brought back the conflict resolution curriculum used in Northern Ireland to Lebanon with a bit of tailoring according to the needs of Lebanese society (Günaydin,

2018:30). From the problem setting and their employment of the hierarchical power of techno-morality of Western conflict resolution, the extent of adaptation of colonial peace by the organization is questionable. However, the author evaluates the organization positively since “the organization was built by the people of that region, they knew the area better, were more engaged with people, and determined and structured in their work” (105). Although this researcher aims to unpack critical approaches to liberal peacebuilding reflected in the field, his evaluation fails to take the critical perspective seriously.

The second study is done by Oussama Safa (2007), who analyzes the activities of one conflict resolution NGO named the Lebanon Conflict Resolution Network. It emerged in the mid-1990s to undertake modest and small training initiatives in Lebanon and implemented training in Mount Lebanon villages (7). From their goal to “rebuild the damaged relationships between” two communities and “respond to the expectation of the young members” (7), their framing of problem and violence is in the lack of communication and regular relationships. At the same time, they create a training manual in Arabic “for basic conflict resolution skills” (ibid.) and give pieces of training to make the recipients “familiar with the basic concepts of conflict resolution and transformation” (8). Even though the author evaluates the organization as having “succeeded in ‘Arabizing’ the approaches, thus winning stakeholders’ hearts and minds” (15), the technical hierarchical power of the peace techniques are manifested in the

NGO. Therefore, we do not know to what extent they are free from colonial peace. His language of “winning stakeholders’ hearts and minds” clearly indicates how embedded he is in the matrix of colonial power and how unaware he is of his position. He even mentions, “[an] attempt to encapsulate them and systematize them (conflict resolution) into a science may be led by Western institutions and thinkers, but the practice of these basic human endeavors continues to be present internationally with people who have not even heard the term ‘conflict resolution’ as such. Conflict resolution and its underlying philosophy are not about flags or cultures; they are about people” (15). His blindness to colonial peace demonstrates that even a scholar can be trapped in the matrix of colonial power. Furthermore, as the above two cases follow, the study of peacebuilding in Lebanon exclusively targets organizations that directly work on peacebuilding and do not deal with the ones that indirectly contribute to peace (Günaydin, 2018:7; Safa, 2007:3-4).

## **F. Methodology**

### ***1. Critical Anthropological Approach***

For research on decolonial peace, I employ a critical anthropological approach in this thesis. Here, what ‘critical’ indicates and makes different from mainstream anthropology is that it is inspired by the post-colonial critique and has shown its effectiveness in an exploration of complex issues of structural violence and inequality in post-colonial contexts on topics such as international aid (Kosmatopoulos, 2021:264-265). In other words, it cuts into and takes the power dynamic seriously. I will carefully

pay attention to how the matrix of colonial power dynamics is involved, how it is perceived, understood, and presented, and whether and how the local NGOs try to shift and resist it<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, as a specific exercise, I adopt decolonial listening. Decolonial listening is an attempt to highlight and analyze the modern “mechanisms that produce invisibilized lived experiences of the subalterns<sup>3</sup>” (Maldonado-Torres 2010, 116). Since it aims to make visible the invisibilized experiences and ideas, decolonial listening requires a heavy reliance on and featuring of direct quotes from participants in an attempt to voice and convey, to let them speak. I believe that this critical anthropological approach and decolonial listening have much to offer to explore decolonial peace in Lebanon because these techniques have not been employed much in this country. Given this approach, I use a combined method of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to answer my research question. Before going into detail, it should be clear that the research is conducted in accordance with the ethical principles indicated under the expedited review criteria of the Institutional Review Board.

---

<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is also essential to keep in mind “impossibility of separating ‘what is’ from a normative analysis of ‘what ought to be’” of the critical study (Behr and Shani, 2021:370). While this thesis aims at arguing ‘what is’ not ‘what ought to be’, it could not employ a suggested approach by the authors, which is going “beyond... from *within* different cosmological traditions themselves in terms” (ibid:371). The failure to explore the different cosmological tradition is one of the limitations of this thesis. This thesis limits to argue ‘what is’ from narrow definition of decoloniality constituted on postcolonial rationality.

<sup>3</sup> Taking this strategy listening to subalterns for examining the NGOs workers would itself trapped into “colonial project” in Spivak’ argument. This thesis sets the target to the local NGOs workers as the speakers of the society and communities in Lebanon. Considered the critique to the local NGOs, this structure would be ‘white men speaking to white men about colored men/women’. On the other hand, the local NGOs are still marginalized, and their voice Whereas the NGOs are not the marginalized and they raise their voice up and carry out the active projects as it has been reviewed, it does not change that their voices are much smaller in the international sphere. Therefore, this thesis tries to firstly understand the marginalized the local NGOs voices.?

## *2. Discourse Analysis*

The first part is discourse analysis. While it has not been recognized as a priority in anthropology, discourse analysis gives significant insight into the analysis. Bellier Irene (2005) defines discourses as “what political and administrative institutions produce continuously and sociolinguists have taken on the charge of analyzing them in multiple situations” (4) and argues that the discourse should not be taken as a given but as a result of the negotiation process. Therefore, one must consider not only the discourse on the text but the whole process “that involves systematically the agents into the production of the institution’s voice that involves systematically the agents into the production of the institution’s voice” (2) such as, which language it employs, who is the targeted audience, what is purpose and merit to using the discourse (16). It is significant, especially in the power imbalance relationship, because the discourse of the weaker sides is often, according to her, constituted by the dominant discourse to show that the weaker side is making the necessary efforts and, in doing so, prove their capacity to support the dominant rules (ibid.).

With this understanding of discourse, I will investigate two types of documents, international donors’ calls for application for their grant assistance in which they use ‘violence’ and/or ‘peace’ and local NGO publications, which were released in the last five years (from 2017 to first two months of 2023). This created a manageable data set that allowed for the in-depth thematic analysis needed to examine the discourses at play in these expressions of their idea. The international donors’ call for application for their grant assistance includes five UN organizations doing peace work, such as UNDP, UN

Women, UNESCO, OCHA, and World Bank, and five state institutions, US, EU<sup>4</sup>, French, British and German, which provide significant funds to Lebanon. For the local NGO publications, I deal with eight local peacebuilding NGOs and investigate various types of publications written in English, such as their web pages, pamphlets, and reports. These documents are supposed to establish the international donors as the audience. I analyze what discourse they employ and how they do so. Through the analysis, I speculate why they adopt the discourse they do, although I cannot conduct participatory observation of discourse production.

For the selection of the local peacebuilding NGOs, I set two extraction components. The first regards the local dimension. This thesis targets NGOs that are founded by Lebanese, have their headquarters in Lebanon, and who focus on Lebanon. The second is about peace-related NGOs. As the rationale part above explains, this thesis targets NGOs who identify themselves as contributing to building peace. Specifically, I select the NGOs with words of ‘violence’ and/or ‘peace’ in their organizational mission, such as Peace Labs, March, Fighter for Peace, ACT for Disappeared, UMAM Documentation and Research, Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, ALEF, and ABAAD. In accordance with the limited timeframe, I select the targets that made themselves heard with their active work in peace online. I also asked for suggestions from a local peacebuilding worker who used to be my supervisor for an internship at an organization to reduce a limitation for the research in the way that there might exist in other NGOs and grassroots organizations.

---

<sup>4</sup> In many cases, EU is categorized as international organization same as UN. Yet, this paper puts more focus on the framings and interests of each agencies than the institutional structure. From the perspective, it is better fit to the research to recognize EU as the agency reflecting the member states’ view.



### ***3. Semi-Structured Interview***

The second part of my research is semi-structured interviews with the local workers of the local peacebuilding NGOs. I conduct interviews with high-rank executives of organizations so that I can get organizational representatives' points of view. In total, I interview eight employees (one for every eight NGOs). These interviews aim at confirming the result from the discourse analysis and detailing the NGO's understanding of violence and peace, the values of the organizations' activities, their degree of awareness of colonial peace, and their idea of decolonial peace. I address the following themes: The mission of the organization, the type of work they are doing, the type of problem they are addressing, how they envision peace, the organizations' relationship with their respective communities, and the challenges they are facing. Some examples of the questions I ask include: How do you view the mission of your organization?; work of the organization? What is your view on peace? What are problems that you find and your organization trying to tackle?; Have you encountered any tension between requirements?; I employ thematic analysis for the collected data from the interviews. Through the interviews with the different local workers, I would like to explore their understanding of 'problem' and 'peace' and their position on colonial peace and decolonial peace.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH FINDING AND ANALYSIS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As introduced in the methodology section, this thesis employs a combined method of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to answer the research question. This section demonstrates the findings from the investigation and the analysis of the results, starting from discourse analysis.

I investigate two types of documents, international donors' (UN and state agencies) calls for proposals for grant assistance and local NGOs' publications released in the last five years (2017-2022) and the first two months of this year, 2023. The former, international donors' calls for proposal, are reviewed to guide the analysis of the latter, the local NGO publications. This analysis also informs the discussion section on how the international discourse and ideas impact and influence the NGOs' discourse, ideas, and activities.

#### **A. International Doners' Calls for Proposal**

Here, I highlight the features of each agency and introduce one characteristic document of each agency and analyze the overall themes and patterns from the entire set of calls. The titles of all corresponding calls are listed in Appendix I.

##### ***1. UN Agencies' Calls for Proposal***

There are nine corresponding calls for proposal to my selection criteria, using 'violence' and/or 'peace' and related words such as 'conflict,' 'tension,' and 'security' in the calls. These documents were all released last five years (2017-2022) and the first

two months of this year, 2023, from the five different UN agencies such as UNDP, UN Women, OCHA, UNESCO, and World Bank.

a. UNDP

As a UN agency working in sustainable development, democratic governance, and peacebuilding (“About us: United Nations Development Programme,” n.d.), UNDP had several calls for proposals in the last five years for peacebuilding and conflicts. In their calls, they used “conflict” to mean conflict between Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Lebanese host communities. Indeed, the conflict between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities has been prolonged, intensified, and spotlighted.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that their framing of conflict as a problem for peace is only the conflict between the two groups. For its work, it developed a series of “Peace Building Projects” with multiple phrases such as conflict analysis and transformation. The projects' targets varied between local authorities, stakeholders, local community members, and school students. In order to qualify for the UNDP calls, NGOs had to be hard eligibility levels. Three calls in five required having previous experience and an established network to collaborate with UN/INGOs. The other two also place the same criteria as an important factor for the screening.

One featured call was the last phase of the Peace Building Project in 2018. It focused on “addressing the underlying causes of conflict in Lebanon and sought to create ‘safe spaces’ for local identity groups to discuss their concerns openly” (“Lebanon - Peace Building Project. NGO to implement MSS through Playback Theater (last phrase)”, 2018:1). Their strategy was to perform theater as a platform for dialogue and interactions between Lebanese and Syrians. The call declares that “Theater helps in

healing and restoring social stability by initiating community support by opening the space to the community member to share, express and empathize with others after attending the performances” (ibid.). However, it is unclear and not rationalized from where this assumption of theater came. Thus, even though it stated that the project was “based on the needs of local groups” (ibid.), it is not obvious that they conducted the need assessment for their strategy. There could be many other needs that the local community has, but the UNDP limits the NGO activities to just theater. In addition, this unclarity is also reflected in the UNDP’s logistical design for the project. By making the eligibility criteria so strict, the UNDP limits the possible NGOs such that smaller and more local organizations are restricted from receiving funds. This call gives 50 points to ‘previous cooperation with international UN organizations and/or international NGOs’ out of a total of 150 points for NGO Eligibility and qualifications. The NGO eligibility is weighed 30% in total screening, in addition to 5 years and above of relevant experience in improvisational theatre projects or relevant activities. This exclusion indicates a lack of willingness on UNDP’s part to commit to addressing local needs.

b. UN Women

The Lebanese government passed Lebanon’s National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325) reflected the importance of inclusive peace and security deliberations and the role of women in Lebanon. UN Women is working to support the implementation of the NAP 1325 (“Supporting work on women’s political participation and women, peace, and security in Lebanon,” 2021:3). There are two applied calls for proposals from UN women

between 2017 and 2022. Both calls targeted women to increase their participation, leadership, and empowerment for peace, which reflected the idea of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In the details of the calls for proposal, they funded some women-led organizations, groups of women, and organizations working for women. The first one, named Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, is designed as a response to the Beirut explosion. It focuses on funding the initiatives which "ensure that women participate in the political recovery following the explosion and ensure that the risk of exclusion from relief and recovery due to lack of formal documentation is addressed" (Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Call for Proposal, 2021:2). On the other hand, the second one focuses more on rooted issues in Lebanon such as supporting women's participation for election and supporting inter-generational community dialogues on Lebanese past, aiming to promote tolerance, and understanding and to reduce social tensions.

Logistically, compared to UNDP, the required criteria for calls for proposals and suggested duration for projects by UN women are not challenging for the local NGOs. The UN Women expects the organizations to operate in the field and the region for five years. However, the second call also asks the organization to have a permanent office within the location area, which might be a hard requirement for the local organizations, especially in the age of economic crisis when the fee for rent is increasing harshly.

c. UNESCO

UNESCO's call for proposal is for a project on youth education for voting. It aimed to give youth the right knowledge and tools in addition to simplifying the electoral process for the 2021 national election. It would not be feasible to capture and

analyze the agency feature from one call for proposal, yet it shows a readable point in this call for proposal on UNESCO's understanding of problems and peace. This call for proposals appeals to a need to empower youth by giving them the right knowledge and tools to rebuild Lebanon's politics ("Call for Proposals: Youth as Agents for Change During Elections [Lebanon]," n.d.). This assumption indicates that UNESCO understands that Lebanese politics should be rebuilt, and the youth do not have the right knowledge for the election to complete it.

There is not much available information regarding logistics for this call for the proposal, but open information notifies that the level of eligibility would not be as much challenging. The NGOs, organizations, and institutions working on media, youth, and/or elections can be applied, and thus, a wide range of organizations possibly candidates, although it is unsure whether the local organization shares the idea and attitude of the project.

d. OCHA

OCHA, an agency to contribute effective humanitarian response, had a humanitarian fund as a response to "economic and financial collapse, COVID-19, the effects of the Beirut Port explosions and the Syrian crisis" (Lebanon Humanitarian Fund Standard Allocation March – May 2018 Allocation Strategy Paper, 2018:7). The project aimed to provide immediate assistance to a vulnerable population. Given the aim, one of the project's purposes was to "support the prevention of tension and conflicts" (ibid:2). It reflects OCHA's idea that the vulnerable population in a severe humanitarian crisis has a high risk of conflict and tension. While the term vulnerability is used in different senses by different authors, here it is valuable to explore the OCHA's mean of

vulnerability. A report of the project introduces some Lebanese population as examples of vulnerability, including those who do not have “availability of basic services such as fuel, electricity, healthcare, and clean water, services” (ibid:6) and who do not even have access to humanitarian assistance due “age, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, legal status, and... chronic medical conditions” (ibid.). While OCHA claims it as a humanitarian crisis, it finds the responsibility of the crisis in “the absence of comprehensive long-term plans for energy, food security, and social safety nets” (ibid.); in other words, in the lack of the structure and the political will to create the structure. Therefore, it can be read this report on the project proposes that OCHA recognizes that the vulnerability created by the structure and politics is the problem of violence.

Nevertheless, the OCHA’s approach to the crisis is humanitarian assistance to the end to meet the need of the most vulnerable population. However, it is questionable that they truly prioritize reaching the most vulnerable population. There are many local NGOs working on the ground, with their mobility and expertise in their communities, the people, and needs that the international institutions do not acquire as the local NGOs showed their presence after the Beirut blast. However, the fund is not open to the local NGOs widely. This call was exclusive to INGO, local NGOs, Red Crescent, and UN agencies registered on the Grant Management system or the organizations approved on diligence and finalized capacity assessment. The registration for the assessment requires the local NGOs to submit many documents and proofs while all of which would not be available to the NGOs. Also, they had to compete with the other INGOs and UN agencies, and therefore, it would be a low chance opened for the local NGOs. This

exclusion would raise a question of to what extent they are serious about answering the local needs.

e. World Bank

In these five years, World Bank does not have a call for proposals for the local NGOs, which corresponds to this research. However, it has created a fund targeting the intermediary agencies to provide grants to smaller local NGOs from them, and therefore, I include the fund as a reference and guideline since it influences the local NGOs indirectly. World Bank launched the “State and Peacebuilding Fund” in 2018 and provides approximately 20 grants each year. The State and Peacebuilding Fund is to support the implementation of the Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy (“State and Peace Building Fund 2020 Annual Report”, 2020:9). FCV Strategy is a World Bank strategy to address the challenges of fragility, conflict, and violence in extremely poor countries (“World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020 –2025”, 2020:2). The definitions of World Bank, each term of fragility, conflict, and violence, indicate that World Bank considers that a status of fragility is “deep governance issues and state institutional weakness” and “deep grievances and/or high levels of exclusion, lack of capacity, and limited provision of basic services to the population” (ibid:6). Therefore, like the OCHA, the World Bank sees that fragility caused by the political and structural failure is the problem of peace and needed to address.

Yet, differently from the OCHA, an approach of the World Bank to the problem is through intervening in an economy. One notable point from the strategy is the improvement of the market environment and “scaling up private sector solution” along



with building capacity and effectiveness of institutions (ibid:20). Indeed, a fund for Lebanon aims at providing support to private sector intermediaries to reach affected micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (“State and Peace Building Fund 2020 Annual Report”, 2020:18). On the other hand, there is not a clear passage in the document explaining the World Bank work for the state institution that it sees as the cause of the problem. I will analyze this in a later part in detail, but this emphasis on the market is proof that the World Bank is sticking with liberal peacebuilding.

f. Overall Theme and Pattern

There are multiple overall patterns among the documents: four of them regarding reasonings for the funds and two in terms of logistics in their calls. First of all, the calls and documents define the problems in Lebanese society as reasons for the fund, particularly concentrated on the vulnerability and weakness of society. For example, World Bank describes Lebanon as “Lebanon has faced several crises and shocks that have severely affected its economy and stability.... political unrest add to the instability” (“State and Peace Building Fund 2020 Annual Report”, 2020:18). On the other hand, UNESCO explains that the youth need to be empowered for the rebuilding of Lebanon’s political class (“Call for Proposals: Youth as Agents for Change During Elections [Lebanon],” n.d.). It indicates that it recognizes that the Lebanese, particularly the youth, need empowerment, and Lebanese politics need to be rebuilt with the UN agencies’ intervention. With a similar intention, UNDP’s call in 2017 for peacebuilding made its reason for the fund as “with the ongoing political rifts and tensions between the major political actors in Lebanon, in addition to the economic instability...putting more people at risk” (“UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building Project: Conflict analysis and

Mapping in Lebanon,” 2017:1). As discussed in the theoretical framework section, taking decolonial lens is not for denying the problems in the societies. However, it points out that claiming the problems in the society for the intervention corresponds with the colonialist approach. This gestures that the ones intervening in the society would have other motivations than working for the society for the society’s end.

The second overarching theme is that almost all funds set their reasoning in external and emergent events such as the Syrian refugee influx and the Beirut port explosion. The UNDP’s call accounts for its fund because of “new challenges to civil peace in Lebanon caused by the high influx of Syrian refugees, being positioned as a key actor in Lebanon” (“UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building Project: NGO to implement MSS through Playback Theater (last phrase),” 2018:1). Also, OCHA’s fund explained the fund because of the Syrian refugee influx and their negative influence on the country (Lebanon Humanitarian Fund Standard Allocation March – May 2018 Allocation Strategy Paper:1). There is a general shift after calls the Beirut explosion, focusing more on the blast. The aforementioned World Bank’s report does not solely focus on the lack of political ability but also gives its reason for the influx of Syrian refugees which “has severely strained the economy and public service delivery” and the explosion, which destroyed “the country’s largest port...Neighboring dense residential and commercial areas were severely damaged” (“State and Peace Building Fund 2020 Annual Report”, 2020:18). UN women reasons for Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund in “little-to-no capacity or resources to respond to the destruction” of the explosion. (“Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund Call for Proposal,” 2021:2). Although it does not mean that these events are minor or peripheral to Lebanese society

nowadays, the documents frame the funds as if there is no conflict or issue before these events.

Thirdly, the documents illustrate that the UN agencies hold liberal peacebuilding as their approach. As explained in the theoretical framework section, liberal peacebuilding has four main components: security sector reform, economic and political liberalization, and transnational justice (Shani, 2019:45). The first component mainly targets the official army and therefore is not the target of this thesis. However, it is noteworthy that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose main mission is to train the Lebanese Armed Forces, gained a budget amounted to \$480 million between 2021 to 2022 (“Budget for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022: report of the Secretary-General”, 2021:3) while the total amount of fund to Lebanon in 2021 was \$1,056 million received by pillars of social (\$943M), political/peace and security/governance (\$41M), environment (\$36M), and economy (\$36M) (“2021 UN Country Annual Results Report Lebanon”, 2021:28). It is unknown how much money had used for training of Lebanese Armed Force, yet it was huge compared to the other pillars.

Coming back to the analysis of calls for proposals and the related documents which directly influence the local NGOs’ activities, three calls for proposal focus on economic and political liberalization, second and third components of liberal peacebuilding. World Bank’s State and Peace Building Fund aimed at providing direct support to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises affected by the Port of Beirut explosion to “strengthen their resilience” to the fragility of the state (“State and Peace Building Fund 2020 Annual Report”, 18). However, as pointed out in the literature review, what the local Lebanese activists demand is an assurance of public services to

ease the burdens on the people, not the strengthening of private enterprises. Yet, the World Bank focuses on strengthening open and active private enterprises, and it suggests a belief of the World Bank in the economic liberalization to solve the problem. It is also possible to analyze that UNDP's call for proposal in 2017, "Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities," is on the same idea of economic liberalization. This call was for projects to economically empower vulnerable Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese women living in the Sabra area in Beirut to address increased insecurities and conflict arising from gender inequality (LEB/CO CFP/26/17, 2017:1). The idea of empowering women as agents of peacebuilding, not reducing them to the victims of violence, arose from the post-Western critique and postcolonial feminism (Shani, 2019:45). However, Eric Awich Ochen (2017), a scholar researching women empowerment projects in Uganda, discusses that the project empowering women's role would be based on western-oriented idea premised on neo-liberal development ideologies and may not be sustained or maintained in the local societies (23). This is because it may break families and not ensure family stability as they wish. The negotiation for gender freedom is taken place at different levels of society, such as individuals, inter-male female relationships, family between families, and inter-communal levels (ibid.), not as the Western-oriented idea assumes 'free individuals. The critique is applicable to the analysis of UNDP's call for women's economic empowerment and calls into question the feasibility of the UNDP's project.

For political liberalization, UN Women and UNESCO step in. UN women tried to promote women's participation in the election, and UNESCO aimed to support youth so that the election would be taken place competitively and equally, and with accountability ("Call for Proposals: Youth as Agents for Change During Elections

[Lebanon],” n.d.). At the same time, similar to economic liberalization, their efficiencies are questionable. Lara Khattab (2010) highlights that USAID funding for a campaign to encourage women’s participation contributed to reinforcing and maintaining the existing sectarian system as the municipal elections involve kinship, confessional and sectarian structures. She argues, “the increased participation of women in municipal elections does not ensure the adoption of a women’s rights agenda... [but rather, let women to] to take part in the same system that deprives them of their rights”. This critique applies to the UN women’s case and raises the question of to what extent the UN women takes the local condition into account. On the other hand, while UNESCO understands that youth do not have the right knowledge for the election, research in 2018 shows that 76% of Lebanese youth answered that they would participate in the parliamentary election in 2020, and 83% of those who will participate the election have already chosen the list or candidate they will vote for (“Election Polling Survey Lebanese Youth Segment,” 2018:13). Considering this context, UNESCO thought that the youth idea and choice is not ‘right’ to rebuild the politics, and it should be changed. This attitude appears to be a ‘liberal peace project’ for “a re-shaping that would correct, so to speak, the ‘failure’ of states” (Jabri, 2013:8-10), which the theoretical framework pointed out. These cases demonstrate that the political liberalization promoted by the UN agencies should be critically reviewed as economic liberalization.

Another feature among the documents is that many of these calls for proposal by UN agencies have the sentence emphasizing centered on local needs. For example, UNDP’s 2018 call for proposals mentions, “the needs of local groups will be integrating theater as an additional tool for social cohesion aiming at creating more platforms for dialogue and interactions between diverse groups” (“UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building

Project. NGO to implement MSS through Playback Theater (last phrase)”, 2018:1). UN women’ 2021 call also declares “The call for proposal at hand embodies both the feminist and localization approach..., which prioritizes and values a bottom-up vision to addressing complex problems in the field” (“Supporting work on women’s political participation and women, peace, and security in Lebanon,” 2021:4). OCHA designs Lebanon Humanitarian Fund for, “the needs of affected communities are outpacing the resources and capacities of partners” (Lebanon Humanitarian Fund Standard Allocation March – May 2018 Allocation Strategy Paper:1). Nevertheless, these calls do not show how they found the local needs in the situation that some projects are not designed to answer the local needs as analyzed above. At the same time, others are positioning themselves on the needs yet, are unclear about whose need they address. For example, the UNDP call for proposal in 2017 mentions, “there is a need for increased involvement and interventions from peace-building and social stability actors to address the existing conflict” (“UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building Project: Conflict analysis and Mapping in Lebanon,” 2017:1). UNESCO’s call also does not make clear whose need for, “they [young Lebanese] need to learn, exercise their rights, and discover the power of their votes” (“Call for Proposals: Youth as Agents for Change During Elections [Lebanon],” n.d.). However, it is unclear whose need they are addressing. As pointed out above, there is a chance that intervening power in the society would have other motivations than working for the society for the society’s end. The ‘need’ would be the intervening powers’ need for their interest.

Besides reasonings and rationalizations, two logistical patterns emerge from the analysis. The first is the high level of application eligibility. Three calls from UNDP (two calls in 2017, one in 2022) limit its eligibility to NGOs that previously cooperated

with UN organizations and/or international NGOs, and two calls from UN Women and World Bank even do not allow the local NGOs directly apply the calls. Also, some have the capacity requirements such as a capacity and recourses to support trainees asked by UNDP 2017 call and a permanent office in the project location are set by the UN Women 2021 call. As the literature review indicated, it may be a higher barrier and exclusion factor for the small local NGO to access the fund.

Another potential barrier for the local NGOs regarding logistics in the calls of the proposal is the duration of the project. The average duration of funds revealed in the calls is 11 months. The shortest is five months by UNESCO for youth empowerment for election, and the longest is three years by UN Women for women-led community dialogue and reconciliation. Although three years for community dialogue and reconciliation sounds durable, UNDP asks for capacity mechanism building of local authorities and actors to reduce tension by seven months. This short-term project and fund may also let the local NGOs to have difficulty maintaining their activities. These logistical barriers also corroborate the question of to what extent they want to answer the local need and carry out the project for the sake of the locals.

## ***2. State Agencies' Calls for Proposal***

Among state agencies, 22 sources appeared, including 20 corresponding calls for proposals and six related documents from five states, the US, EU, France, the UK, and German. Appendix I shows the details of the subject documents as well.

a. US

The US has seven corresponding funds to this research the most, and this might reflect the US's interest in Lebanese society. Among the documents, the US' reasonings for the funds are featured. Particularly, the US finds 'problems' in three different areas. The first is the lack of administrative capacity to deal with the current crisis and potential disaster. Several funds describe the government's poor work and inability to respond to the people's demand, particularly in the 2020 widespread demonstration. Indeed, the 2020 Local Capacity Strengthening for Response ("Local Capacity Strengthening for Response (LCS4R)", 2020) and 2020-2021 Initiative to Deliver Essential Assistance and Services are designed to build the capacity of the national governments. On the other hand, it also problematizes the lack of ability of local and civil society to bring transformation and change to the low-performance government. While it recognizes the local community as "often the best place to respond to disasters" ("Local Capacity Strengthening for Response (LCS4R)", 2020:7) and implementing citizen advocacy (SFOP0005628, 2019:1), the documents declare that civil society needs to be built capacity to make progress in Lebanon. That is why the six calls are focusing on the capacity building of civil society/non-governmental organizations (2017 Embassy local grants program, 2019 Men and Boys in Reducing Violence Against Women in Lebanon, 2020 Local Capacity Strengthening for Response, 2020-2021 Initiative to Deliver Essential Assistance and Services, 2021 Support for the Rule of Law, Independent Media, and Civil Society in Lebanon, 2023 Chemical Security Program). Lastly, but most significantly, the US finds the problem in the US national insecurity. This is obvious in the 2023 Chemical Security Program. It is designed to build state agencies, private sectors, and civil society's capacity to monitor and disrupt



the network of chemical weapons. The call criticizes Iran, the Assad regime, Russia, and North Korea by names as a user of the weapon and target of monitoring, who are the “enemies” of the US, and thus, it can be assumed that the fund is for the sake not only of Lebanon and its peace but also the US national security. It is noteworthy that the use of a chemical weapon is a crime against humanity according to international humanitarian law. On this point, the activities for the prevention of chemical weapon is more like mutual and common interest for all in theory. As well, practically, allowing the trade of chemical weapons on the black market will be able to cause risk in any place on the globe. Thus, this issue would not be reduced to the national interest. Yet, at the same time, it also needs to be critical geopolitically why the US cares about Lebanon in the Middle East, particularly with criticizing its enemies by their name. Moreover, it can be analyzed that all the US all projects are for its national security. In USAID country development cooperation strategy 2021-2026, which I include in the source for the research as a related document, there are the passages in the following,

The goal of USAID/Lebanon’s 2021-2026 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) is a stable, resilient Lebanon at peace with its neighbors (“Country development cooperation strategy”, 2021:1)

USAID’s strategic approach endeavors to maintain stability in an increasingly volatile and difficult operating context driven by sectarian tensions, violence stemming from tensions between refugees and host communities, increased food insecurity among Lebanese, and an economy in free fall. These challenging circumstances could create the perfect conditions for social unrest and violence. USAID strives to prevent the rise of violent extremism due to the presence of Hizballah (ibid :14)

These paragraphs indicate that getting rid of the risk of the further expansion of Hezbollah is the most important for peace in Lebanon in terms of geopolitics among Lebanon, Hezbollah, Israel, and Israel’s ally, the US. Thus, it can be discussed that the

problems of Lebanese society the US is declaring are framed by US geopolitics again nowadays, as the previous study pointed out.

Another feature of the US is the logistic aspect of the funds. Compared with some of the UN agencies, the level of qualifying requirement is not as much higher, but still challenging. The US puts a limitation of its fund to activities in Shia-majority areas due to the Hizballah's dominance, and the NGOs working in the region is automatically dropped. Even if the NGO pass the first barrier, they ask the NGOs to submit a decent number of documents such as a cover page, executive summary, table contents, proposal narrative, budget, budget narrative, logic model, monitoring and evaluation narrative, monitoring and evaluation plan, risk analysis, key personnel, timeline, security plan, lessons learned, psychosocial assistance, and reputation of the organization. In addition, for some funds, for example, 2012-2022 NGO Programs Benefiting Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations, the NGOs must compete for the fund with the INGOs and the UN agencies. The prospect for the local NGOs obtaining the fund would be limited because of the small size and budget of the organization.

b. EU

Contrary to the US, the EU is characterized by its acknowledgment of civil society. On the one hand, the calls indeed problematize “inequality, poverty, corruption, unemployment and poor quality and performance of public service delivery” (“the tensions rooted in the Lebanese society and exacerbated by the current crisis” (“EU 4 Social Cohesion in Lebanon”, 2020:4) and (“Support to Civil Society to improve governance and accountability in Lebanon,” 2021:4). On the other hand, the EU centers civil society in the funds’ plan. Notice that the titles use the word ‘support civil society,’

which reflects that the EU acknowledges civil society as it “fulfilled a positive role in mitigating the impact of the crises mainly on most vulnerable populations” (ibid.) and not as an actor need to be built its capacity.

At the same time, it cannot completely say that the EU does not have the ideological reasoning behind the funds. The fund of 2017 Supports Local Civil Society through Country-Based Support and clearly illustrates an underlying idea. The call starts from a section of background, and this paragraph,

The European Union (EU) is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, gender equality and the rule of law.... The Regulation’s principal objectives reflect... on the EU’s role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries and on a Thematic Programme for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide (“Targeting local civil society through Country-Based Support Schemes Lebanon”, 2017:4).

It can read that since the EU is founded on the liberal principle, it is universal norm that all parts of world need to adopt, and the EU has a mission to promote the norm in “third countries”. The usage of the word of “third country” recollects third world in where the matrix of colonial power has historically been exercised.

It can read that since the EU is founded on the liberal principle, it is a universal norm that all parts of the world need to adopt, and the EU has a mission to promote the norm of liberal peace in “third countries.” The usage of the word “third country” recollects the third world in which the matrix of colonial power has historically been exercised.

Considering this perspective, the EU’s other rationale would appear. The fund for 2022 Disaster Management, Port Governance and Maritime Reform for Economic Recovery is designed to improve the accountability of national institutions responsible

for the security and safety of the population (“Disaster management, port governance and maritime reform for economic recovery,” 2022:4-5). At the same time, the call has another rationale; “addresses as well EU priorities set out in the New EU Agenda for the Mediterranean” (ibid, 5), which is the EU policy to “strengthened Mediterranean partnership remains a strategic imperative for the European Union, as the challenges the region continues” (“Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new agenda for the Mediterranean,” 2021). The new agenda continues in the following,

As the challenges the region continues to face require a common response, especially ten years after the Arab Spring. By acting together, recognising our growing interdependence, and in a spirit of partnership, we will turn common challenges into opportunities, in our mutual interest (ibid.).

Same as or more than the case of the US as a neighboring region, the New EU Agenda for the Mediterranean recognizes the mutual interests of the region and the EU. At the same time, this policy indicates that peace and security in the region is a matter of the EU, which is the main motivation for why the EU focused on peacebuilding in Lebanon.

The logistics for the funds by the EU are relatively loose. The calls do not ask for working experience with international organizations, having an office in the project area, or setting a short term for the project. The EU funds set at least two years for the project and guarantee the NGOs’ activities. On the other hand, all of them require a stable and sufficient source of finance. By the nature of the local NGOs, whose main financial recourse is the temporal funds from the international donor, it is still a difficult requirement and excluding factor for the local NGOs.

c. France

As a former suzerain state of Lebanon, France still gathers attention and, interestingly, support from the Lebanese. It is tested that the people voted for France as the most net positive appraisals in 2006 (Burkholder, 2006) and that the Lebanese, regardless of the religious sectors, favor strengthening the relationship with France in 2021 (“Crisis of Confidence: Lebanese Reflect on Their Crisis, Their Institutions, and Their Future,” 2021:9). An argument of why Lebanese support the former suzerain state and France remember the history in the way are not the main topic of this thesis, but it shows that France and its policy still have a huge impact on the Lebanese society. In return, France also shows interest in “intervention.” A recent accounted strategy report, 2018-2022 Prevention, Resilience, and Sustainable Peace, does not exclusively focus on Lebanon, but some of the corresponding calls for proposal follow manifest it in this paragraph,

France has historical ties, similar administrative, legal and constitutional systems and shares a common language with several third countries (most notably French-speaking countries in sub-Saharan Africa) which gives it certain comparative advantages, including in-depth knowledge of the areas of intervention. The importance of the levers of action that France can mobilize in fragile contexts gives it undeniable added value in these geographical areas (“Prevention, Resilience, and Sustainable Peace (2018-2022)”, 2018:19)

It would be surprising that the former suzerain recognizes the history of colonization positively. This discourse indicates that France holds the matrix of colonial power and enjoys the intervention as dominating country.

Moreover, it is visible that the call overemphasizes the fragility in terms of violence in order to rationalize her intervention. The call for proposal for the 2022

«Neighborhood Approach» Program cites ARK/UNDP tensions monitoring survey to say, “the propensity to violence is on the rise, negative perceptions between Lebanese and Syrians and increasingly between Lebanese communities are at their highest and speeches are very polarized” (“Call for proposals – LEBANON – « Neighborhood Approach » program: local development, social cohesion, access to urban infrastructures in vulnerable neighborhoods impacted by the Syrian crisis,” 2022:26). It is not false, but the description would not accurately grasp the context. In terms of perceptions between Lebanese and Syrian have been worsening as the original ARK/UNDP report mentions, “Syrians provided a significantly worse report of the quality of relations in Wave XI [August 2021]” (“Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave XI Narrative Report,” 2021:3). However, while the divergence of the result up to the regions and Beqaa and the South marks “alarming trends” (ibid.), overall, 62.6% of Lebanese have neutral or positive perceptions. For the inter-Lebanese communities, the perception grew indeed negatively but “marginally” (ibid: ii). In addition to the perceptions, the report illuminates “the incidence of exposure [to violence] remained at or below the average observed across multiple waves (2017-2021)” (ibid:9)”. The gap between the original report and the usage of the report in the call by France would demonstrate that the call overemphasizes the violence in Lebanon to justify its intervention.

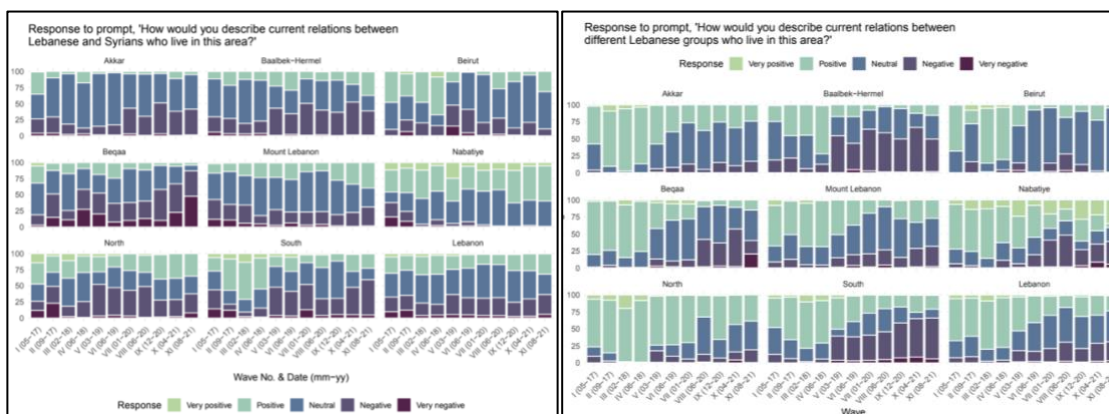


Figure 2: Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions

(Screenshotted from “Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave XI Narrative Report”)

On the other hand, French calls have another feature that acknowledge the local NGOs, which seem to be contrary to the first feature of undervaluing Lebanese society. A call evaluates the local NGOs as “play[ing] an essential role in crisis contexts in Lebanon, through their proximity to the most vulnerable populations and their presence in the most affected areas of the country... contribute to improving access to basic services in a context of saturation of public services...[and] also play a key role in strengthening social cohesion with the growing risk of community tensions” (“Multi-awarded framework agreement in the context of rapid response mechanism for the crisis in Lebanon,” 2022:4) and try to pump their structural ability up. The 2019 Shabake project recognizes,

Lebanese NGOs’ reliance on international donors and INGOs for funding means that most local NGOs suffer from a structural weakness and their agility is not entirely sustainable. This weakness hinders their growth and hampers the development of a robust national civil society.... The Shabake Project was born from a desire to support the localization of aid agenda and the need to strengthen Lebanese NGO capacities so that local responders can take the lead in responding to crisis (“the Shabake Project:

Strengthening resilience of Lebanese civil society in order to improve crisis prevention and management”, 2019:4-5).

This project funds the ‘partnered’ NGOs for their capacity-building plan to put their new institutional changes into practice and seems to be the NGOs’ centered. However, a critical analysis brings another point of view that the calls would be formulated as a result of undervaluing the local NGOs. The calls assume that the local NGOs are the ones who need to change to get prepared for the localized aid from the international donors to meet the requirements and criteria that the international donors set. It should be noticed that the power structure has not changed in the funds, and the local NGOs are undervalued in their ability.

This recognition of the local society is reflected in the high level of requirements for the application. For the funds designed to empower the NGOs, set criteria of a minimum yearly budget of 100 thousand USD (“Multi-awarded framework agreement in the context of rapid response mechanism for the crisis in Lebanon”) and 1.125 million USD or more (“the Shabake Project: Strengthening the resilience of Lebanese civil society to improve crisis prevention and management”), in addition to working experience with the international organization which is applied to the other funds as well. While the fund aims to empower the local NGOs, it is highly doubtful what kind of organizations can meet the requirement in the first place. It indicates the French assumption that only NGOs who meet the eligibility can only get recognition as ‘actors.’ This choosing and assigning ‘actor’ for the local society would inherit from the colonial domination structure.



d. UK

Among the main donors, the UK is featured by the obvious declaration of its funding purpose in a removal threat to UK national interests. There is one umbrella fund covering almost all the funds for Lebanon, named Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund. This fund was established in 2015 to “prevent conflicts and tackle threats to UK interests arising from instability overseas” (“Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund annual report 2020/21”, 2021:5). The report does not hesitate to rationalize the fund for the UK security interest. For example,

The UK’s national security, allowing terrorism and organized crime to spread, undermining the open and resilient international order that the UK is committed to building. The CSSF seeks to address these issues by preventing conflict, reducing violence, and helping states transition from violent conflict to sustainable peace. (ibid:11)

The UK Government is committed to improving resilience to threats from state actors, strengthening our national security and that of our international partners, and pre-empting new international threats (ibid:12)

CSSF-funded projects under the International Prevent Programme have supported partner countries to develop the capacity to identify, support and safeguard individuals who are at risk of radicalisation and recruitment leading to terrorism. In 2020, over 100 practitioners were trained to deliver early interventions in countries across Africa and the Middle East where the risk to UK tourists, residents and overseas workers is high (ibid:13)

These paragraphs demonstrate that the UK's priority is on the establishment of the status of stability for UK security, not the quality and context of the stability. In the report, the only part describing what kind of society the fund envisions is gender equality. It presents, “the UK Government’s commitment... recognizes that achieving gender equality and protecting women’s rights are imperative to all other peace and security

objectives” (ibid:14). However, there is no other part explaining the context of the stability.

Indeed, the associated programs under the fund for Lebanon focus on establishing a stable status. A summary of a program starting from 2016 explains its background, “Lebanon has long-standing structural risk factors for community tensions and violence....., the CSSF has a crucial role to play in promoting social stability” (“CSSF Programme Summary, Lebanon: Community Stability Programme,” 2022:2). There are several components in the program such as improving basic service and infrastructure to reduce inter- and intra-community grievances, supporting peacebuilding activities in the municipalities most vulnerable to community tensions, and capacity building to deal with needs in “‘hotspots’ and ‘areas of rising tension’” (“CSSF Programme Summary, Lebanon: Community Stability Programme,” 2019:2). Given the policy analyzed above, their exclusive focus on the ‘risk’ and ‘tension,’ suggests the underlying rooted motivation reduce the risk and build stability for the sake of UK national security. From this perspective, another associated fund (2020 CSSF Lebanon: Civil Society Democratic Reform) stating, “in line with its wider support for Lebanon and the Lebanese people,” can be analyzed critically. This fund supports civil society to promote the democratic reform agenda and processes (“CSSF Lebanon: Civil Society Democratic Reform,” 2022:1). However, it can be read that the reason for the fund is that the UK sees the risk of leaving behind “people in Lebanon [taking] to the streets across the country to protest, and press for change” (ibid:2019:2). At the same time, it should also be noted that straightly as the calls mention, the local needs for the security and stability would also be met by the projects and funds.

While these might answer the local needs, the funds are not able to support the local NGO's work as much to hear the local voices. Community Stability Programme does not open the local NGOs to be a partner but just places them as a recipient of support from the international NGOs. Although the other two funds are open to the local NGOs with relatively low requirements than others, these set the duration of projects to less than a year. As pointed out above, The short-term fund would decrease the mobility of the local NGOs and be challenging for the local NGOs to maintain their work.

e. Germany

While there are many funds and projects by German in Lebanon, the available sources for the funds and calls for proposals are limited. Yet, a German development agency provides the context behind its fund, and it emphasizes the social divide in Lebanon as follows,

Lebanon's society is divided: the lengthy civil war (1975 to 1990), the unrest in 2006 and 2008, the civil war in neighbouring Syria and the national, regional and religious fragmentation have left their mark on the social fabric. The lack of a state monopoly on the use of force, the continuing presence of civil war elites in political offices and the associated culture of impunity lead to recurring tensions between population groups.... Within Lebanese society and politics, religious affiliation plays an important role. It determines the structure of the education system, the media landscape, public administration and political representation.... In recent times, encounters between the groups have become increasingly difficult. Many people see themselves and their community as the sole victims and blame 'the others' for the precarious situation.... This is also reflected in the limited networking and cooperation within civil society, which, in turn, impedes peacebuilding efforts ("Civil Peace Service: Strengthening civil conflict transformation", n.d.).

Despite the evaluation, it is questionable if “in recent times, encounters between the groups have become increasingly difficult.” As the figure introduced above, the perception grew indeed negatively for the inter-Lebanese communities (“Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave XI Narrative Report,” 2021:3). At the same time, Lebanon witnessed wide national protest against the current government and confessional political system. Since then, more Lebanese, regardless of religious affiliations, have supported the October 17th Thawra movement (“Crisis of Confidence: Lebanese Reflect on Their Crisis, Their Institutions, and Their Future,” 2021:7). Moreover, there are certainly local organizations working for networking and cooperation beyond the social divides for the social dialogue and conflict transformations. The non-recognition or ignorance of the local initiative contributes to undermining the civil society structurally and on the discourse matter while the fund sets a goal to “support various platforms that facilitate intersocietal dialogue and increase the participation of young people” (“Civil Peace Service: Strengthening civil conflict transformation,” n.d.).

On the other hand, a call for proposals by a funding committee recognizes the work of the local initiatives. One available call for proposal by the organization mentions, “In recognition of these many personal and group initiatives that have been leading and contributing to the recovery efforts, this call seeks to support groups and organizations to go beyond immediate relief efforts and work” to the root causes of the blast nationwide. (“Call for Proposals: Special Projects-2 Lebanon”, 2020). Then, the project funds to multiple areas; initiatives and action in conflict transformation, dialogue, sociopolitical change and community mobilizing, accountability and transparency, and media and information with no high requirements for application

(ibid.), which makes it easier for the local NGOs. The gap between the state agency and its partner would be caused by a unique funding structure of German. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development rarely formulates projects with an understanding “the [local] situation cannot be overcome with state funding alone” (“Civil Peace Service: Global programme,” n.d.). The ministry established a network called Civil Peace Service, consisting of nine German peace and development organizations that run peacebuilding projects with local partners (ibid.). Therefore, it is unclear to what extent the state framing and evaluation of the problem is reflected in practice to the influence on the local NGOs.

f. Overall Pattern and Theme

While each state has its context and rationale, there are overarching patterns. The first theme is the underlying motivation for national security. As the above part analyzed in detail, the US, the EU, and the UK demonstrate the point. Although the EU emphasizes the mutual and common interests for security and stability between the EU and the region, the US and the UK do not hesitate to declare their own security interest. For the US, the presence and the activity of Hezbollah is a threat to its national security with the consideration of its ally, Israel. Therefore, the calls for proposals and funds are dominantly designed to suppress Hezbollah for national security. The UK does not present the target yet also formulates the funds to reduce the risk and maintain stability in the region. At the same time, the above analysis of the calls indicated that the calls and documents also point out that there are overlapping interests for the donors’ security and the local societies’ peacebuilding. This point will be explored further in the discussion session.

Secondly, the basic idea of the intervention is for liberal peace. While it is not introduced above but strengthening the capability of the national army is one of the main purposes for the UK's Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund ("Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund annual report 2020/21", 2021:11), which correspond with the first component of liberal peacebuilding, security sector reform. France also outlines the focal areas of the strategy in establishing and strengthening people's security and establishing open economic stability. Here, economic stability means not only enough employment and livelihoods ("Prevention, Resilience, and Sustainable Peace (2018-2022)", 2018:16) but also macroeconomic stability through "budget support can be mobilized swiftly for countries benefiting from an IMF program" (ibid:36). The point associates with the second component, liberalization of the economy. In addition to it, the state agencies also give another focal point in legitimizing the political system ("Prevention, Resilience, and Sustainable Peace (2018-2022)", 2018:16). Indeed, one call by France and another call by the UK deal with the election. The calls assume that the participation of Lebanese citizens and civil society in the election contributes to "inclusive, accessible, reliable and transparent democracy" ("Election 2022", 2020:2), which corresponds with political liberalization. For the fourth component, transnational justice, the US, the EU, and France focus on the judicial system and trial for the victims. Corresponding all four components illustrates that the state agencies tend to hold liberal peacebuilding for their principle.

Thirdly, the calls for proposals and related documents by the state agencies tend to undervalue Lebanese society. France overemphasizes the violence in society and problematizes the lack of the capability to manage the violence. Germany focuses on the social divide and diminishes the work of society to overcome the divide. The US

also underrates civil society to implement projects to deal with the issues in the country. The undervaluing of society and its capability also works to provide the justifications and rationales for the states to intervene in society through funding and projects. The last shared feature is that while there are many funds to ‘build’ and improve the capacity of civil society and NGOs, the requirements for the application are not open to many of the local NGOs practically and technically. The French fund named “Community Stability Programme” is not directly deal with the local NGOs, and most of the other funds set challenging requirements for the small local NGOs. Even though these are relatively loose compared to the ones by the UN agencies, nevertheless still cannot be analyzed as being open to the local NGOs and designed for the sake of supporting the NGOs. So far, this section outlines the findings from the discourse analysis of the donors’ calls for proposals and analyzes them. These findings will be deepened and examined in the discussion section on what kind of peace these dominant practices are trying to fix as colonial peace. At the same time, even before, these findings will be the reference for the following discourse analysis of the local NGO’s publications and interviews with the local NGOs.

## **B. The Local Peace-related NGOs’ Publications**

This section first introduces the eight local peace-related NGOs, Peace Labs, Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, March, Fighter for Peace, ACT for Disappeared, UMAM Documentation and Research, ALEF, and ABAAD. Then, it follows by showing the research findings from various types of publications written in English, such as their web pages, pamphlets, and reports by each organization. The subject publications are revealed in Appendix I.

### *1. Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace*

It is the oldest organization in this research and was established during the Lebanese civil war in 1987. A group of Lebanese came together regardless of the regions and communities and held a meeting “to protect civil peace and solidarity” (“History,” n.d.). Given the background of the establishment of the organization, it has the missions,

It aims at promoting theoretical and practical works concerning the Lebanese experience both a rich and painful episode. Common suffering can generate a renewed collective memory and a better immunized civil society against internal as well as external dangers. The Foundation has propagated concepts that had already been integrated into the Lebanese cultural field: the right to a memory, national contrition, the school of the people, the identity of our suffering, an analysis of war in its aftermath, an accounting approach of common properties (“Home”, n.d.).

Based on the understanding of “a better immunized civil society,” the organization believes LFPCP always believed that civil society has a pivotal role in fostering human rights, good governance, and peacebuilding (LFPCP: Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace since 1986, n.d.:2). It is worth to highlight that these norms are corresponding with the hierarchical morals which Kosmatopoulos (2021) points out.

In opposition to “a better immunized civil society,” the organization finds a problem in people and their behaviors. Whereas it does not meet the selection criteria for the research due to its publication data, there is one report giving the organization’s view on the problem of civic peace. This report lists five behaviors that disturb civil peace as follows:



1. Denunciation of the Lebanese Pact and the Baabda Declaration: those who condemn the “national commitments” ... to the National Agreement of Taef, threaten civil peace.
2. Those who impede the workings of the State: the whole concept of impediment does not exist in the legal systems around the world, either in the past or in the present. The main aim and purpose of the law is to regulate the relationship between citizens on the one hand, and between citizens and the State on the other, and to enable institutions to function. Those who disseminate and adopt a strategy of sabotage within the Parliament, in the government formation and action, in the institutions in general, as well as in their working continuity, threaten civil peace. Impediment, or rather sabotage, leads to an institutional vacuum, taking Lebanon towards the unknown and bringing back the Lebanese to over-saturated and never-ending discussions of the past, threaten the civil peace.
3. Non-citizens but clients: any subordinated Lebanese, dependent on a politician, with no discernment in his political commitment, threatens civil peace, for being easily mobilized for hidden...
4. Those who sit on the fence waiting for private advantage: those who pride themselves on being equidistant in relation to all parties. Instead of defending clear fundamental principles that could be raised by this group or another, are programmed to taking position. The equidistant waits for changes in the balance of power in order to side with the best party according to his private interest.
5. Every idle and irresponsible MP: Every MP who does not fulfill his responsibilities in legislating, particularly concerning an immediate approval of a new electoral law and blames external political powers for his irresponsibility, threatens civil peace ("The Institutions for the Preservation of Civil Peace in Lebanon Today", 2014)

In addition to these, this report also explains disturbing behavior for civil peace:

[those who says] “there is no State in Lebanon”, an expression said and repeated by a large part of the population; including deputies, general managers, and civil servants, who receive wages that come from public funds provided by this same State. This attitude borders on pathology (ibid).

These statements convey that the organization believes in the need to change the civil culture to create a qualified civil society for supporting the state. It indicates that the organization potentially sees the Lebanese people and society as an “uncivil society” (Kosmatopoulos, 2021: 270).

At the same time, the report mentions a problem in the political institution as well.

Institutions first: institutions' regularity and continuity in compliance with the constitutional norms and standards are the only guarantors of civil peace. The Lebanese are in need of a national reawakening.

Therefore, it is shown that the organization locates the problems both in the civil culture disturbing the state governance and non-working state governance itself.

For the first problem, the disturbing civil culture, the organization has projects to work for example, with women to strengthen their capacities on conflict transformation and non-adversarial advocacy, youth for human rights education, and with community members to raise the voting rate to change the people ("Activitiets," n.d.). In addition, it also tackled the religious courts in Lebanon. A project targeted six different religious courts, developed the assessment reports and recommendations, and shared them at the meetings with the key persons from the courts (LFPCP: Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace since 1986, n.d.:17-18). These practices would indicate that they adopt the Western technique of peacebuilding, and the usage of the technique would justify intervening in the community. While they had activities with the religious leaders, it was also to enhance human rights in the religious courts and therefore stands on the consensus on human rights and secular globalization. In this sense, the adaptation of the technique would constitute the hierarchy and master peace over the local community.

For the second problem, non-working state governance, the organization has a project aiming to enhance collaboration between the broad-based civil society organizations' coalitions and government stakeholders to identify necessary reforms

and to protest civic space (LFPCP: Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace since 1986, n.d.:10). Moreover, not only reaching out to the government, but the organization also make an influence on the governmental policies. For example, the current two projects focus on advocacy for specific policies for public-private partnerships and genetic testing and food security to the relevant ministries (“Activities,” n.d.). These activities seem less relevant to the organizational mission, which is still within its target, good governance. A reason for engaging in the less relevant activities would be because it responded to the donor’s framing projects. Both current advocacy projects are within the framework of the USAID funds (“Transparency guide for procurement in PPPs,” 2019:9; “Building a Rule of Law Society: to Enhance Bases of Democratic Governance and Rule of Law,” 2017:8). To certify, the reasoning of the project, “Enhancing Transparency in Public-Private Partnerships, and Small and Medium Enterprises” are for “many of the recommendations of the International Donors (IMF’2018) and Firms (McKinsey & Co...)” have advised for “strengthening the public investment management framework before undertaking large investment projects” and also for “making the procurement system transparent” (“Transparency guide for procurement in PPP's,” 2019:9). Thus, while it can be analyzed under one of their focuses of good governance and the rule of law, it is possible to analyze that the organization adopted the donors’ framings and defined problem.

## ***2. Peace Labs***

Peace Labs is a non-profit organization founded in 2012 “to advance peace work in the Middle East” such as dialogue facilitation, training, coaching, technical support,

grants, and in-kind contributions (“About us,” n.d.). While it does not provide a specific definition of ‘peace,’ its location of a problem as the axis of ‘peace’ can be read from the organization’s value:

International and local organizations in the peacebuilding realm are committed to reaching the same goal – a violent-free Middle East.... Conflict often results in grievances in society, whether expressed violently or not.... [and] every conflict is unique to the community which it impacts across the Middle East. Accordingly, Peace Labs tailors its programs by integrating the needs of local communities through active listening and scientific methodologies (“About us,” n.d.).

Notably, the organization understands that the Middle East is “violent” in general, and the cause of violence is rooted in the society generating grievances. Also, it assumes that the local organization shares the understanding of violence with the international organization.

On the assumption, their main activities are “advance peace work” (“About us,” n.d.), such as “dialogue facilitation, training, coaching, technical support, grants, and in-kind contributions” (“About us,” n.d.). The description of technical support demonstrates the organization’s assumption that there is no peace work in the Middle East, and it needs to support with its peace work technic. Similar to or more visibly than the Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace, it can be analyzed that Peace Labs refers to the hierarchical technique of peacebuilding.

At the same time, it is important to see where in society the organization sees a cause of violence. Another part of their introduction of the organization mentions that it is “addressing and analyzing the root causes and adopting a long-term programming approach” to answer, “local needs and requirements at the core of the process” (“About us,” n.d.). Yet, it is uncertain from this part how deep the root of the cause they are

targeting and addressing is. A report of a reconciliation project in Tripoli to which a president of the organization contributed to writing would answer the question and, additionally, provide their view on Lebanon specifically. The report explains the context and background of the project,

[After the 2012 clash in Tripoli], the Government of Lebanon... started implementing a security plan in Tripoli, putting an end to the numerous rounds of clashes and returning normalcy to the city.... This plan, though, did not take into account a systematic process to reconcile[ation, nor] did it make...any attempts to address the city's developmental needs, especially in the mostly impoverished and underdeveloped areas... The "Plan" mainly tackled the security aspect, which included a large number of detainees and "Wanted" individuals. But despite all this dysfunctionality on a higher level and the socio-economic pressure..., the security plan still holds in Tripoli, and the LAF continues to maintain a presence in the city, making sure that normalcy is sustained as long as a political umbrella is provided (Al Ayoubi, 2017:13-14).

This explanation of context locates the problems that generate violent clashes at the lack of a serious reconciliation process and of addressing the socio-economic pressure and the forced normalcy, and thus, it can be analyzed that the organization sees the larger root cause of the violence. Additionally, the description of "normalcy" is interesting to highlight here as well. This word "normalcy" could be paraphrased as the society is functioning, and the people live as usual, which does not look like a problem at first glance. However, the report and organization problematize normalcy since it is awkwardly maintained by force.

These locations of the problem disagree with international funds in several aspects. Firstly, the organization deals with the Lebanese historical conflict. Therefore, its activities for historical conflict in Lebanon do not correspond with the many funds on peacebuilding targeting conflict, which is supposed to be caused by the Syrian

refugee influx by particularly UN agencies. Secondly, the organizational focus differs from the international donors, this one specifically the state agencies. As the previous part illustrates, one of the features of the state agencies' funds is to maintain stability for security. Therefore, a strategy is enhancing the presence and capacity of the national army to control society. In other words, as long as the army can remove the risks of threatening the stability and managing society, the donors are fine and do not provide the funds. Notwithstanding, the organization problematizes the reinforcement of the army to maintain "normalcy" and tries to break and dig into the "normalcy" to tackle the root causes. Therefore, the directions that the many funds and the organization draw go opposite. From these aspects, it is not challenging to assume that they have a hard time getting funds from the donors at this point as well.

At the same time, their website introduces USAID as their donor (do not provide the details of what activities get funded under what project). This means that they somehow manage to get funds from the donor with a different vision. It should also be noted that the report, "the roadmap to 'Reconciliation in Tripoli: creating an inclusive progress for launching a communal reconciliation in Tripoli,'" which I deeply explored, is not open source updated on their website, but I got from the president of the organization. Thus, it might be possible that they do not demonstrate their true vision but reshape their strategy depending on the donors' intention.

### **3. *March***

March is a Lebanese NGO founded in 2011. While it started its work advocating for freedom of expression and intercommunal acceptance and respect, in 2015, when the clash between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli ended, it expanded its

work in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the area in Tripoli (“Get to know us,” n.d.). That is why it has a belief in arts and culture as powerful catalysts of change” and develops “a unique initiative, Theater for Reconciliation” (ibid.)<sup>5</sup>. Yet, it is questionable where the organization got the idea of the theater and how it interfered with the community. At the same time, their activities are not limited to art but board the rehabilitative program. It has a mission to “develop the resilience of marginalized youth and help them to build a better future while encouraging constructive dialogue and fostering cross-communal acceptance and respect to create sustainable reconciliation” (“Our mission,” n.d.). This mission illuminates the organizational understanding of Lebanese society that the cross-communal divides are still present, and the youth are mainly subject to the divide. It indeed declares in its publications,

Due to Tripoli’s ecosystem, the area has constituted fertile grounds for conflict over the years. Local youth had been subjected to extreme socio-economic conditions that had made them susceptible to sectarian narratives (“Giving youth an opportunity at a better future,” 2020)

Much like in Tripoli, sectarian tensions remain quite prominent in the capital, and traces of the civil war still gravely affect its most marginalized communities (ibid.).

Also, as the cited sentence mentions, the organization does not recognize the youth as violent but understands the extreme socio-economic conditions make the youth vulnerable to the divisive sectarian narrative. Indeed, the organization introduces the voices of the youth on its webpage.

---

<sup>5</sup> This initiative started in after the Tripoli clash in 2015 and is now considered as “one of the various successful conflict resolution tools that March implemented... [as] allow[ing] participants to process any political, religious, or personal grievances... and better understand ‘the others’” (“Project: Theatre”, n.d.). This approach to theater would connect to UNDP strategy of theater which was in 2018, and it might provide the idea of theater. At the same time, a question is still left if UNDP conducted the need assessment for their strategy in their target areas.

We were raised with the idea of eliminating the other and that if I didn't fight the other side, he would eliminate me and displace me from my home and nationhood. Inside me, an immense sense of hatred was born when my friend was killed by a sniper in front of my eyes. And this gave me greater reason and motivation to participate in the clashes even if it kills me ("Giving youth an opportunity at a better future," 2020).

Poverty and lack of jobs, most of all, are stateless like me. I am stateless because my father didn't register me. Someone would come and offer me 50,000 LL to go and to throw out, and I would do it. 50,000LL in the pocket was a big deal during the clash (ibid.).

The fact that the organization publishes these testimonies indicates that the organization understands the youth as the victims of the inherited sectarian narrative and the poor socio-economic conditions. Moreover, it believes that the youth can shift the distorted perceptions to the other and transcend "the false stereotypical perceptions they had inherited from their respective environments" (ibid.).

At the same time, the organization points out a deficiency of civil society organizations working on the problem. It recognizes that "CSOs often employed short-term relief strategies that had proven to be insufficient in countering the cross-generational sectarian resentment and the wave of violence the area had been witnessing" ("Giving youth an opportunity at a better future," 2020). That is why the organization designed a long-term rehabilitation and reintegration program for the youth, such as "The Rebuilders Initiative," which recruited vulnerable youth, such as ex-fighters who had taken part in the clashes from both sides to rebuild destroyed neighborhoods and to run the small business there (ibid.).

In this sense, the organization shares the idea with international donors that civil society cannot transform politics and structure. Yet, their critiques are divergent. The international donors do not acknowledge the organizations, including March, but



conclude that there is no capacity in a civil society. In addition to it, while March criticizes civil society organizations for short-term relief strategies, it can be examined the reason for the lack of long-term projects would be due to the lack of funding for them. As analyzed in the former section, many funds are short-term, less or around one year. Thus, although the two of them share the critique for the Lebanese organization, the contexts contract and should be critically considered.

Having pointed out the duration of the fund, they seem to have a strategy to maintain the funds. On their website, they introduce, “MARCH’s sustainability is ensured through an ever-growing network of both local and international support, partnerships and collaborations,” and the British embassy is the first on the list of donors. There were no available sources of the British embassy funds for the local NGO, yet it is feasible that the fund follows the UK umbrella policy, which the former section explored. The UK focuses on social stability removing risk factors for community tensions and violence, and therefore, March’s work to tackle the tension and violence clash in Tripoli and Beirut corresponds to the UK policy. Nevertheless, it is unclear if and so how the fund is applied to the holistic approach of long-term rehabilitation, which the organization particularly works for.

#### ***4. Fighters for Peace***

Fighters for Peace was founded in 2013 by five ex-fighters of the Lebanese civil war as a reaction to the clash in Tripoli. Now it has developed to reach around 50 ex-fighters from different political, religious, and social backgrounds. The organizational mission is “to engage not only the youth and civil society activists but in particular our fellow ex-fighters, in order to build a lasting civil peace and a true reconciliation in

Lebanon” (“Our Story,” n.d.). As the ex-fighters inherited “a centuries-old culture of sectarian strife,” made the “mistake” of fighting in which “we destroyed our humanity more than anything else, and we killed our souls with every soul that fell because of us” and know “everyone loses a civil war - even whoever thinks has won. There is nothing other than death and destruction”(“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter,” n.d.), they engage in activities to prevent youth from committing the same mistake and to move to reconciliation (“Fighter for Peace,” 2019:4). Thus, their main activities are visiting schools and conducting dialogue sessions, building an online museum of testimonies, reaching out to the community, psychosocial support to former fighters, and delivering training on peacebuilding and reconciliation (“Our Story,” n.d.).

These missions and activities are based on the organization’s assumption of the current Lebanese society as follows,

Although the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990, due to the absence of a national reconciliation process and the failure to change the sectarian political system, Lebanon remains a deeply divided country. The political, religious, and societal divisions surface more readily in interfacing communities with a history of tensions. This is where FFP has been primarily focused (“Fighter for Peace,” 2019:10).

This statement shows the organization’s understanding of violence and peace. It firstly problematizes the fighting itself and, therefore, it tries to help the youth who are vulnerable to the violence, and also those who are “currently engaged in violence” to walk away from the fighting, to “find an alternative sense of purpose and belonging, [to] train them, and then puts them in the front line for the fight for peace and the prevention of violent extremism” (“Fighter for Peace,” 2019:4). Secondly, the organization finds a problem in the divided society and “old culture...denies the right of the other to have a different opinion and...resorts to violence” as the only right way to

solve the conflict with others (“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter,” n.d.). Thus, it uses the ex-fighters' authority as former community leaders to “dovetail with their capacity as trained inside mediators to bridge divided communities” (“Fighter for Peace,” 2019:10). In addition to it, another problem the organization outlines is the sectarian political system which has been an obstacle to the reconciliation and stirs people to the violence. The organization explains that the political leaders spread “the divisive discourse” (ibid:7) and “actually count on using peoples fears and using the consequences of war to benefit and gain power” (“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter,” n.d.). To sum up, the organization finds the problem in the individual, resorting to fighting, the society and culture, dividing people from each other and inculcating fighting as the only solution, and politics, blocking the reconciliation between people and taking advantage of the divide.

Accordingly, the web page declares, “We, the former fighters, have agreed to give up this culture of killing...and to create a new culture that respects diversity and works to protect it under the system of democracy” (“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter,” n.d.). While this statement refers to belief, culture, and system, it can be read that the organization thinks that peace would be “choose dialogue” instead of killing (“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter,” n.d.), and addressing the individual level can eventually lead peace. Indeed, a pamphlet argues its activities “support critical thinking skills in youth and encourage audiences to reflect on their identity and co-existence with others...[and] provid[e] the predominantly youth audience with alternative role models that help disturb the divisive discourse of political leaders that can lead to violent extremism” (“Fighter for Peace,” 2019:8).

A reason for focusing on individuals would be that the organization believes in the capacity of individuals. There are several video testimonies uploaded on their website as ‘oral history,’ and the oral history tells the story of individual transformation. A video by an ex-fighter and one of the founding members of the organization talks about,

Maybe as much as I distanced myself, I started reflecting on my personal experience inside the war, how I changed, how I saw things, and what I did during the war. The maturity which did not occur at a blink of an eye, and the development in my awareness [was] starting from a spiritual and social awareness when I met ‘the other’ and saw him as he is and felt his intuition and what we have done to Lebanon. [and I realize that]what happened to the previous generations shall never happen again. It should not happen again because it’s wrong and because bloodsheds and violence generate the same thing. And violence is not a solution, and we can make a change at the level of our relations with others, Muslims and Christians, Christians among each other, and Muslims among each other. It is not necessary at all to go through this bloody violent experience (“Assad Final,” n.d.).

The other, by a resident in Tripoli, shares his thought:

Every time and every resident of Tripoli will confirm we do not linger at the negative and harmful incidents. We have inside us a Phoenix, and like it, we rise and shake off the dust and rebuild our buildings, and we keep the smile on our faces. I’ve been in this shop for 50 years and seen all kinds of people. I’ve closed many times, I’ve had economic hardships with work... but I repeat, we have a love for tomorrow. We are not mummies. And we don't want to remember only the troublesome times. No! We are capable! I have to protect tomorrow. and My place is to protect my city so it gathers all minds and cultures and becomes a beacon for peace because in my presence here, in my name, in this hundreds of years old shop. I represent civilization and culture, and this culture continuously calls for gathering, love, and peace. Our motto when we greet each other is "peace be upon you," so we should look upon each other with eyes full of love, love, and love (“The shop owner: Shams El Dine Hadaz,” n.d.).

The fact that the organization uploads these videos as testimonies show that the organization believes in the people's capability to transform and live for 'peace' in the sense of building/maintaining peaceful relationships between individuals.

One interesting finding from the discourse analysis is that the organization gets found from the German foreign office, which commissions the German Agency for International Cooperation. As revealed in the above part, the German Agency for International Cooperation undervalues civil society and its ability to overcome the social divide. The evaluation is a complete contrast to the organization's understanding of individual capability. However, the organization keeps the position and message in the way the donor can see and, therefore, it can be assumed that the organization manages to deal with the donor's perspective and value.

##### ***5. ACT for Disappeared***

Act for Disappeared was founded in 2010 as a Lebanese human rights organization working on issues of the disappeared persons in the Lebanese civil war. It works for two missions; bring answers to the thousands of families of the missing and forcibly disappeared in the families' demand to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones and initiating a sustainable peacebuilding reconciliation process in Lebanon in the interest of bringing recognition to the victims and enabling collective healing. The linking peacebuilding process and recognition of the victim and enabling collective healing displays their definition of 'peace' relates to the memory and dealing with the past. In reality, it is shown by an explanation of the Lebanese context in the reports,

The Committee of the Families of the Missing and Kidnapped realized, through bitter experience, that true peace will never be based on "letting bygones be bygones," nor will it be founded on laws which absolve those

who committed the crimes while marginalizing the victims ("Do not let my story end here," 2018a:5).

Among the war's numerous victims are the missing and forcibly disappeared, whose victimhood carries on to this day as the injustice is perpetuated by the absence of answers for the families.... The families of the missing continue to endure severe psychological harm caused by prolonged uncertainty regarding the fate of their loved ones, as well as economic, legal, and administrative difficulties due to the disappearance ("MHPSS Guidelines for Working with the Families of the Missing in Lebanon," 2022:6-7).

The connection between "true peace" and "marginalizing the victims" who suffer from "psychological harm caused by prolonged uncertainty" indicates that in their understanding, the "psychological harm caused by prolonged uncertainty" is placed in the axis of peace. While the organization does not frame the uncertainty and harm as violence, it understands that this psychological harm develops the conflict. In the organization's words, it states, "This unresolved trauma... forms the basis of historical myths that are being regularly activated by political figures in Lebanon and provide fertile ground for mistrust and conflict" ("Context," n.d.). Nevertheless, from its definition of peace, it is revealed that the removal of the fertile ground of conflict is the secondary reason and mission for the activities, and the organizations will work even though and when the ground does not develop conflict. This attitude, "seeking to support the families of the missing and disappeared in their demand" ("MHPSS Guidelines for Working with the Families of the Missing in Lebanon," 2021), does not indicate they enjoy the hierarchy over the community.

On the mission, it performs activities such as advocacy that the search process for the missing and forcibly disappeared is initiated by the government, collecting and preserving information on the fate of the missing and disappeared, and generating the spaces for interactions between the youth and the victim. Among the activities, the

organizations put weight on advocacy. This is reflected in their understanding of by where the issue of “psychological harm” and “unresolved trauma” is caused. In their other publication, the organization explains,

Since the end of the war, the Lebanese authorities have adopted various measures aiming at closing – but without resolving – the issue of enforced disappearances.... the Lebanese judicial authorities, which are responsible for the exhumation and identification of bodies, fail to disclose any information on the progress of their work and about what they do with the remains when these are found.... Lebanon has the capacity to exhume the human remains that are found and identify them. So it is possible to address this issue if there is a political will to do so. ("Retrospective," n.d:5-9).

It demonstrates that the organization recognizes that the issue is caused by the lack of willingness of the Lebanese authority. In another paragraph, to introduce their activity for the intergenerational interaction, they employ the word “political violence” to describe this problem ("Do not let my story end here," 2018b:46). With the previous point, it can be summarized that the political violence of the unwillingness of Lebanese politicians causes this issue of the psychological harm and obstruct “the true peace.”

It should be highlighted that the framing of the problem is different from the ones by international donors. The organization acknowledges the people’s work and abilities to tackle the issue. One of the publications introduces the works of families of disappeared before the establishment of the organization,

On November 17, 1982, families who did not have information on the whereabouts of their relatives gathered for the first time at Corniche el Mazraa, Beirut. Since this date, the families never stopped to organize sit-ins and demonstrations in order to make their voices heard and to ask for help in finding their “disappeared” ("Retrospective," n.d:3).

In addition, the organization declares that the only solution to solve this problem is “more people support the cause of the missing and disappeared [creates] chances we have to see solutions implemented by the Lebanese authorities” (“Retrospective,” n.d:15) and asks people to sign to a petition to submit to the authorities. Note that their approach is not ‘capacity building of civil society’ on the assumption that civil society needs to be built a capacity but rather asking for the cooperation of the people who influence to change the politics.

On the other hand, the organization got funds from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the EU. As was the case of Fighters of Peace, the organizational understanding of the ability of people and civil society and of the place of the problem opposes what the German institute frames. However, they manage to maintain this approach and belief in the capacity of people in their publications. Regarding the EU, the organizational activities correspond to the EU mission, “promoting human rights” (“Targeting local civil society through Country-Based Support Schemes Lebanon,” 2017:4) in the sense of guaranteeing the humanitarian law of the right to know of disappeared and reflecting the peoples’ demand and voices. Therefore, it might be possible that the organization took advantage of the donor’s position and got funds.

## **6. *UMAM Documentation and Research***

This is a Lebanese NGO that was co-founded in 2005 by Lokman Slim and Monika Borgmann. The organization was co-directed by the two until February 3, 2021, when Slim was assassinated in Lebanon. The truth of the assassination of Slim is not revealed due to the lack of full investigation at present, but one of the reasons would be



his<sup>6</sup> and the organization's location of the problem. The organization started from a conversation among friends and colleagues from different backgrounds, all of whom were concerned with the state of Lebanese affairs and the direction of the country. Particularly, they worried that there is "an exigent need to discuss Lebanon's conflict-rich history stripped away of revisionist narratives and sectarian attitudes... [and] the country was still hesitant to engage in dialogue over what happened during the war, opting instead for self-imposed amnesia" ("Who we are," n.d.). For the amnesia, on the one hand, the organization criticizes,

Lebanese political elites and governmental officials [that] continue to ignore, or at least feign ignorance, of the gravity of Lebanon's violent past...[and] tangentially, sects and communities within the country [that] continue to build their respective myths, narratives, and histories, none of which hesitate to leverage strained, fragmented memories for the achievement of short-term political gains" ("history," n.d.).

To tackle amnesia, the organization works to weave history. It corrects periodicals, publications, written documents, audio-visual material, and other archival assets about the Lebanese civil war and serves archives both materially and digitally. It also summarizes the rich amount of information, publishes reports about the history of Lebanon and the civil war, and organizes events to tell the stories of the history ("Who we are," n.d.). For example, on international justice day in 2022, they organized an event named "Justice for Lebanon" to hold a roundtable discussion on justice and accountability in Lebanon, accompanied by a photo exhibition and screening of

---

<sup>6</sup> Slim was one of the most outspoken Shia critics against Iran-backed Hezbollah. He criticized that Hezbollah and the Syrian government were linked to the explosive material that caused the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 in one of his last media appearances. It is testified that Hezbollah had threatened Slim several times before the assassination (Chehayeb, 2022).

messages from victims and the rule of law defenders. They explain the background as follows:

Spanning from the civil war to the present day, perpetrators of political crimes evade arrest, and investigations remain incomplete in Lebanon. Throughout the country's history, the few cases of justice rendered for select political crimes constitute the exceptions that nonetheless confirm the rule of impunity.... This need is even more urgent as Lebanon is still reeling from the explosion in the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020. The investigation into one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions in the history of the world is being actively undermined by the very people who might be implicated. Amid all these types of violence, the countless victims still hope and fight for justice in Lebanon ("Justice for Lebanon: July 17 - World Day for International Justice", 2022).

As it showed, the organization's activities are not limited to documenting the history but also casting a stone to the present situation caused by self-imposed amnesia. While it employs the value of justice, it can be analyzed that its claim does not come from the dependence on the hierarchical moral but from its need and demand as members of the community.

One notable point is the organization's understanding of the circumstance of Lebanon. In addition to "self-imposed amnesia," the organization evaluates Lebanon, which has a "cycle of violence and the deep social and cultural roots that perpetuate such virulence" ("History," n.d.). From the context and background above, it can be read that the cycle of violence means "self-imposed amnesia" and the politicians and sects, and communities within the country seeking short-term gain. Nevertheless, their definition of "violence" is not certainly provided except for the event of Slim's assassination and the Beirut explosion. In a statement named "An end to political violence on the first anniversary of the assassination of Lokman Slim," there is a paragraph,

Lebanon is today notorious for political assassinations, which continue precisely because of the impunity that is systematically conferred upon those who perpetrate these grave crimes. Since the country's independence in 1943, at least 220 politically motivated murders and attempted killings have been documented.... Targeted killings have become political expediency through which their sponsors eliminate perceived critics and opponents, stifle peaceful dissent, conceal incriminating information, and thereby monopolize and control public discourse so as to retain power ("An end to political violence on the first anniversary of assassination of Lokman Slim," n.d.).

It can be possible that their definition of violence means assassination and explosion, which is referred to in the event background cited above. At the same time, the statement also mentions, "cyclical acts of violence... will inevitably persist in the absence of truth, justice, and remedy" (ibid.). Thus, the organization would understand "violence" as not only the direct act but also the state of the absence of truth, justice, and remedy and self-imposed amnesia as Peace Labs and ACT for Disappeared frame that the forced normalcy and marginalizing the families of disappeared is itself violence. While the detail will be confirmed in the interview section, one clear point is that it recognizes that "violence" is present in today's Lebanese society because of self-imposed amnesia.

Although the understanding of the Lebanese context and cycle of violence is the same as the international evaluation, their approach, dealing with the past, collecting achieves, and weaving history, does not correspond to the projects by the targeted international donors. That would be the reason that the research targeted international donors who are not the organization's main donors. Indeed, the top three donors for the organization are private institutions. On the list of donors, the EU and UNDP are accounted for. It would match the attitudes of the EU, which problematizes corruption and centers civil society. Yet, the fact that the organization does not mainly get funds

from the ten targeted influential agencies itself demonstrates that the influential donors cannot answer the organizational need, and the organization manages to sustain its work and activities without funds from the donors.

## **7. ALEF**

ALEF is a local NGO created in 2003. It has a root in a Paris-based international NGO, Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme, and from 1996 and worked under the name of NDH Liben. It firstly formed by a group of Lebanese who witnessed “the deteriorating human rights situation in Lebanon and the role that mobilized youth should play in creating social change” (“About ALEF,” n.d.). The organization’s mission statement is as follows:

ALEF seeks to strengthen the respect and fulfillment of human rights as a cornerstone of social, economic, and political development. By embracing a comprehensive approach to monitor, defend, and educate on human rights, ALEF aims to complement and gear all efforts towards the achievement of an influential human rights constituency and the realization of a durable peace (ibid.).

The background and mission statement illuminate that the organization finds a problem in the Lebanese situation disregarding human rights and recognizes the disregard of human rights preventing “a durable peace.” In this sense, the organization finds a problem not only in politics but in the society and communities in Lebanon that do not respect human rights. Thus, the organization assumes the need to transform the state and society for human rights. On the mission, the organization designs projects of combined research and advocacy campaigns to mobilize the community and

policymakers to protect, respect, and fulfill human rights (“Program,” n.d.). For example, one project worked for the state security sector to document its role,

in the protection and fulfillment of certain human rights violations related mainly to torture and refugee protection, which occur in Lebanon, and as such, will seek to propose evidence-based reforms that would exclusively target the security sector by providing realistic solutions in line with international human rights principles (“Promoting better human rights practices in security sector reforms implemented in Lebanon,” 2016)<sup>7</sup>.

One notable finding is that the organization means human rights by “international human rights laws, international humanitarian law, as well as national and regional legal” schemes (“Progrschemes.d.). It indicates that the organization assumes the international human rights framework even though several international human rights laws are not accepted by the Lebanese authority, such as the right to freedom of expression, protection from torture, adequate work conditions for migrant workers, rights of LGBTIQ, and so on (“Lebanon must end impunity for human rights abuses following UN human rights council review,” 2021). The organization acknowledges that the gap generates a conflict with “the intransigence of religious tradition and culture” (“In the name of religion: women's unequal rights in Lebanon,” 2022:9). Here, I do not intend to develop an argument of to what extent the international human right law is universal, and the traditional communities need to abide by. Yet, the point is that this local Lebanese organization recognizes the international human rights law as a law by which the Lebanese authority and communities should abide by overcoming the conflict with the traditions and traditional cultures. In this sense, it can

---

<sup>7</sup> This project was taken place until 2017, and therefore I dealt it as the subject for this research.

be analyzed that they rely on and refer to the hierarchical morals that arise from consensus on human rights and justifies to their existence and activities.

At the same time, the organization also has the institutional value “to commit to the full respect of [individuals’] culture, faith, and values” (“About ALEF,” n.d.). This attitude is reflected in an activity started from. After publishing the report on women’s freedom regarding religions, they started a series of informal meetings with Sunni Muslim, Alawite Muslim, Maronite Christian, and Orthodox Christian religious leaders, in addition to representatives from other minority religious denominations in the region. They conducted four meetings in total with 51 religious leaders and subjected a topic relevant to the broader theme of the project (“Informal Dialogue Meetings with Religious Leaders to Contribute to Freedom of Religion and Belief,” n.d.). Then, they made recommendations to deal with the conflict with the traditions and human rights. From its approach, it cannot judge if the organization enjoys master peace constituted by hierarchical morals.

On the other hand, sharing morals and values with international donors would make it the organization easier to get funds. In fact, on its website, it has a list of the donors working for human rights, such as the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights and the Arab Human Right Fund. In addition to it, while there are no calls for proposals focusing on human rights by them, there are the EU and German on its list. It corresponds with the EU’s mission, promoting human rights through Country-based Support, and with German, which sees a problem in religious affiliation playing an important role in the structure of the education system. The number of donors shows the organizational advantage of having human rights as the framework allows the organization to get funds easily.

## 8. *ABAAD*

ABAAD is an organization with the secondary name of “Resource Center for Gender Equality Found,” established in 2021. It works “to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region” (“About ABAAD,” n.d.) with a vision of “women live in freedom, dignity, and inner peace without facing discrimination” (ibid.). This vision demonstrates that the organization finds a problem in today’s Lebanese society in which women cannot live in freedom, dignity, and inner peace. Provenly, the organization explains the problem in its publications in this way:

Figures indicate that 1 out of 4 women in Lebanon are sexually harassed, and 49% of those cases are perpetrated by the victims’ close relatives or acquaintances. However, around 13 women per month report sexual assault in Lebanon (according to the statistics of the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces), which is equivalent to the average of only three women per three weeks. A national survey conducted by ABAAD in 2017 showed that 80% of women in Lebanon believe that social and cultural beliefs justify sexual assault and violence against women and girls (“Press Release, ShameOnWho? Campaign Launch: Prosecute the Rapist. Do Not Blame the Victim”, 2018:2)

Lebanon is caught in a vicious circle of gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination that deprives women and girls of meaningful participation in social, economic, and political life. Most abusive and discriminatory acts against women and girls in Lebanon are the direct result of unequal treatment of men and women within the Lebanese law and the influence of a patriarchal society that thrives on the control and oppression of women (“Shame on Who – Campaign 2018”, n.d.).

In addition to the present situation of sexual violence, the organization also problematizes a way to deal with the violence.

[There are the perceptions toward the survivors], “what happens in the family, stays in the family”... The majority of male participants saw a “peaceful resolution” of conflict between husband and wife mediated through parents as the only solution for domestic violence. Another added: ‘Forgiveness is the way.’ [Another perception is] cultures of silence: Negative perceptions of reporting are supported by prevalent beliefs about a culture of silence, as described by participants themselves. Many participants, especially women, recognized this as part of the problem. One female participant mentioned: “Domestic violence is more common than we imagine. You might not know that some women are suffering from violence because they remain silent so that she doesn't humiliate herself or so people do not know what is happening to her. It is a lot more common than what we see and is a very big problem.” Another female participant elaborated: “Society teaches you not to respond, not to speak up, to stay silent” (Baseline study: "Toward a gender-equitable society" project, 2021:38).

In other words, the organization understands that “the peaceful resolution” of conflict forces the victims to be silent and causes oppression and violence, and society also forces the victim to keep silent. Then, these violent acts disturb women’s inner peace. This location of the problem corresponds with the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, and ALEF, which find the problems inside of the society, and it prevents the realization of peace. Moreover, it also shares the point of ‘forced normalcy’ pointed out by the other organizations.

With this vision, the organization provides direct services such as emergency sheltering programs, women and girls safe spaces, and men's centers (“Our work,” n.d.) and also engages in advocacy to promote women’s equality and participation in policymaking through policy development, legal reform, and gender mainstreaming (ibid.). Noteworthy, ABAAD launched a campaign to raise awareness about women’s protection amid multiple crises in Lebanon. Whereas the prioritized issues in the crisis are lack of electricity, hunger, and other material issues, it reveals that one in two women in Lebanon considers that women’s protection should be a priority during the crisis in the country, witnessing 96% of young girls and women residing in Lebanon



who have experienced domestic violence in 2021 (“Anural Report 2021: Gender-based violence prevention & Response during social-economic deterioration”, 2021:32). This campaign would indicate its hardship to get funds from the donors in the age of crisis. Indeed, some funds are targeting women but focusing on women’s participation in the political and peacebuilding process, except for one proposal by the US, whose objective does not directly correspond with women’s protection. A conceivable solution is to have multiple sources of funds. While it might also be because of the size of the budget to maintain the protection shelters and centers, the longest list of donors among the targeted NGOs is remarkable. Therefore, it would be their strategy to have connections with many donors and get funds from the donors when the donors’ focus shifts toward women’s protection to sustain their activities.

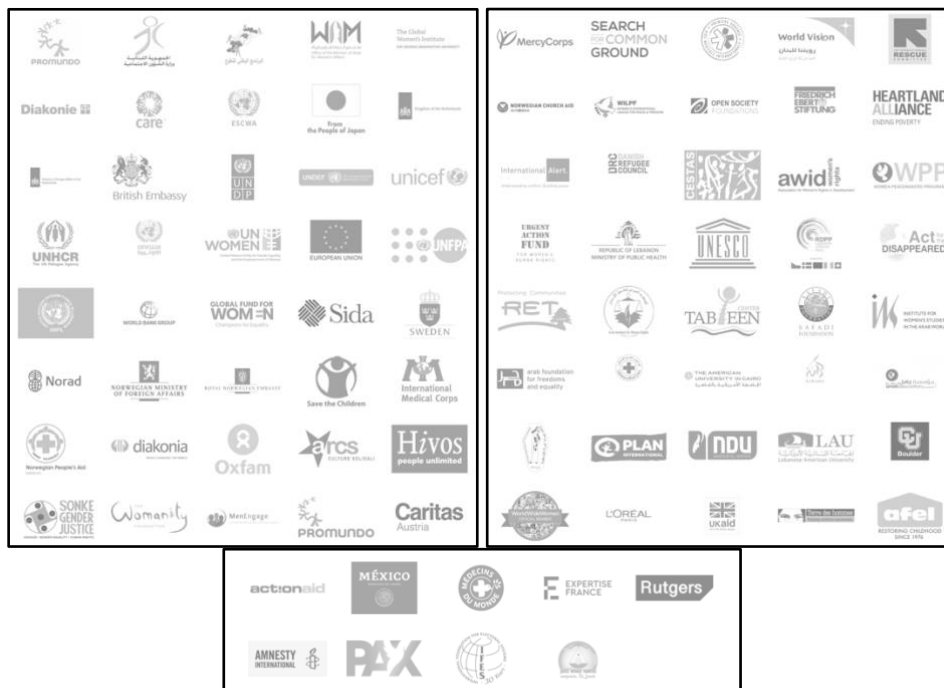


Figure 3: List of donors of ABAAD (Screenshotted from “About ABAAD”).

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH FINDING AND ANALYSIS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

In addition to confirming the result from the discourse analysis, interviews are conducted with the members from the eight targeted NGOs to capture the local peace-related NGO workers' understanding of violence and peace, the value of the organization's activities, the degree of following of colonial peace, and the idea of decolonial peace. This section demonstrates the result of the interviews, which explore the real voices of the NGOs and establishes a basis for the transition into a discussion. The list of interviews is outlined in Appendix II.

#### **A. Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace<sup>8</sup>**

An interview was conducted with a program director at the organization. From the interview, it was assumed that his understanding of civil peace is equivalent to stability. When I asked about his understanding of peace, he answered,

I want to tell you that peace is a very [pose] relevant and not very clear concept. I don't think that there is absolute peace and silence. I don't know. [It is better to talk] maybe stability rather than peace.

This can be attributed to the way he understands violence as explicit acts of direct violence such as “war and clash” which were [have not happened] after 2008<sup>9</sup>” and

---

<sup>8</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from a program director of Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace, personal interview, 17 March 2023.

<sup>9</sup> In 2008, Lebanon experienced military political conflict between political militias mainly Shias and Sunnis when the government's decision to dismantle Hezbollah's telecommunication system, which led to Hezbollah seizing control of west Beirut.

peace as “[long pose] time period between different war times”. From that point of view, Lebanon is “not violence”. It was also stated that at the same time, he does not see the problem of lack of stability as unique to Lebanon. He argued;

Maybe tomorrow we'll wake up and find people on the streets, hitting or striking or doing certain violent things, but I want to shed your attention to see nowadays and in France and Paris. There is a lot of violence by the protesters there.... The point is that in any society that there is a percentage of violence in Europe and the United States and Africa and Asia. I don't think that we have high percentages of crime. I'm just saying that Lebanon same as any other country.

[On the contrary,] if what happened to the Lebanese happens to another country...maybe the action of the citizens might be different. Maybe they have broken bonds. Personally, I see that the Lebanese are quieter than they should be.

He might believe that the manifestation of violence in Lebanon are not entirely unique to it alone, nor he did not know the theory of positive peace. Nevertheless, it does not mean that he does not see any problem in Lebanon and is unable to speak about peace. The organization locates the problem as a “lack of stability” which would “lead to violence”. On this point, the organization shares the same idea of colonial peace, which are establishing and satisfying with a level of stability that does not lead the violence. However, one divergent point from the donors’ perspective is that they are present day focused and attribute the climax of problems in today’s situation whereas the donors are future-focused, which means the future occurrence of violence. He clearly mentioned, “We (Lebanese) are not happy living within this all chaos and economic crisis” and clarified the organization work in attempting to solve instabilities that cause difficulties in people’s “lives, the economy, education, and democracy”. Then, he introduced the projects the organization carried out.

We are doing many good things for the community we are having certain good results that the organization founded to be to serve the community.... In the end, [as] civil society organization, our job is to raise the voice and to bring what the mass people think or want to the decision makers, to the politicians. And this is what we do through our workshops or meetings or dialogue sessions with the decision makers and politicians to reflect what the citizens think. [For] examples, in a project of first one building rule of the law society, we helped three ministries by drafting different laws [and it] has been adapted or adopted by the Parliament, actually.... [But] we are just having our challenges [as others have].

What is illustrated from this explanation is that the organization is not satisfied with today's situation even though it does not lead the violence. Thus, it works to "strengthen and root for peace, stability, social cohesion" which Lebanon has but at a fragile and unsatisfiable level for them. These works are conducted not only for maintaining stability prevent violence but reaching a sturdier level of stability. He said, "You see the nuance? Although there is no war on the country, I'm not saying that we are living in absolute stability". This word choice of absolute stability explains the difference in levels of stability that donors and the organization seek and suggests their understanding of civil peace, differs from colonial peace<sup>10</sup>

In the sense, he does not agree with the evaluation of Lebanon as a continuous cycle of violence but rather he said, "It is a lack of continuous stability". I should be honest that I expected that he would explain the reason behind the evaluation of the donors' justification for their intervention as the other interviewees shared. However, contrary to my expectation, However, he did not express a negative reaction to this international evaluation but postulated that it is natural assumption that others would

---

<sup>10</sup> I will explicitly argue what kind of peace have been constructed and implemented by the donors as colonial peace in the following discussion section.

have given the history of events in Lebanon. He also did not express negativity towards the donors' conditions for providing the funding. He stated,

Each donor has its strategy and donors are not charity organizations. The better way to be is that donors to consult strategies with their local counterparts. But as the local organization, we can check the donors' condition. If we like, you accept them, we can partner. if we don't accept, they are not obliging us to partner.

A reason for no conflict with donors would be that the organization shares direction with the donors in addressing the instability. Nevertheless, as the above part explored, the goals are different. It can be analyzed that the organization gets benefit of the shared direction. My interviewee insisted, "There are absolutely areas in which we will not compromise with" donors for funds. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the organization enjoys its position in the same direction as colonial peace to pursue absolute stability, his and organizational own vision of peace.

## **B. Peace Labs<sup>11</sup>**

This interview was with a founder and one of the board members of this organization. As the discourse analysis illuminates, his understanding of conflict, violence, and peace can be analyzed rooted in Northern theories. The founder of the organization cited a definition of violence by Galtung and explained,

[Violence means] as per Galtung, firstly direct, secondly structural or endemic to the system, and lastly cultural legitimizing direct violence against this or that group.... [Peace] equals no violence, war, or direct harm and no structures and cultures that cause grievances.

---

<sup>11</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from one of the board members of Peace Labs, personal interview, 17 February 2023.

It is arguable if he “think[s] that without them (Northern theorists) we could not talk about peace” (Cruz, 2021:280) and “of course, [has] the orientalist characterization of the ‘Other’ from the great South” (Fontan, 2012:176 translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:280-281). Here, it is valuable to note that he “fully agrees” with the international evaluation of Lebanon as a continuing cycle of violence and he mentioned as follows when I asked what you think a theory of positive peace explains peace and violence in Lebanon:

Of course, clarifying what peace means is VERY (emphasized by the interviewee) important. So far, “no civil war and violence” [which means] negative peace seems to be the way Lebanese understand Peace. This is very dangerous and will guarantee that violence will keep on recurring.

This would indicate that he perceives “Lebanese” as someone other than himself and the organization and categorizes them by the definition of Northern theory.

He further added another factor to the definition of violence, which would reinforce the organizational argument of forced “normalcy” which was deepened in the discourse analysis. In addition to the absence of direct, structural, and cultural violence, he started that there exists “systems and mechanisms in place to work with conflict and transform the cultures and the structures that cause grievances and inequalities between people”.

He clarified that having these systems and mechanisms in place is an additional essential condition for peace, and the lack of systems and mechanisms is another type of violence. From this perspective, the Lebanese situation that the organization analyzed the forced “normalcy” is recognized as the prevention of the systems and mechanisms

to work with conflict and transform the culture and structure in place. Then, he defines it as violence, which is one step out from the Northern theories of violence.

With the understanding of ‘violence’, he clarified the organizational focus that I explored in the discourse analysis. He located a problem that the organization addresses,

conflicts within and between communities, misunderstandings and miscommunication between different stakeholders, and lack of trust between actors engaging in humanitarian aid and development.... Because by doing so, conflict can be addressed more healthily.... [in a situation where there is] the distrust between Lebanese, the lack of dialogical space where deep and open dialogues can take place, and lack of a sufficient number of actors who can be perceived as impartial enough to be trusted by different conflict parties.

It indicates whereas the organization does not deal with larger cultures, systems, and structures that promote the continuation of conflict, it recognizes violence as the lack of mechanisms to work with conflict and works to contribute to building mechanisms.

Along with his understanding of violence, it can be analyzed that he recognizes that the donors hold and promote a certain type of peace, which has a colonial characteristic. To the question of if he has encountered any tension between international donors’ requirements, he answered:

Absolutely yes. And often, we need to have internal dialogues at our organization to decide on things in a way that does not harm the community we serve and that we are loyal to, and not cause any contractual headaches with our partner, and does not jeopardize our organization’s image.... [Also, we need to] work with donors such as the SWISS Foreign Affairs... since they are often ACCEPTED (emphasized by the interviewee) by most if not all communities, mainly by those communities that are alienated by western agencies/governments, which makes those communities averse to engaging with those. We have to understand that peacebuilding is a delicate, political maneuver and that perceptions (we call them optics) are extremely important.

This suggests that the founder is fully aware the idea that donors' colonial peace and its impact to formulate their fundings. In addition to it, he also is sensible of the need to tackle the type of peace by choosing the donors and forming the foundation to include those who are excluded by colonial peace.

### **C. March<sup>12</sup>**

The interview was conducted with a founder of the organization at a “peacebuilding center” located on a former frontline of a clash between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli. Before the interview, a project coordinator gave me a tour of the center. The founder shared her view on violence as follows,

Here in Tripoli, from 2008 to 2014. People harm each other on daily basis.... [Violence] is impacting harm on others. You can say harm is relative based on [personal] emotion but [violence] is more ACTUAL harm [though physical and verbal or intimidation] by forcing them to do things or not to do... [and] threaten[ing] his life, his health, and his existence. I think a lot of people in interrogation when they were interrogated, for example here, were subjected to violence.

From this perspective, even after the violent clash is not taken place recently in Tripoli and even the whole of Lebanon, she clarified people do not enjoy peace.

They tell you peace is the absence of violent conflict. Okay, great, but what causes eventually violent conflict is people who don't feel heard... For me, peace is related to acceptance of differences... The problem we are having is... how we perceive people on the extreme spectrum in the different sects. different regions, different areas. [Therefore,] we are afraid of one another and fear of the other that we don't know. But if you ask anyone in Lebanon, why don't you like this person or why you stigmatize, they automatically tell you because HE doesn't like me (emphasized by the interviewee). So we [perceive] that each and everyone is out to eliminate another or [want to be] stronger or to have more power over the other.... [This fear, in the end, creates] people who don't feel included, accepted, [and] oppressed. They felt

---

<sup>12</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from a founder of March, personal interview, 21 March 2023.



like victims. [That makes] people instigate violence. [Thus, peace is] hearing the other and acknowledging that he's here with all of his differences. [it is] the whole process.

This understanding of violence and peace is divergent from what Northern theories explain, peace as a result of the absence of types of violence but more detailed in people's feelings and the local dynamics relating peace to a process of acceptance of the other. While she did not display an understanding of the theory of positive peace, she spoke of peace in her words through her local understanding of societies.

In regard to violence, she agreed with the evaluation of Lebanon as having a continuous cycle of violence. She stated, "things are controlled, it [looks] everything is fine", but proceeded to state that she does not agree with this surface-level description of the situation mentioning "We have a problem, and it needs to be solved". This comment refers to Peace Labs' understanding of keeping the problem in a contained state and maintaining normalcy prevents solutions. Indeed, she affirmed that she does not think the problem can be solved by avoidance.

In order to tackle the problem, the organization works in a so-called hot spot. In the tour, a project coordinator explained that even after the clash ended in 2015, there was no plan for conflict resolution and reconciliation under the control of the army, but violence still left. The founder of the organization observed the circumstances and decided to go into the field work after learning about mediation and conflict resolution in France. From that starting point, the organization started to work to bring the fighting leaders from both sides of the conflict to work together while initially confronting pushback from those participating in the clashes and community members from both sides. This side of the story would tell that the reason why she did and could intervene in the field is that she acquired the hierarchical peace technics in her study in France.

However, the organization has engaged in the community for a long time on an equal foot. Its activities nowadays develop not only for conflict resolution between youth but also for conflict prevention by providing youth reintegration programs. They create new facilitations and activities based on the participant's needs and develop with the participants. In addition to it, the organization also deals with a problem between youth and the army by implementing a joint project through which they run a community farm together to gain food for the army and community. A wide range of the project demonstrates the organization tries to realize peace in the area with the community members with many attempts without hierarchical relationships between them.

Having analyzed this point, it is notable then that the organization get fund from the British embassy under CSSF, which focuses on the establishment of the status of stability for UK security, and the quality and context of the stability. On the tour of the center, the program coordinator introduced me to a great piece of equipment in the center for activities for youth ranging from dentistry instruments, wood craft tools, sewing machines, PCs, and a well-equipped kitchen, which is a hard aspect of its fund.



Figure 4: Equipment founded by the UK to the Center  
(Pictures taken by the author and approved to use)

Then, a question came up, how to negotiate with the donor. She stated that she talks and tries to convince the donor.

[Experienced tension] all the time. But I always push back. [Regarding] the international donors, there are two problems. First of all, they want to import their methods, which absolutely doesn't work. Any peacebuilding process or anything has to be endorsed and come, from communities, not just be posted. Here, we have our own cultural identity, different ways of thinking, and different specific context. The second thing is that they have agendas that they want to push. [However], they do not realize that that is counterproductive for them because it will not make any impact even if you're pushing these agendas in their way. So we've had to do a lot of pushbacks... Then they started seeing results and so they're happy with the outcome.

This comment demonstrates that she is aware of colonial peace and does not agree with donors' strategies and approaches. At the same time, it shows that the organization gets benefit the donors' intention for the intervention. Then, later on, the organization convinces the donors by the result, of it, stability and violence prevention. It gives an insight into the question of mutual and common interests of international donors and local NGOs which rose in the discourse analysis section. While the locations of the problem and agenda do not completely agree, the organization shows that it can work with the donors. Moreover, using for their own ends of the donors' agenda, it can be analyzed that she and the organization exercise power over the donor. In reality, the comment, "to be honest, we have ever reached out to donors that are funding us [but] they will reach out to us from the very beginning" and "we refuse to work with some donors" declare that the organization has selective power over the donors.

#### **D. Fighters for Peace<sup>13</sup>**

With this organization, interview was taken place with one of the founding members. In the interview, he remarked that Lebanon has all types of violence, not only what the organization publications name. He explains,

We feel violence everywhere.... It can be a state that can be violent. A system that can be violent. I mean, any system that does not give justice to all its citizens, give some more than others is already practicing violence, the kind of violence.... for example, works to improve an area where a type of people is living community and is not improving the other [... and permit to have] weapons with a group and not with everybody... is kind of violence. You have verbal violence, you have communication violence by not only verbal. [for example,] by despising someone and not talking to him or showing that you are class A and class B, for example. This is also one of the types of violence.... And you have the street violence, you have the violence like this woman, the police on this kid, children, and so on.

He framed this circumstance as “we have a negative peace...meaning is not killing ourselves each other... maybe, [however,] we don't have a positive peace. And this is the source of all our problems.... we are [not] living peace in our hearts, our society in our country” with the types of violence he summarized. Same as the previous case, referring to a positive peace which was originally theorized by Galtung would suggest that he “think[s] that without them (Northern theorists) we could not talk about peace” (Cruz, 2021:280).

In addition to it, there is another aspect that would indicate that he adopts colonial peace. Throughout the interview, he emphasized the existence of culture of violence in Lebanon which is not only framed in the discourse by “old culture” that “denies the right of the other to have a different opinion and...resorts to violence”

---

<sup>13</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from one of the founding members of Fighter for Peace, personal interview, 14 December 2022.

(“About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter”, n.d.). It is further the culture that normalizes all types of the violence exist in the society. After outlining the types of violence, he stated, “It became sadly part of the culture” and “violence is... in our culture”. This comment on the culture of violence points to of Simon Springer’s (2015) argument of the culture of violence thesis as an “Orientalizing discourse concerning violence” (61). This point will be further explored in the discussion section.

With that understanding of the problem in Lebanese society, the organization works to tackle the culture of violence by encouraging people to talk about the undealt past which still causes friction between communities and immunizing the youth against divides by making space for them to get to know each other. The organisation believe that “We have so, so much ignorance, we have a lot of ignorance of the other.... The ignorance leads to fear or avoidance”. Further, they also work to transform “the culture that war is something wonderful where heroes are born [where] you conquer and...you are an alpha among the others” by preaching witnesses from former fighters about the war and “how ugly it was, how dirty, how bitter and everything that happens during a war because some of the youth are educated in a way that they think that it was something wonderful [in the culture of violence]”. He summarized all activities to “change [people’s] hearts”. This usage of the words would connect to Oussama Safa’s (2007) analysis of the local peacebuilding activities “winning stakeholders’ hearts and minds” which was previously criticized as a colonial mindset in the literature review. Yet, he gave explained how their activities actually differ from “winning the heart”. Instead of depending on the hierarchical techniques of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, what the organization is doing is replicating its own experiences of

change. The interviewee says, “I [was] helped to change and not I am also helping others to change”,

We dig inside.... We do not try to put *Fasaad* (corruption) and paint their faces. Sending peace in a parachute does not work, it does not happen to work.... They can, they notice the difference. They immediately notice the difference. And they go out with light and hearts. They tell us really.

The reason for being able to dig inside people is that they share the experience, conditions, life, and change. Their activities have a root in their own experience. This mentality is also reflected in the organization’s strategy to reach out to the communities.

You know, we don't send someone from Beirut to Tripoli for example.... We are [firstly] training the ex-fighters to be able to mediate [their own community]. It's rather inner mediation meaning that they have to be part of the society where they are working.... [and] become the owners of peace in their area. We have what they need, they are part of our organization. This is much better because they are more accepted, and they understand more the culture of the people.

At the same time, he also admitted that their activities are sometimes hard to be accepted by the community members. He testified,

[I experienced] a lot [to be] attacked [by community members].... you know, we are a band of traitors. we are a band of traitors. Some, are traitors to Christians, some to Shia. Some are the traitors of the majority of Druze. Because what we are doing is awakening the power of the parties of the communities. [But] we're not against the parties, we are against violence within the parties or the parties using violence or being violent. We are not against the parties.

This comment does not sound that the organization parades the technical hierarchical power of the peace techniques but more struggles to realize peace, which does not come

from the orientalist characterization of the ‘Other’ from the great South” (Fontan, 2012:176 translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:280-281). However, its activities are based on its own experiences of change.

On the country, he strongly criticized a peacebuilding activity which is for the sake of the political agenda of donors.

Listen, some NGOs and some funders don't want things to change seriously... They do not want to change. some use Lebanon to change the society in Syria by changing the series of aid. This is another agenda added to our agenda the Lebanese agenda, and so on are giving examples just to so that you understand.... And not only that, but I also mean, many other NGOs are okay with it (not changing). you know, one year and they work on the cup (pointing at a cup in front of him), and the next thing you want them to work on the laptops they become specialists in laptops (there was my laptop in front of him). Come on in a month's time, you can't become specialists. Stay where you are.

At the same time, he pointed out the root cause of the lack of interest to change and the quick shift of focus; “if they want to stay when they are they don't get any, any funding” continued,

We always strive to find INGOs and funders to get long-term funding so that we know that if we start here, we can work the same and be enlarging a mean. For three or at least five years. At least three to five. And less you can never find. It's on a yearly basis. and sometimes one year they are working on our subject as the year they tell us, we want to work on illiteracy. Okay, let us continue building on what we started. They don't work on long-term projects because they themselves have an issue with their founders, you know, founders of founders.

This comment shows that he is fully aware of colonial peace defined by the donor's requirement and is frustrated by the international agenda. He also revealed more dire case where the organization suffered a loss of fund.

We are not like that (the other many NGOs). We decided that we have a mission. And we don't care (about the funds). We work without anyone, anyone at all, and 2012 and 2014 and even now.... We continue working without funding until we find some funds. Most of my friends work. We're not full-timers, none of us are full-timers. So this makes it easier. I'm not saying that the salaries are wow, but... I used to depend on my money in the bank... and now, money in the back is confiscated. But we are managing it.

With this NGO being one of the leading and famous peacebuilding organizations in Lebanon, it is extremely surprising that it cannot get any funds because they follow their mission, not the donors' agenda. It can be analyzed that under the condition, engaging in the NGO as part-time and even volunteers would be a strategy to deal with the lack of fund form the donors, as he said that they are managing. Nevertheless, it is not only sustainable and unfavorable for developing much of its activities to truly influence the communities and society. In fact, he shared that there is an intra-organizational "tendency to become the industry". He refused to give example with a strong "NO", but it indicates the hardship that the organization experiences to maintain their work.

#### **E. ACT for Disappeared<sup>14</sup>**

An interview was conducted with the executive director of the organization. One striking point in the interview was her view on violence in Lebanese society. While acknowledging the multiple types of violence such as physical, structural, cultural, and verbal violence, she noted they are "all hypothesized violence" and continued,

---

<sup>14</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from an executive director of ACT for Disappeared, personal interview, 19 December 2022.



For me, at least from the objectives we are working for the victims of the war, the victims of war are continuously victimized by the following tactics of the no recognition of their emptiness properly. They have no information and are worried about their loved ones. They are living in violence, this violence committed by and taken by, I would say, the operational violence is ongoing. [While] we often talk about post-war trauma, trauma for violence, but for the victim, trauma is not the day of the disappearance, but it remains consistent.... Violence is being committed against them because of conflict and systematic decisions taken by political institutions.... This is a kind of violence that doesn't have an end to it and is ongoing. It's an ongoing crime against them.

While she grounded the acts of violence to a “systematic decision”, she differentiated the violence that families are forced to go through from that of structural violence. The psychological wound of families which remain open do not correspond to structural violence defined by being a form of violence wherein social structures or social institutions harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs, but it is located somewhere between direct and structural violence on the hypothetical axis. This means it cannot be described by the concept of three types of violence. Yet, at the same time, when asked about her understanding of peace, she answered,

We have multiple layers of peace, okay? and then I say that [pose] peace is the absence or removal of constraints on the families or the absence of structural violence.

Her pose in the sentence, the specific definition of family constraints, and rephrasing the specific definition to the “absent of structural violence” indicates that her idea of peace does not perfectly fit into “absent of structural violence” but has not put into words yet. It suggests that she pictures her own peace from “experience, on everyday life and the historical accumulation of their own resistance”, not from “modern science; that is, as a knowledge geolocation” (Cruz, 2021:279) although she is to some extent,

“whitewashed; meaning that they [think] they must pass the scientific peace matrix, and go through some sort of classification so they can be useful to the dominant knowledge” (ibid:280).

This ambiguity is also reflected in her view on the theory of negative and positive peace. To the question if she thinks that the theory of negative and positive peace explains the current situation of Lebanon and whether she would like to supplement it in any way, she answered,

I agree largely speaking with this idea of the theory of negative peace and positive peace. We will, of course, contribute to positive peace...Umm, but I think there's so much that you need to do in order to get to that point. And for example, I think there is a different way to achieve everyday peace and security for example. People on their own trying to navigate, find ways to cope... survive and make some decisions within the constraints of their world.... And one of the strategies of conflict is avoidance.... [But] I need to make sure knowing families around and people around who are staying on the front lines [of the fight for the disappeared].

With the understanding of the violence on the families, it is less scientifically categorizable of the “multiple layers of peace”. In addition to it, she mentioned another source of violence, which cannot simple categorized into the three types of violence,

We get asked, “Why do you talk about the war and state: I do not like to make any trouble”. It is connected to the collective amnesia in which they think [that] the reconciliation is not possible, gave up on reflecting on the war, and dig into the tension. And another is like “Why you are talking about the war in the crisis that we face now? we can hardly get money for the family for this month, access to education, at the stage where there are more emergent needs in society. We need to move on”.

This comment indicates that non-recognition and emptiness by the people who struggle to survive in the midst of crisis to the family also deepens the wound of families. While

it might be possible to set the collective amnesia as a structure, the families would directly experience the non-recognition daily which can be direct violence. In fact, she “is largely speaking” agree with the idea of negative and positive peace. However, at the same time, it also explains that she does not fully agree with it, yet, she does not have another vocabulary to express it rather than using the dominant knowledge.

That does not mean that she blindly follows the colonial peace, other statements explain that she is fully aware of the structure of the colonial peace and its harmful effects on their activities.

I understand their (international donors’) agenda and I expected initiative from the international community to sometimes feed into the trend or feed into the interest of the state. But painting and portraying Lebanon as a violent state...[is to] impose more pressure on certain factors in Lebanon and [to] have stronger interventions in Lebanon definitely.... You know, they're not going to come in without a plan... [and the] idea of what their interventions need to address the issues. What happened, as in our case, most of the attention now of the international community is not really on us in the midst of the crisis.

Unfortunately, oftentimes, they exclude the local NGOs working with Lebanese vulnerable communities.... That environment is not always easy at all. And then they change the requirements every year, we need to adjust. That would impose conditions [only] on international organizations, including informal work because you don't want a local community adjusting to that.

She further expressed, “That does not mean we do not need to work to try to help them (the funders), Now, this is the key, and we have to catch up. We cannot afford to lose”.

With that said, she mentioned “there are different strategies” and it is not hard to imagine the challenge of finding the fund for their activities, which shows a different trace of the colonial peace.

## F. UMAM Documentation and Research<sup>15</sup>

With this organization there was a further chance to talk with a senior development officer. As someone who oversees the reporting and narrative writing and proposal writing, she gave insightful viewpoints. At first, she noted,

The real mission of the organization is not necessarily of peacebuilding, but of critically reckoning with Lebanon's past, which is unfortunately quite conflict-ridden. [But] the organization really believes that the only way to understand the present and to have a more peaceful, sustainable, or just to explore different versions of the future, there has to be this critical reckoning of the past.

With the note, she shared her view on violence, which was not necessarily clarified from the publications by the organization,

I've been thinking a little bit more about armed, like violent conflict. [But now] my understanding of the violence that Umam also addresses is this violence of a lack of public awareness, accessibility, and resources dedicated to understanding the past. So violence is this homogeneous and imposed narrative that does not allow people to have access to information.

Thus, the violence that the organization finds is not only a direct actions that persist in the absence of truth, justice, and remedy such as political assassinations and postponed judicial justice, but more so the currency system in the society which does not guarantee the justice. In another part, she referred to it as “this structural element (s)”, it can be categorized as structural violence. Yet, the description does not completely correspond with the definition of structural violence. She further gave an explanation of how this kind of violence work. While it is well-argued that there is a correlation between

---

<sup>15</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from a senior development officer and researcher of UMAM Documentation and Research, personal interview, 19 February 2023.

structural violence and direct violence, manipulation and stirring do not equal direct violence but are argued to be triggered by structural violence. Thus, the violence she described and the organization's findings would not fit into the knowledge geolocation. From this perspective, she clarified her understanding of peace,

There are these disparate histories in Lebanon, but they're either accessible or used in different ways for different political purposes. I think that with this atmosphere of amnesia and unknowing, it's then very easy to manipulate facts and develop narratives that support specific political agendas.

While it is well-argued that there is a correlation between structural violence and direct violence, manipulation and stirring do not equal direct violence but are argued to be triggered by structural violence. Thus, the violence she described and the organization's findings would not fit into the knowledge geolocation. From this perspective, she clarified her understanding of peace,

I've been thinking about more and more the core needs for accountability and justice and these systems that provide safety and protection for everyone for crimes is... a central focus for peace.

Since the inefficient legal justice system is understood as structural violence (Sinha and Gupta et al, 2017:135), it can be analyzed that she understands peace as the absence of structural violence. However, it is notable that she does not use positive peace to frame her understanding of peace. That means she tried to formulate the concept of peace through her language.

In addition to it, she agreed on the formation of colonial peace. She raised a point when asked how she feels about an international evaluation of Lebanon as a continuing cycle of violence,

You know, the US is not considered a cycle of violence (she lives in the US currently), but like I am much more afraid for my life from gun violence in the US than I am in Lebanon. It's very much like a Western donor-focused, with a very specific definition of what countries and what societies are violent.

That is not always true and not always like it's very biased, honestly. And it's like this neo-colonialist view of what worlds are dangerous and what worlds are safe.... You know, you cannot say access to healthcare. Is that safe? I don't, you know, the US healthcare system is crumbling. Why is that seen as violence in Lebanon and not in other countries? It's a biased reading of the world.

This view on donors' evaluation is specific to the one in charge of writing proposals and calls for proposals by international donors. While the organization also recognizes the "cycle of violence" ("history", n.d.), the one-sided portrait by the donor is unfair and biased, according to her view. The hegemonic positioning might also be perceived from her work with the donors. She expressed,

The reporting requirements are really a lot, which I think you'll hear from a lot of different organizations that just the sheer amount of reporting, monitoring, and tracking of the work is really an additional burden.... And I would also say that donors are also a bit swayed by trends. So I think at one point it was very trendy to be talking about research and analysis of refugee and migration dynamics when the refugee crisis hit Europe from Syria.... [and another,] the securitization narrative after 9-11 of the Middle East being an area of security and counter-terror work. Now, [it] switch[es] with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There is whim and trendiness and flows of donor attention that can be really difficult to keep their attention for.... If they are interested in working in this more retrospective-looking view and projects, then you know it. it's quite easy to get traction, but they have to be willing to be open-minded.

She made two points here. First, the required number of papers is a burden for the local NGO, even for an organization like UMAM which can hire someone to oversee the proposal writing. The thesis targets calls for proposals only, but these have already exposed the huge list of required documents the NGOs need to prepare only for the initial step of applying for the projects. It showed how big a burden the local small-sized NGOs have to overcome to get funds and work on the projects. Second, the donors exercise their power to define the problem based on “whim and trendiness”. This comment brings reference to the argument by Robert Cox that the ‘problem’ is not something coming out by nature but constructed by the actors who gain benefits and advantages from using those who are in the position in today’s prevailing power structure to remove hazards for their structure (1981:128-129). Further, this chase of trendy topics causes another burden to the local NGOs who work on problems that do not necessarily correspond with what the donors are pushing now. These two hegemonic aspects, in addition to the one-directed portrait by the donors, present as the reasons why she perceives neo-colonialism in the donors funding for the peace-related work.

At the same time, the organization has a silver lining when it comes to getting funds. She explains,

UMAM has been around for quite a while and has done a lot of these different projects. we are known in certain spheres.... Unfortunately, the assassination of Lakman has also made our name. more known because of this. But we were quite well known even before, again, among certain circles.... [Also] looking at the history and memory of Lebanon there are all these different angles and different perspectives that we can take. So yes, we do always have to be coming up with new projects because you know you need to be funding something new but it's it doesn't feel like a false creation for us.

The long experiences and achievements, the assassination of the founder, as well as the flexibility when it comes to the organization goal of looking back at history to gain relevance, have allowed them to get the funds despite the lowered interest and the trend seeking tendencies of the donors. Therefore, one point drawn from the story of UMAM is that setting a wider scope mission that allows flexibility to make access to funds easier is one of the strategies employed by local organizations. But again, that makes the formulation of the mission donor-first and trapped in the hegemonic power dynamic.

### **G. ALEF<sup>16</sup>**

With this organization, there was an opportunity to talk with a board member. One of the remarkable points is that he clearly asserted, “Lebanon a is violent society”. This comes from his definition of violence. With a note, he “come[s] from a human rights perspective” with a focus on the law and the rights it grants, he summarized his understanding of violence as follows:

[Violence] is when the institution and systems to address interpersonal conflict and conflict between the state and the citizens and citizens among themselves are failing. And when they fail and eventually result in..., doing your own form of justice. This is conflict. This is violence.

This comment reveals that his understanding of violence has two sides: the violence of the cause and the violence of the effect. First, the violence of the cause in this case refers to the failure of institutions and systems in dealing with interpersonal, inter-communal, and intersectoral conflicts. This can be recognized as violence but at the same time, it has a cause-effect aspect, where the effect is that the people (citizens,

---

<sup>16</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from a board member of ALEF, personal interview, 14 March 2023.



community members, public employees, political parties, and politicians) practice their “own form of justice” and solve conflict in an unregulated “jungle” fashion outside the rule of law. To the comment of “Yet, I do not really see someone resorting violence to practice their justice in Lebanon”, he answered, “because it's not linear. So you're not gonna see it constantly” and introduced a concept of antifragility theorized by Nassim Taleb, a Lebanese philosophical essayist, and scholar at risk management. It takes much space to cite directly but is worth letting him speak his language here.

The clearest example is this plate, (hold the plate up) I can throw it [from this height], and nothing will happen. (Keeping up the height) Nothing will happen. Nothing will happen, but there might throw it a bit more powerful. And it will break it will shatter it will not be useful. This is a clear explanation that it (the antifragility) is not linear. It says there's an accelerated curve, which means that these things can be used for persisting violence but suddenly becomes completely useless. The same happens in a lot of tension that is happening in Lebanon... but they haven't reached a phase of them becoming an issue because they are not on a linear plane.

Here [where] the institutions are failing, you don't even have very coarse so either has a pacific way to solve problems as avoiding and ignoring or we have violence. [For example,] someone hits your car on the street, you have two options, especially now with lack of insurance in the country, [it goes like] “okay. you're not gonna pay I'm not gonna pay. It's fine. We live our life with a broken mirror”. Or you get into a fight”. [Another example is] one person gets into the Christian area, gets into trouble with the municipality police, goes back to his area [and] tells others what happened to [him]. Some bunch of guys [with] their motorcycles went back to the municipality and burned the municipality... Okay, maybe after the maybe the municipality is burned, things go back to normal. Hezbollah finds a way to rebuild the municipality in order to [being] okay with, “sorry for that” and the municipality does also some kinds of things like apologies, but the impact is there is that the capacity to burn municipal municipality is present... [The incident can be] the acceleration point. We don't know what triggered that because there are so many unknowns.

While it speaks of structural and direct aspects of violence, his framing of violence comes from the Northern-produced theories but is also more rooted in “experience on everyday life” (Cruz, 2021:279).

however, contrary to the Northern theories, he does not believe that the absence of these two aspects of violence will mean peace to him. In his understanding, true peace “has to do with longer-term perception change [among people to live together peacefully]”. Yet, he assumes, “we didn't [could not] have peace [by nature in modern human history]”,

Neo Nazis in Europe, like did we actually resolve Neo Nazism? These are people that thought the peace was the end of World War Two a was not a victory. They lost and they maintain this from one generation to one that's the third generation of Neo Nazis in Europe. Right, so we didn't have peace. Someone got victorious kicked people out and exclude them from politics disregard if I agree or not, and now they are glowing indeed, we didn't do peace. So the paradigm [of peace] is what we created after World War Two of what is peace and eventually what is peacebuilding and eventually all these peacebuilding organizations. This [asks] question about the world discipline of peace can we achieve these anyways? Maybe not.

But instead, what the international communities have been doing is to determine “what is the acceptable level of non-conflict”. Then, to create an acceptable level of non-conflict, he and the organization find ways through an understanding and utilization of human rights.

On the one hand, he and the organization “believe in the mission of human rights”, but on the other hand, there is another reason for resorting human rights for them. He knows human rights become the actors’ benefit practically and representatively.

For example, on conflict transformation between refugee communities and host communities. When we sit with local authorities and municipalities, as an example, we sit as this intermediary between the two... we are able to create the entry points.

[Also, we can create] capacity building code is an entry point to be able to bring security agencies on the table [for human right practice] .... The way they see it as security agencies is that these attending civil society lab capacity building is one showcase to the international community that one, they are ready to do this type of work, and that they are responsive to civil society needs.

These activities are something that other organizations cannot do and he recognizes it as an advantage this organization has. At the same time, he admitted the difficulty to hold “legitimacy” as a human rights organization in Lebanon. The human rights approach only works when there are benefits for the actors. However, when it comes to issues in which there is no “driver, and this is the tricky part now on corruption, for example, on dealing with the Syrian refugees”, they “are unable to work” and lose legitimacy.

We have to be honest, that as human rights organization, we are not entirely present in the community.... Fighters for Peace clearly represents former ex-fighters that have taken a commitment to build peace... We don't represent the interest group [and therefore] decision-makers will [not] sit with us.

The point to focus on here is the organizational disadvantage and weakness to create an acceptable level of non-conflict in Lebanon as he honestly expressed. he was also honest to admit another failure, mentioning,

We (all Lebanese NGOs) are failing to [address] a bunch of tension and conflict. So you're not actually even solving this conflict. You're not solving this one. You're spending money on this conflict, but you're not solving this conflict.

At the same time, he said, “I don’t want to blame NGOs” because the reason for this failure is that the NGOs in “most of civil society are donor-driven, ALEF included, and we have to be honest.... [and we] have to bound to work on the theory of change” of donors, which “itself is not addressing the issue”.

[On their theory of change], we create a painted stair, which means the Lebanese and the refugees will like one another. Or playing theater. It's not, it might work on those individual levels. It's not gonna solve the main issue, because the main. The issue is very political and the donors are not spending money on this political work. They're spending money on the symptoms. Well, let's do a playground here, a party here, a school here, planting trees here, blah blah blah... To keep things busy.

[This is because the donors’] monitoring and evaluation tools would...negative peace... and negative stability.... They see Lebanon as a matter of stability. If you read any international statement on Lebanon, you see Lebanon is looking at stability. Financial stability, security stability, and stability because of the refugee crisis for the sake of their international security [and]... the interest that [they] don’t want other countries [in the Middle East] that is unstable.

In other words, the acceptable level of non-conflict is defined by the donors’ security and interests, not the local needs. Under the situation, what the NGOs can do is to choose the donors and funds like “I am closer to that, close to this” or to take “what’s present”. As an NGO, it is not able to “influence the theory of change of donors”, nor can it develop activities based on local drivers’ theory of change. This analysis clearly shows that he is fully aware of the colonial peace and the influence of the colonial peace on other local NGOs’ and their own activities. Yet, he also admitted,

I'm not gonna tell our eighth employee, we're gonna be, you're gonna, you might risk all your salary in the coming, in the coming year, because we no longer want to be fund-driven and we want to challenge the donors. Like they are employees. I have a labor obligation. So we're not gonna challenge the donors in the fund-driven.

This indicates the dilemma and frustration he has towards the consciousness that his current approach does not address the real problem, but he also cannot change this approach.

However, he claims that this does not mean “we are not doing anything”. He introduced two of his strategies to progress forward. Firstly, “on the free time that I have engagements like I'm meeting with you now and using my time. You might present your study with actors from the donors in the future and influence them<sup>17</sup>. I also have a meeting with the German Embassy tomorrow and hopefully, we can discuss what needs to be done in the judiciary, and how they need to think differently”. Secondly, utilizing the donor-driven projects in their own way.

Even if we're fund driven, so we still take money for capacity building, but you're using the capacity building differently. I'm still going to tell the donors, yes, the ISF (Internal Security Force) is better than before, but I'm doing something else at the same time. I'm not cheating. We are not cheating. Sorry. But we're still being donors driven while doing as much as we can and doing whatever WE want to do using this money.

To the extent, it does not change what the donor is committed to doing. The organization “adds a bit” to the project and use it for their “own interest [with] different purpose” to realize the local idea of the acceptable level of non-violence.

---

<sup>17</sup> I want to leave a note here that this comment also made me think about my positionality from other perspective. On the moment, I felt that I position impartial as researcher but at the same time, I have to take a responsibility to challenge the problem as someone engage in local NGOs and took their time.

## H. ABAAD<sup>18</sup>

There was a chance to talk with a senior technical advisor who has been working since the formation of the organization. While the organization does not remarkably present itself as one working towards peace in its publications, he clarified how its work does indeed relate to peace. He mentioned,

We are more predominantly, a women's rights NGO feminist organization. However, all human rights are interconnected. So, you cannot talk about development without talking about gender equality, without talking about peace and nonviolence, all of them go hand in hand... My personal work in gender and peacebuilding is looking at militarized masculinities as one of the drivers of war and how men are socialized to not only become soldiers for this state but also to think in more violent war-like terms. [On the one hand, providing] shelters for women, [on the other hand,] we do research and advocacy [to address the militarized masculinities].

As the advisor working on militarized masculinities in the feminist organization, his understanding of violence and peace is also “influenced by feminist school and the concept of feminist peace”. He explained,

Violence [in our understanding] is one person's use of power against another person in order to rob that person's rights or to bring harm to their ability to do things in the world. [The violence can be] psychological, physical, verbal [and] structural forms. [The] lack [of] economic opportunity and legal rights because of racial or sexual discrimination [are] form of violence.

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict or war... Peace has to do with a movement towards harmony and overcoming conflict that comes between us through communication and negotiation and understanding one another...[to] coexist with dignity and the full actualization of your human rights. That is an actively moving, not passive process.

---

<sup>18</sup> Citation in this section is gathered from a senior technical advisor of ABAAD. personal interview, 23 March 2023.

Despite his sidenote, these understandings are not imported and not absolutely outside of the context of Lebanon. He expressed,

In a patriarchal society, as a man, I knew how to hold a toy gun and shoot it before I knew how to write my name... we are socialized as men not to talk about our emotions, not to display sadness or fear just display pride, anger... I was interested in my own personal psychology and how I responded to stress [in the patriarchal society]. [In addition,] one of my motivations [to think of violence is] to understand why my society is so immersed in this conflict-like mentality, why despite the end of our civil war, we have not made much advancement in terms of building peace.

This comment reflects his understanding of the current circumstance in Lebanon. While there are no direct clashes, “it was kind of just the status quo, like things were put on pause for a while and it still feels like things could erupt into greater wars” and “[it] normalize... “habituat[e] [and is] accustomed to violence”. On those terms, he agreed with the international evaluation of the continuous cycle of violence.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that he blindly accept the international view and colonial peace toward Lebanon. He expressed his honest idea on the evaluation and shared his frustration with the geopolitical aspect of international evaluation.

I would be remiss not to also mention the geopolitics and the geopolitical issues that are happening in the world right now and that have been happening in our region for well over a decade the economic sanctions that are happening in Lebanon are part of this geopolitical tension... To see how our national politics and conflict are also somewhat of a trickle-down effect of the global conflicts that are at play almost like a war by proxy. Although I do agree with that international analysis, I think international actors could do much more to cease and desist that cycle of violence than they are currently doing.

In addition to the international geopolitical agenda, he is also aware of the neocolonial aspect of the topic of gender in the Middle East. He talked,

So often narrative in the West when we talk about violence in the Middle East or justifying military anything in the Middle East. This colonial perspective has a lot to do with saving brown women from brown men, and white men saving brown women from brown men. That's very much in feminist literature, that's very much when we talk about the racial elements associated with narratives around war.

This point is also reflected in his organization view on international donors. He argued,

The problem with a lot of international donors is that they are states of politics. Very often they will be international actors in geopolitics, which is also resulting in conflict in our region. For example, donors from the US have conditional funding in Lebanon against working with specific populations in the south because they consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization. [Some] talk about peace but specifically, only focus on some issues like disarmament and fail to look at issues like the occupied Palestinian territories.

Then, he testified that the organization does not accept any conditional funding or requests to sign a non-terrorism agreement or agreements not to work in specific areas in Lebanon. This is because “that’s not what we believe our role is as an NGO”.

At the same time, he also made a different point and emphasized the necessity to get ahead of the neocolonial trap.

When we talk about the effect of neo-colonialism in national conflicts such as Lebanon, I think we forget the marginalized voices that are continental, and again this is where we talk about the voices of women. This places women in our culture in a very difficult position. On one side, they cannot talk about certain violence and changes that they would like to make in their own culture without being accused of being pro-Western and trying to digress the culture or stepping away from the culture. At the same time, if they lend themselves to that narrative about how good the West is and inside him with the West, then they'll be lending themselves to that colonial narrative of saving brown women from brown women. So very often, women and girls are just silent for inability or not wanting to betray one of the different identities that they wear.



That is why, he confirmed, as a feminist organization, it is important to have the women's and girls' backs and support the most marginalized voice. This comment illustrates that he and the organization have bypassed the stage of anti-colonialism, which is an explicit resistance to any colonial and western-originated influence and thoughts, to pursue "decolonial feminism". According to Chela Sandoval (2000), a notable theorist of postcolonial feminism and third-world feminism, decolonial feminism provides marginalized indigenous women the space to (de)construct their identity, gender, and epistemologies, which has been oppressively defined by the patriarchy and the colonial hegemonical matrix. Not only providing a space for women, the organization supports them and works to end the violence against them. In this sense, it can be analyzed that the organization embraces its own decolonial view of peace.

At the same time, it is not always easy to hold this decolonial view. He expressed his concern for future funding for the organization and other local NGOs.

I think we have been very lucky not to have been in that position too often yet. We historically have worked with Scandinavian donors and states and private foundations, with issues of gender and peace. But honestly, I think as the war in Ukraine and Russia drags on international funding as a whole and it will start to decrease. I think we will see a lot of local organizations either accepting funding that they would prefer not to but staying silent about it because of the power dynamics and they have no other choice or closing down.

This comment demonstrates the depending nature of the local NGOs on the international donors whose focuses shift with the trends and their own interests and the vulnerability of the local NGOs who twisted around by the donors' trends.

## CHAPTER III

### DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings and analysis, this section develops a discussion on the research question of this thesis. In order to reach an exploration of the primary research question, is it possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and if so, what role can they play in the process?, the discussion is divided and explored by each supplementary question. It has to be noted that the ideas and positions of local NGOs and their workers cannot be generalized, as the discourse analysis and interviews revealed their diversity. Nevertheless, this section tries to summarize their points, grasp overall tendency and understanding, and explore the answer to the questions.

#### **A. Supplementary Questions**

##### ***1. What kind of peace are these dominant practices trying to fix as colonial peace?***

As indicated in the previous section of the discourse analysis on calls for proposals of international donors, there is a type of peace that the dominant practices are fixed on. The donors tend to see peace or the acceptable level of peace (if you borrow what the interviewee frames) regarding the stability that allows society to maintain its function under the liberal state system. This point is corroborated by Lisa Schich (2022)'s paper entitled, "Decolonizing Peacebuilding". She argues that the Western liberal peacebuilding takes a form of "stability peacebuilding". The stability peacebuilding "is primarily concerned with extending state authority and strengthening rule of law. It often mirrors a colonial mindset where Western states provide 'aid' to

‘fragile and conflict- affected countries’ (FCS) instead of critiquing an economic and trade system that has left the people out” (4). Further she states, “instead of analyzing power dynamics and their own lack of language and cultural capacity, Western stability peacebuilding tends to assume a lack of local capacity and a need for a charity model of Western aid rather than reparations or economic justice” (4-5). Her critique exactly corresponds with what the dominant practices are trying to fix as peace in Lebanon.

In Lebanon, the formulation of peace as stability exists because the donors prioritize their interests and motivations. In Lebanon, the donors associate ‘peace’ with security and stability, especially the US, which recognizes Hezbollah as a terrorist group and are concerned given Israel is in geographic proximity. The UK as an ally of the US and the EU, which oversees the region as its neighbor, share similar views. That is why many donors pay attention to external and emergent events, such as the Syrian refugee influx and the Beirut blast, which can cause obvious and direct clashes that threaten the acceptable level of peace. While they emphasize the sharing common interest with the local society and communities, it is doubtful to what extent focusing on stability serves the interests of the local society. The structure in which they intervene in the local society to build peace for their own interests suggests that they inherited the colonial structure and are bound in the colonial power matrix. Thus, their defined peace can be discussed as colonial peace.

Moreover, the donors’ attitudes to the local society also explain the colonial structure. From the point of view of peace as stability, the donors’ dominant practices get into the context. On the measurement of stability, they evaluate Lebanon as an essentially weak and vulnerable state undervaluing the society and the people living there. This attitude would be reflected in excluding the local NGOs from the funding

targets. Many of them do not explicatively state it, but the required documents and factors and the duration demonstrate that they do not consider the local NGOs as priority targets.

It also demonstrates that the donors, as far as the local NGOs understand, do not want to dig up the underlying problem causing instability but believe that implementing liberal peace is the solution to achieve their peace. On the one hand, it is illuminated that the donor community takes a non-confrontational stance concerning politically sensitive topics such as family law debates and elections. Riwa Salameh (2014) analyzed that the European Commission refused a project proposal presented by local organizations aiming to reform the personal status law. As the discourse analysis section introduced, Lara Khattab (2010) highlights that USAID funding, which is also applicable to UN Women, for a campaign encouraging participation contributed to reinforcing and maintaining the existing sectarian system. That is because the municipal elections in Lebanon involve kinship, confessionalism, and sectarian structures. These cases demonstrate that the donors do not want to address the root of the problem and cause instability by digging up the problems.

On the other hand, the investigation revealed that the donors try to establish a liberal economy and politics. Both UN and state agencies prioritize strengthening an open and active liberal economy as well as holding well-participated elections. It should be noted here that political liberalization is ironically limited to holding elections, not unearthing the political causes of problems. Nevertheless, as analyzed in the discourse analysis, assertive attitudes to make the local “uncivilized” people choose ‘right’ to rebuild the politics without the deep consideration of the local circumstances do not work effectively. The State agencies’ focus on the strength of the military force to deter

the problems of their peace also reveals their belief in liberal peace. Although the donors emphasize common interests with the local community to implement these projects and funds, it is questionable to what extent the approach for their defined peace serves the interest of the locals.

## ***2. Epistemologically, do the local NGOs incorporate colonial peace?***

As the theoretical framework indicates, in order to construct decolonial peace, it needs to be critical to the idea of peace and its opposition, violence, epistemologically. Therefore, this section, epistemological examination divides into two parts, the local workers' understanding of violence and of peace and their epistemological positioning.

### **a. Understanding of the concepts**

#### **a. Violence**

Some points can be analyzed that the local organization follows the colonial peace's epistemology of violence. Firstly, several organizations adopt the "inherently violent, and potentially 'uncivil society'" (Kosmatopoulos, 2021:270). In its publications, Peace Labs presents that the organization understands that the Middle East is "violent." In addition, in the interview, the president drew a clear line between him/the organization and the other "Lebanese." This point would be arguable that the organization adopts the essentialist image of the Middle East as "inherently violent." The Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace also fulfills the point. The organization states that it can generate "a better immunized civil society," It needs to change the civil culture to create a qualified civil society in its discourse. This

illuminates their understanding of Lebanon as an “uncivil society,” as Kosmatopoulos criticizes. Furthermore, Fighters for Peace repeatedly emphasizes the culture of violence in Lebanon. This understanding complements with Springer’s (2015) argument that the culture of violence thesis is an “Orientalizing discourse concerning violence” (61). In this sense, this organization also adopts the colonial epistemological understanding of violence.

Secondly, all of them find the cause of problem of violence specifically in Lebanese context. The first group (Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, Peace Labs, March, ACT for Disappeared, UMAM Documentation and Research, and ALEF) point out the core of the problem in the Lebanese political system that fails to address the conflict. ACT for Disappeared and UMAM criticize the political system and governments that have not dealt with the civil war and have abandoned reconciliation and justice. They argue that abandonment reproduces the current violence. From a slightly different perspective, Peace Labs, March, and ALEF blame the government for failing to address the current harm and conflict. They see the government prioritizing preventing a devastating clash taken place and maintaining “normalcy”. While the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace evaluates the normalcy and silence of the society positively, it also criticizes the lack of stability guaranteed by the government.

The second group (Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, Peace Labs, March, Fighters for Peace, ALEF, and ABAAD) argues that the location of the problem is at the social norms and culture which cause harm to the people and fail to manage the conflict and differences. Some of them, especially those who find the problem in the political system argue that the violent social norms and culture have been fostered and

maintained by the political system. For example, March points out that the youth and people engaging in violence are the victims of the incited sectarian narrative by the politicians. ALEF argues that the lack of an institutional mechanism originates the social norm of violence which leads people to practice their own form of justice.

Divergently, others find the problem in the violent social norms and culture itself. The senior advisor of ABAAD clarified that the Lebanese social norms and culture of militarized masculinity cause direct harm to not only women and girls but also men in structural harm of ‘I need to become stronger and gain more’. Fighter for Peace also problematizes the “culture of violence” both in its discourse and interview. The founding member pointed out the culture of violence which normalizes all types of violence in society. Thus, these organizations see the culture as problematic because it not only causes violence but also normalizes the violence and makes people normalize, habituate, and be accustomed to violence. While there is variety in where they find the cause of problem, these are all particularly localized.

However, Kosmatopoulos (2022) argues that it needs to “re-socializ[e] the problem with violence” by “[being] aware of the geopolitics of knowledge” (210). Kosmatopoulos actually points out that the violence in Lebanon has been “ethniciz[ed]” as a unique cultural context from Eurocentric undertones (ibid:45-65). However, the causes of creating a violent-favorable environment are “entangled in geopolitical contexts that transcend [Lebanon]” (203) for example, military intervention by Syria and Israel, Israel and Palestine conflict, US-led mediation between Israel and Lebanon, US-led “war on terror,” unequal economy by neoliberalism. Thus, it should be read that we have to re-socialize the problem of violence in Lebanon as a partial product of the broader regional geopolitics. Springer (2015) shares this point, as they discusses that

reducing the reason for violence only to the culture of violence in the local community pulls the attention away from the other external causes. He comprehends that violence is not only produced by “local sociocultural histories, [but also] importantly, [by] the relational geographies of the locale” and emphasizes the need for violence to be seen as “extra-local” (63). Reflecting this point to the discussion, the targeted Lebanese NGOs do not accomplish “re-socializing” the problem. As the discussion for the first supplementary question above, all of them locate the problem specifically in the Lebanese context and do not associate violence with geopolitics and relational geographies. As the introduction pointed out, they could criticize and seek the causes of today’s violence in geopolitics. For example, March can criticize the international policy to enhance the role of the army to maintain stability and oppress social wounds. ACT for Disappeared and UMAM which deal with the past, can find the root of the cause in the liberal peacebuilding taken place after the civil war by the internationals, which sided the reconciliation process. However, they do not find the violence as “extra-local” (Springer, 2015:63). Here, it is also valuable to note that the scoping the decoloniality and re(de)constructing violence does not apply to the concern of ABAAD senior advisor of forcing the marginalized populations silent by judging which side they stand, either local or ‘the West’. It tackles both the local culture and the colonial matrix that cause the violence in order to listen carefully to the marginalized voice. Having examined this point, even though they do not incorporate into colonial peace, it cannot be argued that they fail to re(de)construct a decolonial understanding of violence.

b. Peace

Although the local peace-related NGOs and their workers have limited recognition of violence, they construct their own understanding of peace, which can be



argued as different from the colonial peace in two points; firstly, the local NGOs voice their own thoughts on peace, and secondly, the local NGOs capture the problem regarding peace in the larger picture.

The NGOs all agreed that peace is not the absence of direct conflict or violence. This was one of the frequent clarifications about peace they used, as all of the targeted NGO workers agreed that no clashing does not mean peace. However, there is divergence among them on how to frame peace. The first group (Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace, Peace Labs, Fighter for Peace, ACT for Disappeared, and UMAM) formulates their peace definition as positive peace, saying it represents the absence of direct, structural, and cultural violence. In this sense, as the interview analysis section pointed out, it is arguable that they might “think that without them (Northern theorists), we could not talk about peace” (Cruz, 2021:280). However, at the same time, it is demonstrated that from their word choice that they are not “simply whitewashed, meaning that they must pass the scientific peace matrix and go through some sort of classification so they can be useful to the dominant knowledge” (ibid.). Some (Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace, UMAM, and ACT for Disappeared) did not use “positive peace” directly but tried to explain peace as the opposition to the entangled direct, structural, and cultural violence in their words. Yet, their efforts illuminate that their conception of peace indeed does not perfectly fit into the Northern theories without using precise academic terms to describe it. On the other hand, other (Peace Labs) makes other kinds of effort: adding an extra condition to the traditional definition of peace. Even though there are multiple of violence, it can be seen as normal and is no longer problematic. That is why the president of Peace Labs emphasizes the condition of having “systems and mechanisms in place to work with

conflict and transform the cultures and the structures that cause grievances and inequalities between people” (a founder and one of the board members of Peace Labs, personal interview, 17 February 2023). This idea is uniquely formulated in a society where people normalize the types of violence. Thus, it reveals that they are not simply whitewashed but actively trying to formulate their idea of peace while using the concept of positive peace.

The other groups (March, ALEF, and ABAAD) approach peace outside of the Northern theories. The concept of peace they are arguing is more about individual perception and mentality<sup>19</sup>. The president of March defined peace as “a whole process for acceptance of differences, [meaning] hearing the other and acknowledging that he’s here with all of his differences” (a founder of March, personal interview, 21 March 2022). ALEF and ABAAD interviewees also agreed with the point that peace is a movement for a perceptual change in others to live together peacefully. This is divergent from the Northern theories in two points. Firstly, as it showed, they do not refer to Gultang’s classical definition of peace. Secondly, they do not describe peace as a discrete state of absence of violence but as a process. In a society where there is a culture of violence (borrowing terms the interviewees use) and where multiple types of violence are normalized, peace does is clearly far from the picture. This idea of peace is unique and specifically speaks about the Lebanese situation.

Having considered how the local NGOs’ understanding of peace divergent from the Northern theories, one common theme of peace appears. As demonstrated before,

---

<sup>19</sup> There are certainly the Northern theories dealing with the interpersonal communication and peace. I remember the first textbook we used in a course of “Introduction of Peace and Conflict Studies” was about the interpersonal conflict and communication. Indeed, John Paul Lederach, whom is listed by Curz as one of the Northern theorists also talks about interpersonal communication (for example, *Building Peace Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, 1998). However, the individual perception and mentality do not *the center* of the definition of peace.

the local NGOs locates problem at situation in which types of violence are normalized and integrated into “the normalcy of society.” From this perspective, their understanding of peace is the opposite of the pretend “normalcy” forced on the Lebanese society<sup>20</sup>.

This idea of peace differs from not only the Northern theories of peace but also the donors’ peace. This understanding of peace echoes with “social justice peacebuilding” argued by Schirch (2022) as the opposite to the stability peacebuilding in terms that it centers on “intersectional social justice ethics and collective action against repressive and authoritarian regimes” and “has a long history and grew out of legacies of resistance to colonialism” (3). In fact, the targeted NGO workers are aware of and criticize the donors’ colonial peace. All interviewees from the targeted NGOs acknowledged the existence of an agenda from the international donors. Some (ACT for Disappeared, UMAM, and ABAAD), in fact, pointed out that the portrait of Lebanon as a violent county by the donors is a justification for intervening in the society and recognized it as a form of neo-coloniality. Furthermore, they have a clear understanding of what colonial peace has justified. Some (Fighter for Peace and ALEF) also argued that the agenda is to establish the entrance point of intervention in Syria. Others (Peace Labs and ABAAD) talked about the peace-related funds are exploited to marginalize the specific communities, namely Shias in the South in the relationship with Hezbollah. In addition to that, others also criticize the donors’ lack of intention to solve the problem. The ALEF interviewee commented that “the donors are not spending money on this [a core of the problem]. They’re spending money on the symptoms” (a board member of

---

<sup>20</sup> At the same time, again, it should be noted the framing is not directly spoken by them but is the author’s summary. Yet, as Cruz (2021) clarifies, decolonial peace is “finding a voice of its (their) own” (281), and therefore, the summary and reflection of their voices to summarize decolonial peace is still valuable.

ALEF, personal interview, 14 March 2022). In other words, the donors, as far as the local NGOs understand, do not want to dig up the underlying problem causing instability. Yet, these donors do not have a problem as long as a certain level of stability is maintained. However, for the local NGOs, that acceptance level differs. Even at the level of stability in which society is “functioning,” it does not mean it is a “purely functional society” (a program director of the Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace, personal interview, 17 March 2023). What they are seeking is to oppose and transform the pretend “normalcy” forced on Lebanese society, not the pretense of stability. Moreover, the local NGO workers criticize the international donors refraining from tackling the core of the problem.

Delving into this point, it can be examined that their understanding of peace also is counter to the current idea of peace in today’s world, as argued by Vivienne Jabri (2013) and Robert Cox (1981) outlined in the introduction. The current idea of peace’s description of ‘violence’ as a ‘problem’ has been intentionally constructed for when that violence becomes a hazard to today’s prevailing power structure. However, according to the local NGO workers, this structure itself obstructs and frustrates the achievement of peace by tricking society into keeping “normalcy.” In that sense, they are taking critical approach, by which does not take prevailing social structure for granted but is critical to the prevailing power structure by considering its origins and developing process (Cox, 1981:129). Different from the previous localization of the problem in society, it can be discussed that they capture the problem regarding peace funds in the larger picture. Thus, this disparity coming from the donors’ colonial peace confirms the differences in two senses. The local NGOs are able to voice their own ideas on peace, defining it by themselves, and they capture that understanding in the larger picture.

b. Epistemological positioning

Even though the Lebanese local peace-related workers have formulated their own understanding of peace, it should be critically examined to what extent the epistemology of peace differs from the colonial peace. Shani (2019) criticizes that the local peacebuilding “reproduce[s] its central tenets while simultaneously constructing a space outside of its interventionary practices” (47) by defining ‘problem’ and ‘peace’. The rationale section in the introduction distinguished the peacebuilding and peace-related work and set peace-related NGOs as research target to limit the peacebuilding assumption. It stated that “peacebuilding is naturally associated with liberal peace... since an attitude of ‘building peace’ itself has an assumption that there is no ‘peace.’” This formulation is a ‘problem’ in post-conflict societies until peacebuilding activities intervene, which is a ‘solution.’” Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis research indicate that peace-related NGOs partially share its nature with the assumption of peacebuilding.

The Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace defines peace as civil peace which is enabled by “a better immunized” and qualified civil society and argues that qualified civil society as ones who foster human rights, good governance, and peacebuilding and in practicing deliberative democracy. With this formation of understanding, the organization justifies its intervention into society in which does not equip with the better immunized civil society. In addition, it indicates that they gain the “hierarchical morals” from “consensus on human rights, liberal democracy, and secular

globalization, meaning liberal peace” (Kosmatopoulos (2021:259-260). While they had activities with the religious leaders, it was also to enhance human rights in the religious courts. Therefore, it stands on the consensus on human rights and secular globalization and justifies its intervention to the society. Referring to the values of liberal peace and justifying its intervention is shared by ALEF and ABAAD. As human rights organization, ALEF seeks its legitimacy in human rights and justifies its intervention in fixing the human rights violation. In other words, it can be examined that the organization resorts to hierarchical morals. In terms of human rights, ABAAD can also be argued that it gains the hierarchical morals to intervene in society. In sum, they position themselves as civilized who acquire the hierarchical morals over the local community, which needs their help and their education as uncivilized population and justify its intervention. In this sense, it fails to go beyond the colonial peace structure.

At the same time, it is arguable to what extent the local NGOs reproduce the colonial peace structure by “fail[ing] to engage with the ‘local’ target population on *their own terms*”(47). This point is recalled by a comment by ABAAD interviewee:

When we talk about the effect of neo-colonialism..., I think we forget the marginalized voices.... On one side, they cannot talk about certain violence and changes that they would like to make in their own culture without being accused of being pro-Western and trying to digress the culture or stepping away from the culture. At the same time, if they lend themselves to that narrative about how good the West is an inside him with the West, then they’ll be lending themselves to that colonial narrative.... So very often, they are just silent for inability or not wanting to betray one of the different identities that they wear.

This comment asks whether the above evaluation becomes the one that is “accused of being pro-Western and trying to digress the culture or stepping away from the culture”

and to marginalize the local voices<sup>21</sup>. The reason for this is that the local NGOs do not adopt “the essential image of inherently violent” (Kosmatopoulos, 2021:270) of the post-conflict society as colonial peace does but find the problems in “experience, on everyday life and the historical accumulation of their own resistance” (Cruz, 2021:279).

For example, although Fighters for Peace refers to the culture of violence, their formulation of the argument is actually divergent from “Orientalizing discourse concerning violence.” This “Orientalizing discourse concerning violence” and colonial peace, by nature, “[has] the orientalist characterization of the ‘Other’ from the great South” (Fontan, 2012:176, translated and cited in Cruz, 2021:280-281). However, for Fighters for Peace, the organization's members are actually the perpetrators and, at the same time, victims of the culture. They grew up in the culture, engaged in the civil war, and analyzed the culture of violence works as a source of violence. The ACT for Disappeared defines peace in the association with the families of disappeared psychological wounds “to support the families of the missing and disappeared in their demand” (“MHPSS Guidelines for Working with the Families of the Missing in Lebanon,” 2021). The interviewee of ABAAD also emphasizes his subjectivity. He grew up in what he referred to as a “culture of militarized masculinity” (senior technical advisor of ABAAD, personal interview, 23 March 2023) and suffered from it. Therefore, the critique that they “reproduce...constructing a space outside of its interventionary practices [by] fail[ing] to engage with the ‘local’ target population on *their own terms*” (Shani, 2019:47) does not fully apply to the local peace-related NGOs. They certainly get a justification to intervene in the society by defining peace, which is the same structure of colonial peace, however, it does not necessarily mean that they fail to engage with the

---

<sup>21</sup> Whereas the NGOs are not the marginalized and they raise their voice up and carry out the active projects as it has been reviewed, it does not change that their voices are much smaller and marginalized in the international sphere.

population<sup>22</sup>.

**3. *How do the power relationships within the matrix of colonial power influence the local NGOs, and how do the local NGOs collide with the influences?***

The theoretical framework in the introduction section indicated that the influence of colonial peace over the local communities has two epistemological and practical reasons. Moreover, it also reviewed that the practical reasons consists of financial impact and practices impact. This section explores the two aspects of the practical influence of colonial peace and how the local NGOs collide with the influences.

a. Practice

It can be discussed that the targeted NGOs enhance the colonial peace by referring practices and techniques of colonial peace. A majority of the targeted NGOs (Lebanese Foundation for the Permanent Civil Peace, Peace Labs, March, ALEF, ABAAD) exercise the peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation activities as ‘face’ practices. For example, Peace Labs declares it was founded to “to advance peace work in the Middle East” such as dialogue facilitation, training, coaching, technical support, grants, and in-kind contributions (“About us,” n.d.). It was also analyzed that the president of March parachuted the practice of theater, which she learned in her study of mediation in France, into the communities in Tripoli. From this point, by referring to

---

<sup>22</sup> At the same time, it should also be critically noted that the research of this thesis cannot argue whether and to what extent the NGOs’ voices are truly reflections of voices of “the ‘local’ target population on *their own terms*” (Shani, 2019:47). Engaging with the target population does not necessarily mean that the local peace-related NGOs fully adopt and represent the ‘local’ population. In order to examine it, the qualitative ethnographical research or quantitative research on the public opinion are required.



the hierarchical technics of colonial peace, they would claim the legitimacy and justification to intervene in the community.

At the same time, it is also illustrated from this research that the targeted NGOs do not parade technical hierarchical power. The interviewee of ALEF expressed the difficulty of gaining legitimacy in Lebanese society only with the value of human rights and therefore argued the necessity to be strategical to address the benefits of each party. Moreover, March, Fighter for Peace, ALEF, and ABAAD pointed out that they often become a target of attack by community members who do not agree with their values and activities. Even then, they commonly try to convince the members what they do is not something that leads to exclusive benefit to one but becomes a mutual benefit. Remarkably, Fighter for Peace emphasizes what the organization is doing is replicating its own experiences of change instead of forcing the conflict resolution skill made from the technical hierarchical power of the peace techniques. March engages in the community for a long time and develops an equal and respectful relationship with the community members. What can be found from these attitudes and approaches is not hierarchal positioning over the community members. In a nutshell, they may refer to hierarchical morals and technics to justify their activities, but it does not solely provide them the domestic legitimacy as the previous study argued. Therefore, they make efforts to gain legitimacy from the communities by standing on the same foot, building trustful relationships, and convincing the communities. Thus, their practices are not simply shaped by hierarchical morals and technics and are not trapped in colonial peace.

b. Finance

Although the local peace-related NGOs have their own understanding of peace, it does not mean that all NGOs can fully realize that vision because of financial

reason. However, their situation is slightly different from what the literature review pointed out. The literature states that for almost all Lebanese NGOs, “funding agencies shape their goals, objectives, and tactics” and the central motivation of the NGOs becomes to meet the donors’ interests (Kreidie and Itani, 2016:17). From the investigation, there are several ways that the NGOs are dealing with the funding issue.

The first way is to align themselves with the same direction of the donors as the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace and March suggested. That direction is to enhance stability in the community and society. The shared direction allows them not to struggle to find donors. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they fully agree with what the donors seek. Rather, they are aware of the difference but, at the same time, talk to donors at the equal position and choose the donors. In this sense, the organizations enjoy the autonomy to select the donors and design the activities. However, it is not the case that all organizations can share this direction with donors. Rather, this strategy was only achieved by two organizations out of eight. Thus, it is doubtful to what extent the overlapping interest is the mutual interest for international donors and the local communities.

The ones which do not share the direction with donors have to take on other strategies. The second way is to choose the donors which the NGOs can compromise with in terms of the donors’ requirement and approach. This strategy is taken by Peace Labs and ABAAD. They mention that they apply extra scrutiny in choosing which donors to get funds from to maintain their reputation in the community. One approach to this strategy is to get funds from private foundations and global cooperations, which share the same ideas and vision. Yet, it also becomes challenging when the chosen

donors change their focus. A combination of this method and the following are used to address this issue.

The third way is to accept about what the donors require to the extent they can keep their vision. This strategy is practiced by the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, Peace Labs, and UMAM. All of them mentioned that the donors' focus is swayed by trends, and therefore they have a challenging time keeping the donors' attention on the same activities. To deal with the trends, they create new projects and activities to satisfy the donors' requirements through pivoting on their specialty around their vision. It does not mean that these organizations are totally sharpened by the donors but accommodate the donors' trends. Thus, it is not the same to be subjugated to the donors and to just serve them.

However, to use the third strategy, the organization should have a larger vision allowing them to create the wide scope of their activities. This condition does not apply to all organizations. For example, ACT for Disappeared and ALEF have the specific theory of change and a narrower list of desired activities. Yet, as they expressed in the interview, oftentimes, the theories of change are not the same as the donors. Thus, the fourth strategy is following what the donors call for at the present while looking for better funding opportunities in the future. Sometimes they must do what they believe to be outside the center of their activities. The founding member of Fighter for Peace sees it as "being industry only to make money." However, they pointed out that they cannot afford to stick with their central focus. Therefore, in order to sustain the activities, they have to be fund-driven by applying flexibility. Here, it becomes "funding agencies shape their goals, objectives, and tactics" and become their center point to meet the donors' interests (Kreidie and Itani, 2016:17).

The last way is not to rely on the donors if the organization cannot stand with the status of “being industry only to make money.” This is the case of Fighter for Peace. While it cannot sustain the organization and is less impactful on the communities, it prioritizes holding its own vision of decolonial peace. At the same time, it should be critical if the organization can really realize its vision with the lack of mobility and impact. The non-dependence of the donors does not only mean working as a volunteer without payment. Actually, the board member of ALEF shared his idea to create a fund pool for the local organization, in which donors put money, but a commission of the local organization takes care of strategizing the theory of change and of the examination of the applications by the following organization (a board member of ALEF, personal interview, 14 March 2022). Therefore, it can be a strategy, but in fact, he confessed the idea was not accepted by the donors and failed in 2016 (*ibid.*). This experience ironically demonstrates that this strategy does not work to overcome colonial peace.

So far, it has explored the targeted NGOs’ ways to keep their vision and goal in the relations with the donors. It, at the same time, can hardly say that the NGOs overcome the colonial peace. The NGOs which can talk and negotiate with donors in equal relations are limited to those who share the same direction with the donors. It even means that their ability to realize their vision of peace is framed by colonial peace. For other organizations which have different directions and locations of the problem have to compromise and also follow what the international donors formulate. Furthermore, their activities for decolonial peace are also limited by colonial peace. The above part discussed that the Lebanese NGOs want to address the core of the problem and dig up the underlying problem causing instability to construct decolonial peace. Addressing the core of the problem here means engaging in “politically problematic” (a

board member of ALEF, personal interview, 14 March 2022). However, it is examined that the local NGOs cannot actually address the core of the problem in relation to the donors. There are studies demonstrating that Lebanese NGOs tend to avoid engaging in politics in periods when political conflict intensifies to affiliated with any side (Kantar, 2009, translated and cited in Dawoody, 2014:228). That is why they “wait for and rely on donor funding” to deal with public policy and advocacy activities (ibid:227). In addition to it, as the board member of ALEF pointed out since the international donors adopt “a non-confrontational stance” to the existing sectarian system (Salameh, 2014:18-19), the local NGOs end up with “disappointingly...continue[ing] to fail to ease political tensions (Kantar 2009 translated and cited in Dawoody, 2014:228) and tackle with the political problem. In fact, there is a lesson learned from ABAAD that they cannot make an impact without having donors on their backs. Salameh (2014) examines that ABAAD started a campaign for gender equality in the private sphere in collaboration with leaders of religious institutions, and it attracted donors and received huge amounts of funding (18-19). However, it also failed just by enhancing the legitimacy of the authority of the religious institutions, which protect the patriarchal and sectarian system and hold women hostage (18). Salameh analyzes that this is because the donors have “the upper hand in drawing strategies... leaving the system” and “women’s organizations have become dependent on donor money to maintain their work and pay salaries” (19). This study critically suggests that many organizations, except the few that can take the first (sharing the same direction) and last (not

depending on donors) strategies, are urged to take the fourth way in the above summary. Therefore, the financial aspect is an exceedingly strong influence on the local NGOs and their activities.

At the same time, it is important to note that it still does not mean that they subjugate the donors. While their activities and goals, strategies, and tactics are temporally sharpened by the donors, it does not mean that they throw their own goals, objectives, tactics, and vision. The interviewee from ALEF is extremely aware that the organization is fund-driven, and its activities are shared by the donors. It is worth pasting what he said, which was reviewed in the interview funding section. He said,

Even if we're fund driven, so we still take money for capacity building, but you're using the capacity building differently. I'm still going to tell the donors, yes, the ISF (Internal Security Force) is better than before, but I'm doing something else at the same time. I'm not cheating. We are not cheating. Sorry. But we're still being donors driven while doing as much as we can and doing whatever WE want to do using this money (a board member of ALEF, personal interview, 14 March 2022).

This indicates that while they follow donors but at the same time, they set their own takeaways from the projects and “add a bit” of their values and true activities to the donors’ requirements<sup>23</sup>. The step would be too small to discuss as overcoming the colonial peace but still push forward the NGOs to move one step forward to realize their decolonial peace.

---

<sup>23</sup> The approach of doing projects for the ‘local’ vision of peace in the communities would be criticized an imposition of postcolonial rationality and subjectivity upon the local actors who “who may operate according to different understandings of rationality intelligible only to their own particular cosmological constellations” (Shani, 2019:54). This critique is plausible and points out the limitation of this thesis that defines the decolonial peace narrowly.

**B. Primary Question: Is it possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and if so, what role can they play in the process?**

As the theoretical framework section and the above part indicated, there are two obstacles in front of the local NGO workers to construct decolonial peace: epistemological and practical reasons. So far as this thesis explores, the discussion can be summarized in the table below.

<b>Reasons for the local peacebuilding being trapped in the colonial peace</b>		<b>Overcome?</b>
Epistemological	5. Taking the liberal value as “face value”	△
	6. Taking peacebuilding hierarchical position	△
Practical	7. Following the practice of colonial peacebuilding	△
	8. Following the finance of colonial peacebuilding	×

Table 2: Summary of the discussing points

From these points, the thesis argues that the local peace-related NGOs are not part of decolonial peace but rather, contribute to colonial formations of peace. Nonetheless, there are still the spaces that they can make decolonial peace possible.

Epistemologically, on the one hand, the targeted organizations do not attribute the violence with the context of the geopolitics and the relational geographies of the locale but also seek the location in their local society, either at the government and politics or the culture and social norms. In this sense, it can be argued that the workers internalize the discourse and idea of Orientalism, as Springer suggests (2015), and colonial peace. However, on the other hand, this thesis explored that the workers

construct their own understanding of peace, which is outside of the Northern theory and colonial peace discourse in the larger picture. They are aware of and critical to the colonial peace and, therefore, “re-socialize” (Kosmatopoulos, 2022:210) the idea of peace.

This local NGOs’ divergence regarding the understanding of colonial peace in violence and peace illustrates the ambiguity of the local peace-related NGOs workers toward decolonial peace. It can be argued that they recognize and criticize the obvious intervention of the colonial peace. Still, they are unaware to the invisible and cognitive influence of the colonial peace over them, which is the way to capture ‘the problem.’

This means that they fail and skip an essential step for achieving decoloniality. Walter D. Mignolo, who argues the concept of the matrix of colonial power and his colleague argue that self-reflection is vital to achieve decoloniality. They clarify that decoloniality is to “delink” ourselves from the structure of knowledge imposed by the West (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018:120) and, therefore, self-reflection is important as they cite a comment of an activist: “Our other-communication, must lead us to recognize the external aggression, but also the ethical, political, and strategic challenges that emerge from our own contradictions” (37). Compared with this activist cited by Mignolo and Walsh, it can be argued that the targeted NGO workers are weakly engaged in self-reflection for their recognition to overcome the epistemological aspect of colonial peace. At the same time, it should also be noted that some of them (Fighters for Peace, UMAM, ALEF, and ABAAD) are cautiously thinking about their positioning to the structure of knowledge and engaging in self-reflection. If they further advance their self-reflection to their own



contradictions, it might be possible that they become also to be critical their internalized Orientalist view and “re-socializing” violence as well.

This self-reflection would be also required to the NGOs workers when they set their epistemological positionality. On the one hand, at present, the local peace-related NGO workers certainly reproduce the colonial peace structure of justifying its intervention with the idea of peace by rationalizing their existential value and exercising their practice. On the other hand, the previous argument of this thesis also showed that many of them find ‘problem’ and ‘peace’ in “experience, on everyday life and the historical accumulation of their own resistance” (Cruz, 2021:279). In this sense, they are not just intervener to the communities but also “communities, social movements, or subjectivities” as the actors of the decolonial peace movement (ibid:285). This perspective provides new way to discuss the local peace-related NGOs. For example, while Peace Lab emphasizes that that evaluation of the region is based on their analysis of the root cause of the problem to answer the local need and requirement, its positioning is as intervener as separated ‘self’ from other rest of ‘Lebanese’ as the president of organization indicated in the interview. On the other hand, ALEF expressed its difficulty to gain the legitimacy in the communities, but its activities are motivated by its own experience of “the deteriorating human rights situation in Lebanon (“About ALEF,” n.d.). From the point of view, when the local NGOs hold and claim their subjectivities as Lebanese and engage in their own communities, there is still possibility that their epistemological positioning can be decolonial peace.

At the same time, the fact still reminds that there is another obstacle to making decolonial peace possible by the local peace-related NGOs: practical reasons. In practice, many of the local peace-related NGOs refer and gain legitimacy from the

Western-made peacebuilding practices. In this sense, acquiring these practices work as “a rhetorical device of ‘Othering’ through which particular citizens or parties are depicted not only as isolated from the whole, but often as radically different and dissimilar” (Kosmatopoulos, 2021:272). This point is precisely expressed by the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace and Peace Labs. Nevertheless, other NGOs show that they do not ‘Other’ the communities to implement their practice. Rather, they need to gain legitimacy from the communities by standing on the same foot, building trustful relationships, and exploring the practices with the communities. In this sense, they place themselves as the partners of the communities, not as ‘experts’ or ‘interveners.’ This point again indicates the importance of the self-reflection particularly on “strategic challenges that emerge from our own contradictions” (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018:37). In order to be part of decolonial peace, the local peace-related NGOs have to engage in the critical self-reflection of ‘how are they seen as?’ and ‘what kind of practice do they employ?’.

Financial obstacle is the most challenging for the local NGOs because it is the linefine for them. At present, almost all NGOs face to the obstacle of finance in front of the colonial peace. They cannot talk and negotiate with donors in equal relations, meaning that their activities are framed by colonial peace. Those who have different directions and locations of the problem must compromise and follow what the international donors formulate. Thus, it can be also argued that they become another hand of the reproduction of the colonial peace and of the colonial matrix of power<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup> Speaking of being another hand of power, a critique on NGO-ization cannot be ignored. One study demonstrates that since the Lebanese income tax law offers deductions on profit subject to tax if these deductions go to charity, the Donors prefer funding NGOs to the public sectors to get the tax exemptions (AbouAssi, 2014:225). The tax exemptions is a serious issue in Lebanon today, especially in the devastative economic crisis, run out the state budget. In the macro finance, the Lebanese local NGOs are standing on the side of powered and contribute to the structure. However, it is not the main point of this

However, the previous discussion of this thesis also illustrated that the local peace-related NGOs are not fully subjugated to the donors. One can argue that if the relationship of funders and recipients is not transformed, the local NGOs are still being trapped in the colonial peace. However, while the targeted NGOs showed that they follow donors, at the same time, they can hold and set their own takeaways from the projects and ‘add a bit’ of their values and true activities to the donors’ requirements. Even though the ‘bit’ is not directly reflected in the immediate outcome and practice, with the accumulation of the “bit” of own takeaway, they might be able to implement a project for their vision of peace at their will. Therefore, even in the environments that the local peace-related NGOs need to get the funds from the international donors, their vision of peace might become possible.

With the four points trapping the Lebanese local peace-related NGOs to the colonial peace, this thesis examines that the local peace-related NGOs are not part of decolonial peace but more of colonial peace at present, however, there are still the spaces that they can fill to make decolonial peace possible by them. It also argues that these spaces for the decolonial peace are indicated by the targeted local peace-related NGOs themselves. This suggests that they are making efforts to find a way to get through the colonial peace. The distance to get overcoming the colonial peace and to be part of decolonial peace of NGOs has been perceived negatively, as Kantar (2009) describes as “disappointed” (translated and cited in Dawoody, 2014:228), and in fact, there are organizations which do not engage in the struggle but wallow in their position as being part of colonial peace. However, undervaluing and disregarding the NGOs

---

thesis, focusing on the relationship between the donors and the local NGOs, this point is left in the sidenote.

which making efforts contributes to making them silent, which the debate between the anti-coloniality and locality has produced, as the ABAAD interviewee described.

Taking a close look at the NGOs' discourse and the voices tells us that the local NGO workers are not 'powerless' in the matrix of colonial power as portrayed.

Decolonial studies, especially decolonial feminist theory, shed light on the point. Jennifer Manning (2021), who studies on Maya women's movement and organization, similarly analyze that Maya women's organization are created in a space between indigenous worldviews and coloniality "filled with ambiguities and contradictions" (1213) such as their location of the problem of gender violence and recognition of the role of women. Nevertheless, she argues that Maya women "balance and negotiate coloniality/modernity with their own ways of working and organizing" (ibid.). They develop and construct the organization based on their specific social, cultural, and historical context. It means, she emphasizes, that they "exercise their self-determination" to speak their voices (ibid.). In relation to the colonial peace formulated by the donors in Lebanon, the local peace-related NGO workers make efforts to construct the idea of peace and make some strategies to keep holding the vision. While at present they are more part of the colonial peace, they are partly engaging in the effort for imagining and realizing their decoloniality. Ultimately, this figure illuminates that they are engaging in a struggle and are on the way to reach completely achieving decolonial peace, which the struggle is challenging, and the way is not even.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to examine if it is possible for the local peace-related NGOs to conceive decolonial peace and, if so, where the space for the possibility can be found to unpack the black box regarding peace and violence in Lebanon. Based on the investigation of discourse analysis, interviews, and discussion, it concludes that **the local peace-related NGOs are not part of decolonial peace, but rather, contribute to colonial formations of peace. Nonetheless, there are still the spaces that they can and are filling to make decolonial peace possible.**

This conclusion is reached by examining what kind of colonial peace is exercised in Lebanon and how and whether the local peace-related NGOs adopt/follow to the colonial peace from decolonial lens. The discourse analysis on the donors' calls for proposal illuminated that donors prioritize state security and social stability, which they consequently construct as 'peace'. As a strategy, they believe that the stability can only be achieved by implementing a liberal peace agenda. As a result, they refrain from digging into the underlying problem that can cause societal instability, such as political structure, social norms, and culture.

The discussion chapter illuminated that since the type of peace and attitude of funds inherited the colonial features, it can be argued that formations of colonial peace are deployed in Lebanon. outlining the aspects that trap the local peacebuilding workers' engagement in the framework of colonial peace, I examined their positions in four aspects: their understanding of peace and violence, their positioning vis-à-vis questions of colonial peace, their peace practice and their finances.

In terms of epistemological reasons, their understanding of concepts and own positioning, the findings show that peace-related NGOs workers internalize the Orientalist viewpoints. Regarding their understanding of concept, the explored organizations do not re-socialize ‘violence’ and seek its roots in the culture of the local society. For their own positioning, local peace-related NGO workers reproduce the colonial peace structure by justifying its intervention with the idea of peace by rationalizing their existential value and exercising their practice. Therefore, it argued that the local NGOs are now closer to part of colonial peace.

At the same time, this thesis also found that the researched NGOs are making efforts to challenge the constraints. For their understanding of concepts, they construct their own understanding of peace, intending to dig in the causes of problem by opposing the pretend “normalcy” forced on the Lebanese society. Considering this point, it argued that they take the critical approach to the liberal peacebuilding and colonial matrix of power. To the trap of the NGOs’ own positioning, many of the targeted NGOs try to formulate ‘problem’ and ‘peace’ from their subjective “experience, on everyday life” (Cruz, 2021:279), not from the position of intervener to the communities. From these efforts made by the NGOs, it explored that they are partly engage in the self-reflection for realizing decoloniality. Thus, it further argued when the local NGOs further advance the self-reflection on “the ethical, political, and strategic challenges that emerge from [their] own contradictions” (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018:37), there is still possibility that their epistemology becomes part of decolonial peace.

Furthermore, I illustrate that many of the local peace-related NGOs are still part of colonial peace in terms of practice and finance. In practice, they refer to and seek to gain legitimacy from Western peacebuilding practices. Acquiring these practices wors

kas “a rhetorical device of ‘Othering’ (Kosmatopoulos, 2021:272) of the communities that do not exercise the hierarchical peace practice. Financially, at present, almost all NGOs face the obstacle of finance. They cannot talk and negotiate with donors on equal footing.

At the same time, NGOs are not just passively accepting the current situation. In terms of practices, they are aware and critical that they cannot gain legitimacy exclusively from the hegemonic peace practice. Nevertheless, they figured they need to stand on the same foot, build trustful relationships, and explore the practices with the community as partners. Financially, they make the effort to get one step closer to realizing their vision of peace. With the accumulation of the ‘adding a bit’ to the donors’ requirement and of their own takeaway, they might be able to implement a project for their vision of peace at their will. From the research finding and discussion, it is concluded that the local peace-related NGOs are not part of decolonial peace but rather, contribute to colonial formations of peace. Nonetheless, there are still the spaces that they can and are filling to make decolonial peace possible through the further engagement of self-reflection and the accumulation of their own takeaway from the donors’ projects.

#### **A. Limitation**

At the same time, there are two limitations in this research. Firstly, formulating the research question does not fully reflect the decolonial literature. Theoretical framework already indicated that the centralized and institutionalized peace work tends to fail to go beyond the liberal peacebuilding. Moreover, the rationale part in introduction chapter also noted that since NGOs are, by their nature, “often engineered

by internationals, [they] have failed to offer support to plenums or even to sympathize with their cause” (Belloni, 2016:41). Nevertheless, this thesis set the assumption that it is significant to examine the Lebanese local NGOs since they is perceived to play the significant role in peace work in Lebanon (“Lebanon: Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Lebanon”). However, from the nature, NGO does not necessarily represent the local population and the decolonial peace movement as Cruz argues.

Moreover, the thesis started from another assumption that the ‘locals’ and the local NGOs want to achieve decoloniality. Shani (2019) theoretically points out that turning to the local does not necessarily mean that it leads to overcoming coloniality and achieving decoloniality in the world where the individual subjectivity is constituted by the postcolonial rationality (54). Since this thesis stood on this assumption, it cannot go beyond the narrow definition of decoloniality, constituted on postcolonial rationality. Nor can it examine decoloniality broadly regarding cosmology as Shani (2019) suggests.

In addition, practically, previous literature demonstrates that part of the locals and the local NGOs are satisfied and wallow in the current situation in the matrix of colonial peace. Lebanon is also a specific case in that most Lebanese in the study see strengthening the relationship with France, its former suzerain, as being in Lebanese interests (“Crisis of Confidence: Lebanese Reflect on Their Crisis, Their Institutions, and Their Future,” 2021:9). As a result, this thesis cannot examine if the local peace-related NGOs want to engage in the further effort to be part of decolonial peace while this thesis argues roles that they play to make decolonial peace possible. Therefore, it reflects that research assumptions were not initially set on the previous decolonial literature.



The second limitation regards the implementation of the research. The selection of the targeted NGOs has a limitation. Per the limited timeframe, I selected the targets NGOs that somehow made themselves heard with their active work in peace online. Although I attempted to reduce the limitation by asking for suggestions from a local peacebuilding worker who used to be my supervisor for an internship, there might exist other NGOs than the supervisor and I listed up. I selected the research targets having ‘peace’ and/or ‘violence’ in their mission statement. However, I reflect that this extraction criteria already limit the idea of peace. Oliver Richmond (2019) argues that in this age, when a liberal international architecture does no longer work, peace formation is entwined with “agonistic, contradictory mobility of people, knowledge, capital and arms” (35). Yet, ‘peace’ limits of everyday agency “to mitigate away from violence” (36). This dilemma, in fact, is felt in the investigation of the ‘peace’-related NGOs. They want to oppose of the pretend “normalcy” forced on the Lebanese society, which can be read as revolt against unjust authority (ibid:34). However, it can be found that the NGOs refrain to be seen as revolt using ‘violence’ with all their strength. However, ‘peace’ with justice as Richmond suggests does not reduce ‘peace’ to non-violence. This indicates that the research extraction criteria limited the understanding and epistemology of peace. There might be excluded NGOs that take a different path on behalf of peace than ones I selected.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> In this sense, throughout this thesis process including designing, implementing investigation, analyzing the date, developing the arguments, and concluding all the steps, I was challenged by the question, “how do I understand peace?” while I ask to others ‘how do they understand peace?’. As a student, majoring peace studies in the BA and MA in a university adopted the American style educational system in Japan and taking the certificates for Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding from the Center of Justice and Peacebuilding in the state, I was and still am the one, “whitewashed” by colonial peace. This thesis gives me opportunity to engage self-reflection. Nevertheless, the limited understanding of ‘peace’ for the study should be admitted as limitation.

Similarly, the selection of international donors was limited. With time constraints, it is impossible to include all the actors, and then this research limited the international donors to UN and state agencies. However, as the research proceeded, the significance of the international private foundations appeared<sup>26</sup> as the many NGOs get funds from them. Therefore, lacking the international private foundation is a limitation of this research.

In addition, personal factor may also influence on the implementation of the investigation. As international student with the intermediate level Arabic, I could not carry out the investigation in Arabic. Still, There are some Arabic only reports by the NGOs and some interviewee might feel more comfortable expressing their complex ideas in Arabic. Thus, future work should consider performing more in Arabic if there is more time and recourse.

## **B. Contribution**

Still, this thesis may contribute to deepening our understanding of peacemaking in Lebanon and NGOs' understanding of violence and peace and how the international donors influence them. Firstly, the previous studies of peace and violence in Lebanon and the activities for these were limited in examining the peacebuilding organizations narrowly. This thesis aimed not to limit the understanding of peace only to 'peacebuilding' and therefore expanded the research targets to 'peace-related'. As a result, it could listen to the local NGOs' voices regarding peace and violence.

---

<sup>26</sup> To be fair, I did not even have the idea of the private foundations at the stage of designing the research. It would indicate that I had a limited view on the today's international sphere. While in globalization and post-colonial age of and post-state, the private actors other than states and interstate institution display their power, I would be trapped in the traditional idea, essentializing the states.

Secondly, this thesis also deeply explored what the local NGOs mean by peace and violence epistemologically and how the definitions manifest on the ground. As outlined in the literature review, little literature explores the local peacebuilding NGOs critically. The evaluation of Lebanon suffering from “a continuing cycle of violence” prevails and seems to be adopted by the local NGOs workers without the critical examination. This thesis attempted to unpack the black box and explore it critically. Ultimately, the evaluation of Lebanon suffering “a continuing cycle of violence” was not altered, however, this thesis provided the new nuance and further meaning to ‘peace’ and ‘violence’ stemming from constructions by the local peace-related NGOs workers. Furthermore, it revealed that this nuance has been formulated by the complex relationships between the international donors and the local NGOs.

Thirdly, this thesis shed light on another figure of the NGOs workers, making efforts to take different track from colonial peace and find a way to get through colonial peace. The previous studies focused more on the powerlessness of the local NGOs concerning their international donors. But through the critical anthropological approach, another figure of the NGOs is highlighted as making effort to face to colonial peace and take other tracks. Along with this finding, it is expected that future research will expand more to examine the active side of the local NGOs and deepen the argument further of how they can and if they want to achieve decolonial peace.

Lastly and more broadly, this unpacking of the local NGOs’ understanding of peace and violence and the complex relationships for formulating ideas and practices for peace between the locals and the international donors would give insight to the other societies in the Middle East, particularly to countries experiencing so-called ‘post-conflict context.’ Lebanon has a more extended period of being in a post-conflict

context and, therefore, various experiences and has developed complex dynamics. As the region shares the context of the region's long-standing entanglement with (post-)colonialism, the result of this research and argument could be a future lesson for other societies in the Middle East.

## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF THE SUBJECTED DOCUMENTS FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

#### **A. International Doners' Calls for Proposal**

##### ***1. UN Agencies' Calls for Proposal***

Agency	Year	Title
UNDP	2017	UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building Project: Conflict analysis and Mapping in Lebanon
		Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions
	2018	Support established "Groups" in selected villages in North Lebanon in implementing their Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS) in 3 villages in Bekaa
		UNDP Lebanon - Peace Building Project: NGO to implement MSS through Playback Theater
	2022	Violent free community in South Lebanon and North Lebanon, North Lebanon and Mount Lebanon
Un women	2021	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
		Supporting work on women's political participation and women, peace and security in Lebanon
UNESCO	2020	Youth as Agents for Change During Elections
OCHA	2018	Lebanon Humanitarian Fund

##### **Related documents**

Agencies	Year	Title
World Bank	2020	State and Peacebuilding Fund: Lebanon Financing Facility
		World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020 –2025

##### ***2. State Agencies' Calls for Proposal***

States	Year	Titles
US	2017	U.S. Embassy Beirut Local Grants Program for Civil Society
	2018	NGO Programs Benefiting Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey

	2019	Men and Boys in Reducing Violence Against Women in Lebanon
	2020	Local Capacity Strengthening for Response (LCS4R)
	2020	Initiative to Deliver Essential Assistance and Services
	2021	Support for the Rule of Law, Independent Media, and Civil Society in Lebanon
	2023	Chemical Security Program
EU	2017	Targeting local civil society through Country-Based Support Schemes Lebanon
	2021	Support to Civil Society to improve governance and accountability in Lebanon
	2022	EU 4 Social Cohesion in Lebanon
		Disaster management, port governance and maritime reform for economic recovery
France	2019	The Shabake Project: Strengthening resilience of Lebanese civil society in order to improve crisis prevention and management
	2022	«Neighborhood Approach » program for local development, strengthening social cohesion and access to urban facilities and infrastructures in vulnerable neighborhoods impacted by the Syrian crisis
	2022	"Elections 2022"
	2022	Strengthening Feminist CSOs working in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in crisis and conflict zones
	2022	Multi-awarded framework agreement in the context of rapid response mechanism for the crisis in Lebanon
UK	2018	Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy
	2020	CSSF Lebanon: Civil Society Democratic Reform
German	2021	Special Projects-2 Lebanon

#### Related documents

States	Year	Titles
US	2021-2026	Country development cooperation strategy
France	2018	Prevention, Resilience, and Sustainable peace (2018-2022): A Comprehensive Approach to the Fragilization of States and Societies
UK	2019	CSSF Programme Summary, Lebanon: Community Stability Programme
	2020	Conflict, Stability and Security fund annual report 2020/21
	2022	CSSF Programme Summary, Lebanon: Community Stability Programme
German		Civil Peace Service: Strengthening civil conflict transformation

## B. Local peace-related NGOs' publications

Organization	Type of publication	Year	Title
Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace	Website		Home
			History
			Activities
	Pamphlet		LFPCP: Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace since 1986
	Report	2017	Building a Rule of Law Society: to Enhance Bases of Democratic Governance and Rule of Law
		2019	Transparency guide for procurement in PPP's
		2014	Institutions for the Preservation of Civil Peace in Lebanon Today
Peace Labs	Website		About us
	Report	2017	The roadmap to “reconciliation in Tripoli”: Creating an inclusive process for launching a communal reconciliation in Tripoli
March	Website		Get to know us
			Project: theatre
			Project: giving youth an opportunity at a better future
			Project: March's fight against statelessness
	Report	2017	Loopholes in the Lebanese censorship system
		2019	Plight of the rightless
Fighter for Peace	Website		Roadmap to reconciliation: Tripoli
			About us / to the fighters of today: An open letter
			Our story
			Doners and partners
	Video testimony		Assad final
			The shop owner: Shams El Dine Hadaz
	Pamphlet	2019	Fighters for Peace
Act for Disappeared	Website		Who we are
			Context
	Report	2017	Empty chairs waiting families
		2018	Do not let my story end here (a and b)

		2022	MHPSS Guidelines for Working with the Families of the Missing in Lebanon
	Pamphlet		Retrospective
UMAM Documentation and Research	Website		Who we are
			History
	Statement		An end to political violence on the first anniversary of assassination of lokman slim
	Video		Memory is a battlefield: Tribute to Lokman Slim
	Announcement	2022	Justice for Lebanon: July 17 - World Day for International Justice
ALEF	Website		About ALEF
			Program
			Informal Dialogue Meetings with Religious Leaders to Contribute to Freedom of Religion and Belief
			Program: Promoting better human rights practices in security sector reforms implemented in Lebanon
	Report	2021	Brussels 5 SitRep – Eviction and Social Tension
			Diversity and citizenship: a selective teaching of notions
		2022	In the name of religion: women's unequal rights in Lebanon
ABAAD	Website		About ABAAD
			Our work
			Shame on Who – Campaign 2018
	Report	2021	Anural report 2021 Gender-based violence prevention & Response during social-economic deterioration
			Baseline study: "toward a gender-equitable society" project
			Now and the future
		2022	The Sorrow remains inside
	Press Release	2018	ShameOnWho? Campaign Launch: Prosecute the Rapist. Do Not Blame the Victim



## APPENDIX II

### LIST OF THE INTERVIEWS

**A. Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace:**

A program director of Lebanese Foundation of Permanent Civil Peace. (2023, 17 March). Personal Interview

**B. Peace Labs:**

A founder and one of the board members of Peace Labs. (2023, February 17). Personal Interview.

**C. March:**

A founder of March. (2023, 21 March). Personal Interview.

**D. Fighters for Peace:**

One of the founding members of Fighter for Peace. (2022, December 14). Personal Interview.

**E. ACT for Disappeared:**

An executive director of ACT for Disappeared. (2022, December 19). Personal Interview.

**F. UMAM Documentation and Research:**

A senior development officer and researcher of UMAM Documentation and Research. (2023, February 19). Personal Interview.

**G. ALEF:**

A board member of ALEF. (2023, March 14). Personal Interview.

**H. ABAAD:**

A senior technical advisor of ABAAD. (2023, March 23). Personal Interview.

## REFERENCES

- AbouAssi, K. (2014). The third wheel in public policy: an overview of NGOs in Lebanon. *Public administration and policy in the Middle East*, 215-230.
- Aime, C. (2000). *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- “Budget for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022: report of the Secretary-General” (2021). United Nation digital library. Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3907026?ln=en>
- Bazzi, Z. and Hassan, N (2020, October 6). *An IMF bailout for Lebanon can make things worse*. Bretton Woods Project. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2020/10/an-imf-bailout-for-lebanon-can-make-things-worse/>
- Behr, H., & Shani, G. (2021). Rethinking emancipation in a critical IR: Normativity, cosmology, and pluriversal dialogue. *Millennium*, 49(2), 368-391.
- Behr, H. (2019). Peace-in-Difference: Peace through Dialogue about and across Difference(s): A Phenomenological Approach to Rethinking Peace. In Hinton, A. L., Shani, G., & Alberg, J. (Eds.). *Rethinking peace: Discourse, memory, translation, and dialogue*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Bellier, I. (2005). Anthropology of institutions and discourse analysis. in Wodak, R., & Chilton, P. (Eds.). (2005). *A new agenda in (critical) discourse analysis: theory, methodology and interdisciplinarity* (Vol. 13). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Bogaert, K (2013) Contextualizing the Arab Revolts: The Politics behind Three Decades of Neoliberalism in the Arab World, *Middle East Critique*, 22:3, 213-234
- Carpi, E. (2014). The political and the humanitarian in Lebanon. Social responsiveness to emergency crisis from the 2006 war to the Syrian refugee influx. *Oriente Moderno*, 94(2), 402-427.
- Chesters, Graeme (2012). “Social Movements and the Ethics of Knowledge Production,” *Social Movement Studies* 11(2): 145–60.
- “Confronting the legacy of political violence in Lebanon”. (2014). International Center for Transitional Justice Lebanon. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Lebanon-Recommendations-2014-ENG.pdf>

- Cruz, J. (2021) Colonial power and decolonial peace, *Peacebuilding*, 9:3, 274-288
- Dalton, M., Shah, H. (2020). Playing politics: International security sector assistance and the Lebanese military's changing role. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/09/07/playing-politics-international-security-sector-assistance-and-lebanese-military-s-changing-role-pub-82663>
- Dawoody, A. R. (2014). The third wheel in Public policy: An Overview of NGOs in Lebanon. *Public administration and policy in the middle east*, 215-230. Springer New York.
- “Election Polling Survey Lebanese Youth Segment”. (2018). Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Galtung, J. (2008). “Towards a Grand Theory of Negative and Positive Peace: Peace, Security and Conviviality”, in: Murakami, Yoichiro; Schoenbaum, Thomas J. (Eds.): *A Grand Design for Peace and Reconciliation: Achieving Kyosei in East Asia* (Cheltenham, UK, and North Hampton, Massachusetts, USA: Edward Elgar): 90–106.
- Chehayeb, K. (2022). “Lebanon: The assassination of activist Lokman Slim, one year on”. *Aljazeera*, Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/3/assassination-of-activist-lokman-slim-in-lebanon-one-year-on>
- Ghereichi, M. (2020). *The IMF: No silver bullet for Lebanon*. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/the-imf-no-silver-bullet-for-lebanon/>
- Gunaydin, A. (2018). Building peace through liberal construction (Master’s thesis). the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, Beirut. the American University of Beirut.
- Hassan, D. (2014). “Lebanon’s Civil Society Sector: A Lost Continent,” *The Daily Star*, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Nov-27/279050-lebanons-civil-society-sector-a-lost-continent.ashx>.
- Jabri, V. (2013) Peacebuilding, the local and the international: a colonial or a postcolonial rationality?, *Peacebuilding*, 1:1, 3-16
- Kosmatopoulos, N. (2014). The birth of the workshop: Technomorals, peace expertise, and the care of the self in the middle east. *Public Culture*, 26(3), 529-558.
- (2021) Master peace: expert power and techno-morals in Lebanon, *Peacebuilding*, 9:3, 258-273

- (2022). *Master Peace: Lebanon, Violence, Techno-Morality*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Kingston, P. (2012). The pitfalls of peacebuilding from below: Governance promotion and local political processes in postconflict Lebanon. *International Journal*, Spring 2012, Vol. 67, No. 2, A new agenda for peace (Spring 2012), pp. 333-350
- Koenraad Bogaert (2013) Contextualizing the Arab Revolts: The Politics behind Three Decades of Neoliberalism in the Arab World, *Middle East Critique*, 22:3, 213-234
- Kreidie, L., and Itani, H. (2016). The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Tackling Sectarianism and Extremism in Lebanon: Track-Two Diplomacy and Good Governance. *Middle East Review of Public Administration (MERPA)*, Spring 2016, (2)1.
- Lara, K. (2010). *Civil society in a sectarian context: the women's movement in post-war Lebanon*. Masters Thesis, Lebanese American University.
- Lebanon - global peace index 2022* (n.d.). countryeconomy.com. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/global-peace-index/lebanon>
- Mac Ginty, R. (2008). Indigenous peace-making versus the liberal peace. *Cooperation and conflict*, 43(2), 139-163.
- (2014). Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies. *Security Dialogue*, 45(6), 548-564.
- , & Hamieh, C. (2010) Made in Lebanon: Local Participation and Indigenous Responses to Development and Post-war Reconstruction, *Civil Wars*, 12:1-2, 47-64
- “Majority of Lebanese optimistic about prospects for peace, says new poll”. *International Alert*. (2021, October 20). Retrieved December 3, 2022, from <https://www.international-alert.org/press-releases/majority-of-lebanese-optimistic-about-prospects-for-peace-says-new-poll/>
- Manning, J. (2021), Decolonial feminist theory: Embracing the gendered colonial difference in management and organisation studies. *Gender Work Organ*, 28: 1203-1219.
- Maldonado-Torres, N. (2010). The Time and Space of Race: Reflections on David Theo Goldberg's Interrelational and Comparative Methodology. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 44 (1): 77–88.

- “Mapping civil society organization in Lebanon”. (2015). *European Union*. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-governance-civilsociety/documents/mapping-civil-society-organisations-lebanon>
- McCloskey, S. (2021, September 29). *Why an IMF loan is not the solution to Lebanon's economic crisis*. openDemocracy. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/why-an-imf-loan-is-not-the-solution-to-lebanons-economic-crisis/>
- Mignolo, W (2007). Introduction, *Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking*. *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 155-167
- , & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, and praxis*. Duke University Press.
- Milan, S. (2014). The ethics of social movement research. In Della Porta, D. (Ed.). (2014). *Methodological practices in social movement research*. OUP Oxford. 446-464.
- Mounzer, L. (2022, October 19). *When robbing your own bank account is the only option*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/opinion/lebanon-bank-robberies.html>
- Mühlbacher, T.F. (2009). Post-War Lebanon’s Long and Perilous Road to Democracy. In: *Democracy and Power-Sharing in Stormy Weather*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91769-6\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91769-6_5)
- Omer, A. (2020). Decolonizing religion and the practice of peace: Two case studies from the postcolonial world. *Critical Research on Religion*, Vol. 8(3) 273–296
- Our people*. (n.d.). Institute for Economics and Peace Our People Comments. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/about/our-people/>
- Ramsbotham, E., Picard, A. (2012, July 1). “Reconciliation, reform and resilience”. *Whose Lebanon? A post-war history of people, power and peace initiatives*. Conciliational Resources. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from <https://www.c-r.org/accord/lebanon/whose-lebanon-post-war-history-people-power-and-peace-initiatives>
- “Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave XI Narrative Report”. (2018). ARK.
- Richmond, O. (2014) *A post-liberal peace*. Routledge.

- , and Pogodda, S. (2016). *Post-liberal peace transitions: Between peace formation and state formation*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Safa, O. (2007). Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation in the Arab World: The Work of Civil Society Organisations in Lebanon and Morocco. *Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management*, 3, [http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/safa\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/safa_handbook.pdf)
- Salameh, R. (2014). Gender politics in Lebanon and the limits of legal reformism (En-Ar). *CSR 2014*.
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Min.
- Schirch, L. (2019). "Conversation about the State of the Field." Building Sustainable Peace: Ideas, Evidence, Strategies, The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, November 8.
- (2022). Decolonising Peacebuilding: A way forward out of crisis. Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Online Edition. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Shani, G. (2019). Saving Liberal Peacebuilding?: From the 'Local Turn' to a Post-Western Peace. In Hinton, A. L., Shani, G., & Alberg, J. (Eds.). *Rethinking peace: Discourse, memory, translation, and dialogue*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Springer, S. (2015). Violent Orientalism: Imagining the "Savage Other". In: Violent Neoliberalism. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Sinha, P., Gupta, U. et al (2017). Structural Violence on Women: An Impediment to Women Empowerment. *Indian J Community Med.* Jul-Sep;42(3). 134-137.
- Tschunkert, K., & Mac Ginty, R. (2020). Legitimacy in Lebanon. In O. P. Richmond, & R. Mac Ginty (Eds.), *Local Legitimacy and International Peace Intervention*, pp. 240-260. Edinburgh University Press.
- UN country annual results report Lebanon (2022), cited in 17 October, 2022 from <https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/202204/2021%20UN%20Country%20Annual%20Results%20Report%20Lebanon%20online%20version-FINAL.pdf>
- Visoka, G. (2016). Peace Multitudes: Liberal Peace, Local Agency and Peace Formation in Kosovo. In Richmond, O. and Pogodda, S. (ed.). *Post-liberal peace transitions: Between peace formation and state formation*, 65-82.
- Wallerstein, I. (2008). *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power*. New York: New Press.

- (2011). *The Modern World-System IV: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789–1914* (1st ed.). University of California Press.
- Watt, C. (2011). Introduction: The Relevance and Complexity of Civilizing Missions c. 1800–2010. In C. Watt & M. Mann (Eds.), *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*. pp. 1-34. Anthem Press.
- WFP Lebanon country brief. world food programme. (2021, June). Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000130024/download/>
- What are the 23 indicators of peace used by the global peace index? (n.d.). Vision of Humanity. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/chart-of-the-week-indicators-of-peace/>
- Zahar, M. (2009). Liberal interventions, illiberal outcomes: The United Nations, Western powers and Lebanon. in Newman, E. (ed). *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding*. United Nations University Press, 292-315
- “2021 UN country annual results report Lebanon”. (2022) MDG Fund. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from <http://www.mdgfund.org/node/701>