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DRUG TRAFFICKING NETWORKS IN LEBANON: THEIR HISTORY AND FORMATION, 1920-1975

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The following thesis analyses Lebanon's emergence as a major player in the global drug trade from the early 20th century to the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Based on extensive research, the paper focuses on discussing the various dynamics of the country's role in differing drug markets. It takes a tripartite approach to the question, focusing on the relationship between criminals and the Lebanese political and security establishment at the national level to shed light on the country's extensive role in the regionalized hashish market and the international opium trade, using as a case study the life and career of one of Lebanon's most successful criminal entrepreneurs, Sami El-Khoury.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 20th century, Lebanon experienced what many call its "golden age." Gaining its independence from France in 1943, by the 1960s the capital of Beirut had embarked on a rapid transformation from "little more than sleepy village" into a "glitzy Mediterranean metropolis, a Mecca for the international set, a haven for exiles of the region's political wars, and a brothel of business where ready cash transcended law and ethics."[1] Considered a place of relative freedom, Lebanon siphoned off the best and the brightest from nearby countries, who brought with them business acumen and capital. Soon, Beirut had become an important banking center catering to the needs of the regional and international financial communities, as well as a listening post for foreign diplomats, news correspondents, and the intelligence community. As the city expanded and capital flowed in, its boundaries engulfed neighboring villages, and the traditional red roof houses of lore were shadowed by high-rises piercing the West Beirut sky.

As Beirut in particular faced a rapid transformation into a regional and financial center, its role in transnational narcotics trafficking networks flourished simultaneously. Across Europe and the United States, an insatiable demand for hard-to-find narcotics, primarily opiates and cannabis derivatives,[2] had been growing despite periodic attempts at criminalization and eradication. Enterprising individuals worldwide endeavored to profit from the rising demand, and entrepreneurs from Lebanon were no

[1] Mackey, Sandra. *Mirror of the Arab World: Lebanon in Conflict.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. 65.

[2] Of the opiates, the most basic form is simply opium, derived from the latex inside *papaver somniferum* seed pods. Through a chemical process involving slaked lime, a more concentrated form called morphine base can be extracted from the latex. Morphine base can be further processed using a cocktail of chemicals to produce heroin base and finally heroin, the most valuable and concentrated of the opiates. In the United States today, a gram of opium costs between $10 and $15, whereas a gram of uncut heroin sells for around $300 a gram. The primary derivative of cannabis (A.K.A. marijuana) is hashish, a concentrated form of the plant extracted either with a chemical solvent such as ethanol, or mechanical apparatuses such as sieves or tumblers. The resulting hashish is concentrated and more pure, creating a stronger physiological reaction.

exception. Their breakthrough entrance into the drug trade mirrored the country's outsized role in the international arena. The trade in Lebanon was repeatedly enabled and sustained by a multitude of actors hungry for the skyrocketing profits involved, and they achieved unprecedented successes: by the 1960s, not only had the Bekaa Valley become the predominant source of arguably the world's highest-quality hashish, but Beirut's bars, clubs, and ports had become one of the largest activity hubs for opiate trafficking in the eastern hemisphere. By the time war broke out in 1975, militiamen, politicians, security officials, and opportunists had amassed an absolute wealth of experience in illegal smuggling, which they were able to draw upon in order to finance their military and political endeavors.

This paper seeks to parse Lebanon's flourishing role in the international drug traffic during the country's "golden age." Its broad objective is to interrogate some of the many causes behind the emergence of drug networks in Lebanon. To do so, a unique approach is taken which evaluates the trade from three perspectives: the local, regional, and international. From the local / national perspective (examined in chapter one), this paper looks at the theoretical basis of political-criminal collusion in the drug trade. By doing so, it demonstrates that elements of the Lebanese political and security establishment were absolutely instrumental in establishing the country's position as producer, transit, and supply source for different narcotics. The different criminal groups and narcotics traffickers could never have achieved such an astounding level of success if it were not for the numerous politicians, security officials, and state actors who worked alongside them in a web of mutual cooperation and complicity. Together, collaborative alliances of criminal gangs, mafia-type families, entrepreneurs, career smugglers, security officials, police, bureaucrats, and politicians enabled the world of narcotics smuggling. In this section I introduce the concept of the political-criminal nexus (PCN), comment on the ideal type and alternate types of the PCN, and look at some of the political, cultural/social, and economic factors which enabled a PCN to develop in Lebanon. On the political

level, I argue that an overweight sectarian and clientalist political system led to a political-criminal nexus characterized by upperworld or elite dominance. As such, political positions were viewed as a tool used to improve one's lot, or that of one's sectarian community, and the boundary between criminal and politician became at times blurred. On the “cultural” level, a long history of narcotics production combined with a delayed criminalization of the act led to a delayed or incomplete internalization of the “wrongness” of the act. And finally, on an economic level, actors in the political and security fields resisted or undermined criminalization of drug production or traffic, due to their own financial interests, or those of their constituents and/or communities.

On a regional level, the politics of supplying the first modern Middle Eastern consumer market for hashish and to a lesser extent opium, Egypt, is examined closely. With a precipitous rise in demand and an inability to meet it with local Egyptian supplies, smugglers brought in narcotics from a number of neighboring countries. Lebanon's role in this supply is examined closely, and the conclusion is reached that a number of historical and political attributes led to Lebanon taking a predominant role in supplying hashish to Egypt. First and foremost, it can be attributed to the political-criminal collusion that had been quick to form in the country. Politicians and security officials were involved in the trade from the get go: not only were they approached by criminals for their smuggling and protection services, but those who owned marijuana fields detested the fact that an expanding source of income for them was turning from legal to illegal before their very eyes. Keen to resist this transformation, they similarly turned to criminals for assistance in selling their product in the Egyptian market. Second, the indirect effects of the French mandate were important, especially the effect that infrastructure expansion projects had on the emergence of smuggling routes. Furthermore, the physically-removed administrative position of French Mandate officials was extremely influential, as they encouraged the drug trade by seeking to co-opt local political actors and power brokers by ignoring drug related

activities.[3] Third, despite brief Lebanese attempts to eradicate hashish, the extent of political resistance was such that despite significant international pressure, the actions of concerned regional antinarcotics bureaus, foreign law enforcement agencies (such as the U.S. FBN), and international organizations (the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board and INTERPOL) to fight the hashish trade, Lebanon remained one of the largest marijuana producers in the world well into the 1970s. Fourth, regional politics undermined regional interdiction cooperation. Not only were Arab countries not cooperating as much as they could be, but the absence of Israel in regional efforts created a "large loophole of which the traffickers of the Middle East drug ring take full advantage."[4]

On an international level, Lebanon's role in international opium smuggling networks is examined. It argues that Lebanon became a bottleneck in the supply line of the international heroin trade, connecting Asian opium fields and European and American markets, for a number of reasons. These include the linguistic background of Lebanese, the prioritization and rise in importance of the port of Beirut due to French infrastructural investments, prior Lebanese expertise with brokering and smuggling, as well as a plethora of corrupt officials.

In each chapter, this paper takes full use of a case study in the form of one of the most successful Lebanese narcotics smugglers in the mid-20th century, Sami El-Khoury, to provide a unique micro-level perspective on one participant's experiences in the drug trade across the local, regional, and international spectrums. El-Khoury owed his success to an array of political and security connections, many of which ran incredibly deep, as Lebanese journalist Al-Lawzi noticed upon first meeting him:

> "How is it that Sami can be detained in Al-Raml jail, and while the newspapers are abuzz with news on him and news of his trial every morning, he gets out of jail to stay out late in one of the biggest clubs in the capital, and returns in the morning to jail and to the court like any old

[3] Schayegh, Cyrus. "The Many Worlds of Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization." *American Historical Review*, 116:2 (2011): 277-8.

[4] O'Callaghan, Sean. *The Drug Traffic.* London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967. 28.

detainee?"[5]

According to Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) Special Agent Jim Attie, El-Khoury had a plethora of connections in the Lebanese Sûreté. In an interview, Attie commented that, "Khoury relied on Customs chief Edmond Azizi for protection in Lebanon," and went on to claim that FBN activities were even undermined by El-Khoury's extensive contacts. "Everything [FBN Agent Paul Knight] said, whether he knew it or not, went directly from [Maronite leader Hanna Yazbek connected to El-Khoury] and Azizi to Sam Khoury, who sold 50,000 submachine guns to the Israelis while I was there."[6][7] Not only did El-Khoury have "influence and solid support among top-ranking policemen and politicians," but one of his chief "lieutenants," Mounir Alaouie, "was a former officer of the narcotics section of the Lebanese police."[8] Politically he was well-connected, and reaped benefits from these connections. According to an Irish journalist based out of Beirut, El-Khoury operated "with complete immunity" in Lebanon.[9] Whenever he was arrested by unknowing or ill-tempered policemen, "the case was thrown out by the examining magistrate for lack of evidence."[10]

> "[El-Khoury] was on first name terms with members of parliament, ministers, high officers of the Police and the Army. The members of Parliament had no intention of doing anything to hinder Khoury, as both Cannabis Indicus from hashish is produced, and poppies for opium were grown openly in the Bekka [sic] Valley, where many of them had their large estates."[11]

These individuals to which he was close were often times drawn upon to help him complete smuggling operations. While recollecting his process of co-opting powerful government actors, he commented:

> "I began to review the names of friends from businesspeople to politicians... to men of society. Then I chose from them those who I knew were going through financial crises. Little by little, I

5 Al-Lawzi, Salim, and Nabil Khoury. *Qissat Muharrib: Mudhakkarat Sami Al-Khuri.* 1971. 17.

6 Attie, Jim. Interview with Douglas Valentine. *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs*. By Douglas Valentine. New York, NY: Verso, 2004. 125.

7 Attie goes on to state that the Israelis provided Khoury with contacts, money, and protection enabling him to move narcotics across Europe.

8 Charbonneau, Jean-Pierre. *The Canadian Connection.* Montreal, QB: Optimum Publishing Company Ltd, 1976. 98-9.

9 O'Callaghan, Sean. *The Drug Traffic.* London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967. 12-3.

10 Ibid. 13.

11 Ibid. 13.

> began to work on my own account. I would choose one of them every once in a while, then send him to a specific country via airplane while carrying a quantity of drugs in his suitcase."[12]

El-Khoury's name was known on an international level, due to his operations in Europe. He was described as a "grave menace" by the United Nations Narcotics Commission in 1955, and in 1956 INTERPOL issued a circular for his arrest. Although he was arrested twice by INTERPOL officers, first in France, then in Germany, he was never convicted of a crime in Europe.

Given the extent of El-Khoury's connections in the political and security establishments, and the availability of an autobiography and several sources examining his career, he is a perfect case study for examination in this thesis.

1.2 Methodology

The biggest challenge to conducting research of this type is data collection. Not only have some 35 to 70 years passed since the occurrence of many of the events discussed in this study, but the discreet nature of both criminal activities and criminal investigations does not facilitate easy discussion of the subject. Furthermore, personal inquiries and interviews pose blatant security challenges, especially since some of the individuals mentioned in this thesis still have relatives working in the industry. Thus, due to the difficulties of collection data on the topic, this thesis poses many challenges in terms of making personal inquiries. As a result, I have relied principally on primary sources written by individuals living, traveling, and working in Lebanon at the time. Many of these are journalistic accounts published by English-language newspapers such as the New York Times, while others are books and memoirs written by journalists, criminal investigators, and in one case, a Lebanese smuggler. When possible, I have given weight to academic resources discussing the topics at hand. While these

[12] Al-Lawzi, Salim, and Nabil Khoury. *Qissat Muharrib: Mudhakkarat Sami Al-Khuri.* 1971. 95.

flaws are a necessary hazard of studies of this nature, my hope is that they do not undermine the principal arguments underpinning this work.

1.3 Literature Review

Despite the significant repercussions of drug trafficking networks on global economic and political systems over the last century, the topic itself has been of little interest to academics for most of the 20th century and up until the 1980s.[13] However, in the last several decades, interest has picked up especially with regards to Latin American trafficking networks and cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine epidemics in the United States.

In contrast, the topic of criminal networks in the Middle East, and Lebanon in particular, has been *terra incognita* of sorts in academia. Concerning the period on which this thesis focuses, there is only one academic study that has been published, "The Many Worlds of Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization." This paper is based on extensive research in the archives of the French Mandate administration, and looks at the French influence on smuggling during the Mandate period. The research within and the conclusions reached have been drawn upon throughout my thesis.

Other than this work, no other academic books or articles have been produced that are dedicated to examining Lebanese drug trafficking networks or organizations in the period before the civil war broke out in 1975. However, several books, articles, and chapters have dealt with the topic indirectly, in passing, or as they relate to other topics. As can be expected, of this literature, some is meticulously documented, and some is based on hearsay or is speculative. As such, in order to keep this work as academic as possible, I have attempted to give weight to the resources with documented sources.

[13] Martin, J.M., and A.T. Romano. *Multinational Crime: Terrorism, Espionage, Drug and Arms Trafficking*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1992. 19.

Sources I have found which report second-hand information but do not elucidate the source of that information are not outright dismissed, but rather are examined on a case-by-case basis. I ask, is the source of the information implicit in the work? Does the author mention why he doesn't provide sources? Is or was the author in a professional position in which he has access to such information? Is there an implicit bias or ulterior motive in the sharing of that information? This methodology is in line with convention within the discipline of history, in which primary sources are not considered more valuable than secondary sources simply for the fact that they are fewer levels of potential distortion between the item of examination and the researcher, but rather each and every resource is interrogated for the prospective information it may provide and for the value that can be taken from it, with care taken as to the potential misinformation that can be included within.

With this in mind, some of the more reliable resources found have looked at drug trafficking in the pre-civil war period as it relates to other topics. One of these is Eduardo Rovner's *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*. While focusing predominantly on Latin America, Rovner takes time to mention Lebanese drug traffickers in Cuba and other Latin American countries, and touches on the historic legality of drug trafficking and production in Lebanon. He also cites important information on the directional flow of networks (i.e. Hashish was transported from Tyre and Sidon to Alexandria). Another book, which offer analyses based on the historical perspective of the drugs themselves, is Alfred McCoy's *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade.* This discusses Lebanese traffickers in the mid-20th century within the context of the geopolitics of heroin trafficking, including a brief look at El-Khoury and Josef Akre (the former director of Beirut International Airport).

Several books have looked closely at the role of Sami El-Khoury in the drug trade. The most important of these is the Arabic language *Qissat Muharrib: Mudhakkarat Sami Al-Khuri*, published in

1971. The author, journalist Salim Al-Lawzi, conducted extensive interviews with El-Khoury, and the book alternates verbatim stories from El-Khoury himself and the author's comments. This is the primary source used in this thesis to conduct the case study of Sami El-Khoury. Another book that talks about him is *The Drug Traffic*, written by Irish journalist Sean O'Callaghan and published in 1969, in which he recounts his first-hand experiences as a drug user in Lebanon. It has a significant section on his time spent in the Middle East, and focuses on the relationship between El-Khoury and the infamous mafioso Charley "Lucky" Luciano. It also draws connections between drug trafficking in the Middle East and what the author calls "white slavery."

I have also looked at a variety of works that touch upon the issue of drug trafficking in Lebanon during the civil war period. While outside the period of focus of this essay, I shall still mention a few. There are two that focus specifically on Lebanon's relation to drug trafficking. The first is "Conflits: Le nerf de la guerre au Liban," a book chapter written by Philippe de Vrouze in Delbrel's *Geopolitique de la Drogue*, *and* published in 1991. The second is Hassane Makhlouf's *Culture et Trafic de Drogue au Liban*. Both of these books contain some interesting analyses, but practically none of the data on which their quantitative analyses are based can be traced back to a single source.

Other books focus on the physical logistics of trafficking and the relationship with port usage and embargo-busting during the war. R. T. Naylor's *Economic Warfare: Sanctions, Embargo Busting, and their Human Cost,* for example, cites information on opium and hashish trafficking networks and how drugs were trafficked through unofficial maritime ports controlled by various militias in the civil war. Barbara Conway's two books *The Piracy Business* and *Maritime Fraud* both take a look at the role of Lebanon's ports in conducting maritime fraud, which exported and received a variety of drugs and arms in the 1980s. Guilain Denoeux's *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon* has a variety of interesting information on smuggling

in Lebanon during the civil war. Of the works providing insight into the connections between Lebanese drug producers, traffickers, and foreign actors, a good start is Lesch's *The New Lion of Damascus,* which accounts Syrian involvement in Lebanese drug production. Edward Azar's *The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?* is also interesting because it briefly discusses Tony Frangieh's relationship with President Assad's brother, with whom he reportedly ran a "flourishing trade in hashish."[14] Elizabeth Picard's "The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon" in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* also proves worthwhile, especially where she discusses poppy production in Lebanon and specifically focuses on the oversight and protection given by the Syrian Army (who, she claims, brought in Kurdish poppy producers to help increase production[15]).

[14] 1984. 20.
[15] 305.

CHAPTER 2.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The variety of forms that criminal groups, alliances, and unions may take is infinite.[16] While some may be disorganized, temporary, single-opportunity affairs, others can be sophisticated, sustained, and coordinated. In order to make theoretical sense of this endless variety, the field of criminology has embraced the social network concept as the primary organizational structure for social relationships.[17] But while social network theory can be used to gain a greater understanding of criminal networks in isolation, it carries the risk of a partial and incomplete understanding of the phenomenon of crime. As Arnao (2003) notes, one cannot examine (organized) crime in a vacuum, as this decontextualizes the act of crime from "political and social reality."[18] The implication, he argues, is that "it conceals the fact that its competitiveness may also consist in a traditional network of collusive relationships with members of external (and licit) groups (social, political, entrepreneurial)."[19] In other words, one cannot attempt to understand exactly what organized crime is without looking at the relationship of the criminal world with the non-criminal components providing them with favors, information, and protection, such as businessmen, social leaders, politicians, and security officials. This collusive relationship is referred to in academia as the political-criminal nexus (PCN). Numerous studies have interrogated the role of the PCN in various societies and countries across the world,

[16] Morselli, Carlos. *Inside Criminal Networks.* New York: Springer, 2008. 1.
[17] Ibid. 2.
[18] Armao, Fabio. *Organized Crime and the Challenge to Democracy.* Allum, Felia, and Renate Siebert, eds. Routledge, 2003. 25.
[19] Ibid.

including Nigeria,[20] Colombia,[21] China,[22] Italy,[23] and Mexico[24] among others, but none has ever examined the rise of the PCN in Lebanon. The following section will use the PCN as a framework with which to better understand the nature of drug trafficking networks in Lebanon.

2.2 PCN Creation and the PCN Ideal Type

Godson discusses the ways that PCNs can be initiated, and the benefits that individuals can accrue by initiating them.[25] For criminals, who are effectively attempting to carve a business niche in an insecure environment, the potential benefits of the relationship are twofold: ensured protection and decreased competitiveness. To defend against local and foreign law enforcement agencies, criminals require a host of items, including protection, impunity, and security, not to mention assistance in facilitating their illicit activities. By collaborating with "upper world" figures, they can acquire protection from both law enforcement and rival criminals. Additionally, by soliciting information and intelligence from government sources, criminals can seek to outperform their rivals. And, "advance information on government economic policy and regulatory activity enables them to take advantage of privatization plans, bids for public contracts, sales of licenses, and other opportunities."[26] There are other less cut-throat motivations, such as a desire for social mobility and respect. Furthermore, some

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[20] See Ebbe, Obi, "Political-Criminal Nexus: The Nigerian Case: Slicing Nigeria's 'National Cake'," *Trends in Organized Crime* 4.3 (Spring 1999): 29-59.

[21] Lee, Rensselaer W. III, and Fancisco E. Thoumi, "The Criminal-Political Nexus in Colombia," *Trends in Organized Crime* 3.1 (1997): 59-65.

[22] See Lintner, Bertil. "Chinese Organized Crime," *Global Crime Today, the Changing Face of Organized Crime.* Ed. Galeotti, M. New York, NY: Routledge, 2005. Also see Chin, Kolin, and Roy Godson. "Organized Crime and the Political-Criminal Nexus in China," *Trends in Organized Crime* 9.3 (2006):5-44.

[23] Paoli, Letizia. *Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style.* Oxford University Press, 2003.

[24] Pimentel, Stanley, "The Nexus of Organized Crime and Politics in Mexico," *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability: Mexico and the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands.* Ed. Bailey, John, and Roy Godson. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

[25] Godson, Roy (ed). *Menace to Society: Political-Criminal Collaboration Around the World*, Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, 2003. 8-9.

[26] Brown, Michael E. *Grave New World: Security Challenges in the 21st Century.* Georgetown University Press, 2003. 265.

criminals seek acceptance by the upper world, mixing with well-known individuals in well-known locales.

Likewise, for politicians, bureaucrats, and government representatives, there are four primary motivations for collaboration with criminal organizations: increased resources, fear, need for information, or desire for the criminal organization's influence. Increased resources are used by politicians "to finance lavish lifestyles, to win elections, and maintain their leadership roles. Criminal connections can also facilitate services for corrupt business or money laundering for the politicians."[27] Fear can influence politicians, either in the form of blackmail to ruin someone's career or home life, or physical threats against an individual or his/her family. This is characterized in the Spanish saying "plata o plomo" (silver or lead), the choice given to a politician or businessman between accepting money for performing a favor, or taking a bullet for not performing it. Former collaborators may be forced to continue collaborating at later stages of their political careers, "or may well continue them out of physical or psychological pressure."[28] This motivation for collaboration is common in Mexico, where "staking out a neutral position is not always a prerogative allowed to Mexican government officials by the cartels - although there are those who have managed to remain somewhat neutral [...]."[29] Information or a need for intelligence on rivals can also be a motivating factor. This factor compelled the U.S. government to form an alliance with the mafia during World War II.[30] Criminal groups can also be solicited to eliminate political rivals or conduct sabotage operations, such as securing votes in regions under their control. Out of a need for influence and support, politicians are brought close to criminals in areas where there are "strong cultural and familial connections, and long traditions of

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27 Godson (2003). 9.

28 Ibid. 9.

29 Payan, Tony. *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security.* Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006. 43.

30 See Newark, Tim. *Mafia Allies: The True Story of America's Secret Alliance with the Mob in World War II.* Zenith Press, 2007.

association and collaboration."[31]

It should be emphasized that within political-criminal nexuses there are inherent and incessant struggles for power. As such, an ideal type would be one in which the most actors profit, or in other words, a relationship in which power is shared between as many actors as possible for mutual benefit. This ideal type would be one of symbiotic balance, a scenario in which power is shared, "boundaries between the underworld and upperworld are blurred," and where "the state and organized crime can be viewed through the lens of public-private partnership, where to deliver public goods or services, the state collaborates with 'para-statal actors' (i.e. organized crime groups) that can be thought of as 'quasi autonomous bodies or [public-private partnerships].'"[32]

Alternate types to the ideal type would be those in which power is unbalanced, and either the criminal underworld or the political/business upperworld become dominant actors in the relationship. On one level, a situation of underworld or criminal dominance could emerge, one in which the political and economic sector is dependent upon organized crime for survival.[33] In a scenario such as this, organized criminal groups begin to operate seemingly autonomously, with authorities unable to challenge their power.[34] For this to unfold, smaller disorganized groups develop into increasingly sophisticated networks - at the height of their development, they would have "transnational linkages; provide social stability, informal policing, and protection; and directly influence and participate in state

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31 Godson (2003), 9.

32 Kupatadze, Alexander. "'Transitions after Transitions': 'Coloured Revolutions' and Organized Crime in Post-Soviet Space. Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan," Doctoral Thesis at the University of St. Andrews, Accessed at http://hdl.handle.net/10023/1320. 2010. 26.

33 Lupsha, P.A. "Transnational Organized Crime Versus the State," Transnational Organized Crime, 2(1) (1996): 32, cited in Kupatadze (2010). 22.

34 Blok, A. *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village 1860-1960, a Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs.* London: Basil Blackwell & Mott limited, 1974. 172. Cited in Kuptadaze (2010). 23.

politics."[35] Unable to fulfill their duties, political elites would be weak and in need of criminal partnerships, a reality "tantamount to state capture."[36]

Upperworld or elite dominance would be another alternate type in which organized crime is a tool used by the state apparatus at will, and where the state retains enough power to turn against criminal elements if need be.[37] Kupatadze argues that the level of elite dominance can be represented by a continuum, with the "sporadic involvement of individual members of legitimate institutions in organized criminal activities at one extreme, and the takeover and monopolization of organized criminal activities by licit actors at the other."[38] At the latter end of the continuum, interconnectedness deepens to such an extent that it becomes more and more difficult to disentangle the licit from the illicit economies, or political from criminal actors. Overlap becomes commonplace.

With regards to the PCN ideal type, a number of criteria can be examined to determine how close pre-civil war Lebanon fits the ideal type of symbiotic balance. To what extent were criminal actors dependent upon political actors for protection, favors, and success? To what extent did political actors rely on the underworld to achieve its goals? Did elements of the economy depend on criminal activity? Did one or the other retain the ability to overcome or overpower the other if need be? How was the relationship characterized, do we see evidence of dependency or equilibrium? This essay provides strong evidence supporting the claim that there was a strong duality in Lebanon, characterized by underworld dominance in rural, agricultural areas and upperworld dominance in urban areas such as Beirut.

In rural areas, such agricultural areas of the Bekaa, there was substantial overlap between politicians and criminal actors throughout the period in question. Many of the "criminals" responsible

[35] Kupatadze (2010). 23.
[36] Ibid. 23.
[37] Ibid. 24.
[38] Ibid. 24.

for the hashish trade were landowning politicians who had cultivated marijuana on their plots in the Bekaa valley for generations. Having been kept wealthy via the drug trade, they used their political power to maintain their profits from the hashish that had enriched them since before the narcotic's criminalization. Plenty of these politicians failed to keep a very low profile, and their identities seemed to have been common knowledge. Articles mentioning the involvement of "leading Lebanese politicians" in the drug trade were far from rare.[39][40] The state was at times powerless to act to stop them - when hashish faced increasing international scrutiny and eventual criminalization, these politicians and landowners continued to forge alliances with smugglers to facilitate their shipments. Many people were involved in this underworld-dominated trade. In 1963, United Press International reported that "some 2,500 families are estimated to depend in one way or another on illegal cultivation, processing, or smuggling of hashish."[41] It is safe to say that some of these politicians didn't necessarily enter into the criminal world or become "criminal," but rather they sought to maintain a status quo and resource generator that had provided for them for centuries. As a result, foreign cries for a help in eradication and enforcement were traditionally met with resistance from the Lebanese political class. For instance, when Lebanon's new prime minister Abdallah Al-Yafi acquiesced in 1951 to Egyptian cries for

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[39] Reston, James. "Beirut: The Dope Traffic in the Middle East." *The New York Times* 18 February 1970.

[40] The "president of the national congress, the richest landowner in the Bekaa Valley," was identified as a trafficker by Eduardo Royner, who went on to note that "other Lebanese politician-landowners" were also involved in the production of marijuana, while "officials" from south Lebanon "facilitated the export of hashish from the ports of Tyre and Sidon to the Egyptian city of Alexandria." (Rovner, Eduardo S. *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution.* University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 107.). After returning from a narcotics fact-finding mission, U.S. congressman Seymour Halpern stated that "one of the leading growers of hashish in Lebanon has been [Deputy Naif El-Masri] of the Chamber of Deputies" (Anderson, Jack. "Other Lands Fill Dope Gap," *Herald-Journal* 10 July 1971.). He also identified two other powerful hashish growers, the former Speaker of the House, Sabri Hamadeh, "still a prominent member of Parliament" who has been growing hashish "for years." Hamadeh is also recognized as a hashish dealer in John Bullock's *Final Conflict: The War in the Lebanon* (Century Publishing, 1983. 205.), as is Fares Shumayt, the son of Lebanese Chief of Staff General Yusuf Shumayt (Anderson, Jack. "Other Lands Fill Dope Gap," *Herald-Journal* 10 July 1971.) One report even suggested that one of Lebanon's representatives to the United Nations was implicated in the narcotics trade. ("Ex-UN Aide Cited in Narcotics Case." *The New York Times* 7 February 1958.).

[41] "Major Headache for Lebanon: Hashish More Stable Than Onions," United Press International. *Beaver County Times* 31 March 1973.

increased law enforcement cooperation,[42] the New York Times reported that members of the former government who had been involved in the marijuana traffic reportedly went "livid with rage."[43]

Indeed, even politicians not directly involved in the trade may have chosen to resist interdiction efforts simply to avoid the inevitably violent conflict that would have emerged with the armed groups controlling hashish-growing territory in the Bekaa valley. State forces had minimal control over these territories. According to the statements of one "clansman" interviewed in the 1988 documentary *Lebanon: The Hashish Connection*, "We have grown hashish for a hundred years. No government has ever been able to stop us." The narrator explains that before the civil war, the Jaffir clan of hashish growers even "fought off the Lebanese army itself, when it tried to reestablish its authority."[44]

In contrast, in urban areas with strong government control, criminal entrepreneurs, smugglers, and traffickers such as Sami El-Khoury were quite dependent upon the political upperworld to succeed in their work. Officials had to be paid off and palms had to be greased to facilitate transactions and ensure smooth operational success. As such, these actors focused on higher profit transactions, primarily heroin. El-Khoury's biography provides substantial insight into the level of upperworld dominance, many examples of which are given throughout this thesis.

There is evidence that by joining the ranks of the Lebanese political class, one was at times *de facto* given entry to the drug trade. In 1960, Time Magazine inquired with a parliament candidate about the intense competition and vote-buying prevalent in the coming elections. He explained that, in addition to the opportunity to obtain lucrative business positions and obtain bribes, the competition was

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42 Ross, Albion, *Lebanon Battles Narcotic Traffic. The New York Times* 2 July 1951.

43 Ibid. In 1973, when U.S. Agents arrested eleven Americans in connection with a large trafficking ring, the defense jokingly offered to travel to Lebanon to find out the facts since the government was unable to persuade Lebanese authorities to arrest the Lebanese component of the ring, Majeed Mahfoud, and have him extradited to the United States. See Alligham, Jim. "Drug Ring Trial Under Way," *Beaver County Times* [Beaver, PA] 12 September 1973.

44 Wenner, Christopher. Dir. *Lebanon: The Hashish Connection.* Journeyman, 1988. Documentary. (Accessed at http://vod.journeyman.tv/store?p=3744&s=Hashish+Connection).

linked to politicians' desire for immunity from police searches, meaning that "any time he drives out to the country, he can load up with $1,000 worth of hashish."[45] Being in a position of power meant that authority would not be challenged. This went for politicians as well as security officials. Many of the latter carried a level of knowledge about interdiction practices unavailable to run-of-the-mill traffickers, and were thus valued actors in the drug trade. Motivating these security officials was financial reward at minimal cost. Regarding one security official, Moscow comments, "There was no safer way to carry narcotics across the Lebanese border than to have [the Criminal Investigative Division Inspector] drive the car with the narcotics."[46] Along with a Lebanese Customs Chief, they were the only two men "who could insure the safe transport of the morphine at the least risk."[47]

The two most powerful security posts in the country, the General Commander of Customs, and the Criminal Investigative Division (CID) Inspector, were frequently occupied by individuals involved in smuggling during the 1950s and 1960s. As for Customs Chiefs, many have been identified as being involved in the drug trade. According to El-Khoury himself, Customs Chief "Edward,"[48] "the biggest trafficker in Lebanon,"[49] was chosen to represent Lebanon at an INTERPOL conference in Geneva, and worked intimately with El-Khoury and other smugglers for a number of years. Rather than smuggling himself, Customs Chief Edward assisted traffickers by ensuring that customs searches would avoid certain cargo. In one account, Federal Bureau of Narcotics Agent Jim Attie pointed out that another Customs Chief, Edmond Azizi, was "a big dope dealer,"[50] who, along with "Sûreté officer Haj Touma [was] able to protect El-Khoury and Alaouie and profit from their drug smuggling operation."[51]

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45 "Lebanon: The First Secret Ballot," *TIME Magazine* 27 June 1960.
46 Moscow, Alvin. *The Merchants of Heroin.* Sphere Publishing, 1974. 71.
47 Ibid. 74.
48 His real name remains unknown, but he is referred to as "Edward" throughout Al-Lawzi (1971).
49 Al-Lawzi (1971). 62.
50 Valentine (2004). 125.
51 Ibid.

Furthermore, Abd Al-Karim Hamed, head of the Lebanese Sûreté narcotics division, may have been involved in the trade as well.[52]

Similarly, several CID chiefs have been identified as traffickers. For example, "Farid Shehab, director of the country's criminal investigation department," was reportedly involved in the drug trade.[53] And according to McCoy, CID Inspector Abou Salim Mallouke "protected the import of raw opium from Turkey's Anatolian plateau."[54] He acted as a "go-between, in the sense of the ordinary Lebanese middleman, helping a potential buyer and seller get together."[55] For the right price, he would personally drive and retrieve morphine base in Syria, bringing it back to Beirut in the trunk of his car, which was certain not to be searched.

Many officers continued to traffic after retirement, using their knowledge of police methods and their connections to their own benefit. In his autobiography, drug smuggler Richard Stratton mentions that his Lebanese connection was a so-called Mohammed, "who had retired as chief of Customs and become a multimillionaire."[56] And as for CID Inspector Mallouke, upon retirement he reportedly "turned his efforts full-time to smuggling, teaming up with several of the major smugglers in Beirut."[57] Other studies have found similar results in other parts of the world, such as in some Eastern European countries where "during and after the implosion of communism, parts of the (former) security services were recycled by criminal organizations [...] with a view to greater efficiency."[58] The input from former security officials helped criminal organizations to professionalize.[59] These security officials held a tight

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52 Al-Lawzi (1971). 114.

53 Rovner, Eduardo S. *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution.* University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 107.

54 McCoy, Alfred. *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003. 39.

55 Ibid.

56 Stratton, Richard. *Altered States of America: Outlaws and Icons, Hitmakers and Hitmen*. Nation Books, 2005. XXXI.

57 Moscow, Alvin. *The Merchants of Heroin.* Sphere Publishing, 1974. 273.

58 Leman, Johan, and Stef Janssens. "Human Smuggling and Trafficking from/via Eastern Europe: the Former 'Intelligence' and the Intermediary Structures." *Kolor: Journal on Moving Communities*. 6.1 (2006): 19-40.

59 Ibid.

hold over the criminal collaborations that they had forged. With corruption so pervasive, they could create and destroy them at will.

2.3 PCN Formation and Evolution Factors

In addition to the motivations and different PCN types outlined above, Godson notes that there are specific political, social, and economic conditions that create the prime environment for the (a) formation and (b) evolution of a PCN.

Political factors include multiple scenarios. On one hand, the presence of a noncompetitive or "unitary" state, one in which bureaucracies far outweigh institutions of civil society, leads to unchecked development. An example of this would be Russia under Communist rule. Second, an inverse situation, in which civil society institutions or other non-official political actors outweigh regimes and bureaucracies, also lend themselves to vulnerabilities. In this environment, governments are unable to compel citizens or officials to respect the law. Third, states with political systems in severe political and economic transition grapple with PCN formation.[60] An example of this would be Ukraine following the collapse of the Soviet Union, where it was "unexpectedly created without the institutions needed" and faced an economic crisis, precipitating the expansion of the Soviet-era political-criminal nexus.[61] It is argued that the specific political factors may lead to a unique type of PCN to form. For example, in a state with an overweight and strong bureaucracy, it is likely that a PCN characterized by upperworld dominance would appear. Inversely, in a system with a weak government and political actors, underworld dominance would likely arise. States going through severe transitions would be susceptible to the formation of any of the three balance of power forms.

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[60] Godson (2003). 9.

[61] Shelley, Louise. "Russia and Ukraine: Transition or Tragedy." *Trends in Organized Crime.* 4.3 (1999): 81-107. Cited in Godson (2003). 199.

Political factors may have facilitated the emergence of a PCN in Lebanon. While the central state was quite weak, unofficial political systems far outweighed civil society. These unofficial systems took the form of a deeply clientalist and sectarian social organization. This system was composed of individuals, *zu'uma',* and *qabadays*. The *zu'uma'* (sing. z*a'im*) were powerful religious and community representatives which operated at the state level. The *qabadays*, clientalist communal leaders, acted as a conduit between the zu'uma' and mostly urban communities. These informal networks operated as the "main channels of political mediation, participation, and integration."[62] While not an official part of the state bureaucracy, political contestations and power struggles took place within the context of these clientalist and sectarian sub-political structures.[63] As such, these structures ruled supreme. It is via this system that the population was able to cope with "a difficult environment, one characterized by material scarcity and latent or manifest insecurity."[64] With that in mind, in areas where this political system existed most strongly (urban areas), civil society institutions were far outweighed, leading to an urban PCN characterized by upperworld dominance. In areas where this political system had less influence, such as rural areas, a PCN emerged characterized by underworld dominance.

The evidence for this argument is clear. Official and "unofficial" political positions were utilized as a means with which to dispense privileges within a clientalist system, whether those benefits included criminal involvement or not. For this reason, they were not used to work towards the betterment of the nation, but rather to obtain a position that allowed one to work outside the rule of law

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62 Khalaf, Samir, and Guilain Denoeux, "Urban Networks and Political Conflict in Lebanon." *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus.* Eds. Shehadi, Nadim, and Dana Haffar Mills. London, UK: I. B. Tauris, 1993. 182.

63 In Khalaf and Denouex's analysis of this system, they argue (among other things) that this patronage system "enables [the qabaday] to influence the effectiveness of clientelism as a system of political control" (Khalaf (1993), 184.). While in good times qabadays may act as a conduit through which orders, goods, and services pass from patrons to the general population, in bad times they revealed themselves to be "weak links in the chains of clientelism," able to "strike out against the za'ims and establish themselves as independent leaders in their own right." For more, See Johnson, *Class & Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and The Lebanese State, 1840-1985.* Ithaca Press, 1986. 106. Also see Khalaf and Denoeux (1993), 184.

64 Ibid.

and improve one's lot. An example of this was previously mentioned, when a political candidate explained in an interview that political positions were highly sought after for the opportunity to obtain lucrative business positions, bribes, and immunity from police searches.[65]

It is no small coincidence that elements of sectarianism appear in the literature concerning trafficking, reflecting the importance of these divisive systems. For instance, many of the more powerful security posts in the country seem to have been held by Christians, i.e. Lebanese Sûreté Chief Emir Faoud Chehab, and Customs Chief Edmond Azizi. Perhaps conscious of this, Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) officials reportedly felt the need to tiptoe along sectarian lines in order to win their favor and cooperation, using an initial trial investigation to "prove that drug arrests would not be embarrassing to *Maronite officials* [emphasis mine]."[66] In this context, it seems that drug arrests which could have potentially embarrassed security officials who happened to be Maronite would have also perhaps embarrassed Maronite leaders. Initial FBN cases targeted those who would not be perceived as such a threat, such as Palestinian Abou Suleiman and Abou Sayia Basanti. When discussing some of the difficulties of working in Lebanon, FBN Agent Paul Knight mentioned the sectarian nature of getting information vetted by influential individuals, commenting that one Maronite leader would only provide assistance if it "helped make a case against Sami Khoury or *the Druze* [emphasis mine]."[67] It has also been suggested that Maronite Christians and the Phalange were primarily behind the opium traffic, having served for decades "as middlemen between the Turks and French along the Syrian border."[68]

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65 "Lebanon: The First Secret Ballot." *Time Magazine* 27 June 1960.
66 Valentine (2004). 122.
67 Knight, Paul. Interview with Douglas Valentine. *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs*. By Douglas Valentine. New York, NY: Verso, 2004. 124.
68 Valentine (2004). 121.

Godson further argues that there are unique cultural factors leading to the formation and evolution of a PCN. He cites the example of patron-client systems in Mexico or southern Italy, which "tend to make politics personalistic," as well as the history of secret societies in China and Nigeria, and the Italian "Mafia-Freemasonry connection" that helped create conditions of covertness that facilitated PCNs.[69] He also argues that different cultures perceive corruption in varying degrees of normality, and attach different levels of stigma to criminal conduct. Furthermore, some societies may perceive "criminals" as cultural heroes of sorts depending on public perception of the crimes they commit, bestowing "an aura of legitimacy on illegal activities." In parts of Mexico, Colombia, and the United States, drug dealers are sometimes idolized within certain subcultures. For example, the infamous drug cartel leader Pablo Escobar, once the 7th richest man in the world, is highly respected in his home city of Medellin, Colombia, for the Robin Hood-like investments he made in poor areas of the city.

In Lebanon, "cultural" (perhaps a better term here would be "social") factors may have influenced PCN creation. There is evidence that it took some time for society to internalize the criminalization of smuggling and begin to stigmatize traffickers. Thirteen years after the ban on hashish cultivation, some farmers even openly admitted to reporters that they cultivated hashish,[70] suggesting that the career field had no strongly-associated stigmatization.

In some cases, it seems that smugglers were regarded as cultural heroes of sorts. El-Khoury was held in high regard in his hometown of Zahlé, although the exact cause is uncertain – it may be simply that people appreciated the trickle-effect his enormous income had on the town, similar to the case of Pablo Escobar in Colombia. Although perhaps exaggerated, it is reported that when he arrived to

[69] Godson (2003). 9.
[70] "Major Headache for Lebanon: Hashish More Stable Than Onions." *United Press International.* Beaver County Times 31 March 1973.

Damascus' airport after being released from jail in Egypt, "There were more than 200 cars that had come from Zahlé to accompany him back to his hometown," and once there,

> "Triumphal banners had been raised in every street, and decorations on the door of every house, and the women ululated at the hero's return from prison and showered the elegant boy with flowers and perfumes. Bullets cut through the air and the zeal in the people reached such a proportion that they snatched the king from his car and carried him on their shoulders amidst songs and chanting..."[71]

And after returning from incarceration in Paris a few years later, hundreds of cars supposedly awaited El-Khoury at the Beirut airport in a similar show of support.[72] Perhaps his fame was built around the fact that he used his work and profits as a charity of sorts. He reportedly used his business to help Lebanese in need. In one story, he mentioned a man named George Joha.

> "[He] was a poor man! He came to me one day, saying that he had a car with a hidden compartment, and that he was willing to smuggle for me a bit of product from Zahlé to Beirut. He was unemployed, and wanted to support himself... I felt sorry for him, and instead of giving a share to my officer contact, like usual, I asked my group to send 300 kilos to George Joha so he could transport them to Beirut's beach."[73]

Stories from El-Khoury's biography make him seem concerned with the welfare of Zahlé in general. After returning from prison, he reported that he couldn't help but notice the "impoverished state that his town had been suffering in, especially since smuggling had almost stopped during the long time he was in jail, and he noticed that there was almost no one to be found that would pick the cultivated hashish because there was no way for anyone to export it outside of the country without him."[74] Some of his closest associates came from the town, including his driver, Michel Midwar.[75]

There are also a plethora of economic factors that facilitate the creation of a PCN. Godson cites a number of examples from his and others' studies. In some instances, criminals need political

[71] Al-Lawzi (1971). 56-7.
[72] Ibid. 110.
[73] Ibid. 63-4.
[74] Ibid. 56.
[75] Ibid. 173.

assistance in order to launder the huge quantities of money changing hands, or turn to political actors due their ability to "exercise control over local job opportunities."[76] In other cases, legitimate economic actors need assistance and services from criminal organizations and their political collaborators, such as the need for infrastructure to launder profits, a "level of efficiency and service" only available to criminal organizations and their political collaborators, and the "speed, simplicity and confidentiality" of criminal bankers.[77] Godson provides an example of this in a situation where entrepreneurs seek to work through criminal organizations in order to access foreign currencies if the domestic currency is undervalued and unstable, similar to the situation faced by Argentina in December of 2011. There, President Kirchner enacted multiple laws to restrict trading in foreign currencies, sending ordinary people to black markets to obtain dollars and giving them impetus to begin creating dollar smuggling networks. There are also, according to Godson, "specific national-level economic policies," "concrete economic factors at the local level," and supply-and-demand dynamics.[78]

In Lebanon, unique economic factors influenced the creation of the PCN in different ways. On the whole, the country's traditional economic role as an economic and commercial hub in the Middle East played an important part in fostering a distinct PCN. As Moscow states, "narcotics became merely another commodity in which to trade."[79] Indeed, the majority of the Lebanese involved in opium/morphine trafficking positioned themselves as middlemen between networks.

> "Lebanon found itself geographically between the opium of Turkey and the heroin of France. Culturally, it bridged the two dissimilar nations. Men grew rich in Beirut because they could buy in Turkey and sell in France more easily than the Frenchmen could themselves. The service to the heroin makers in Marseilles and in Italy was worth the commission. As traders, the Beiruti saw nothing wrong in trafficking in narcotics. Despite all the narcotics laws, the merchants in Beirut told themselves they were merely performing a service. They were not

[76] Godson (2003). 14.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Moscow (1968). 67.

> supplying harmful narcotics to their own people; the drug merely flowed through their own country like oil, leaving only a profit behind."[80]

This role as the facilitator, arranger, or middleman seems to provide the background to many of the PCN collaborations that emerged in Lebanon. For example, criminals paid corrupt members of the security forces to manage import and export of drugs across borders, where they could sidestep established import, export, and border controls. The ability of security forces to augment their sparse incomes – in exchange for a quick drive across the border – mattered a great deal in Lebanon's PCN. Inspector Mallouke's position in heroin trading networks exemplified Lebanon's trading spirit perfectly, and moreover, demonstrates the economic role that he and other security forces played. Reportedly, he "operated quite openly," serving as a:

> "[...] go-between, in the sense of the ordinary Lebanese middleman, helping a potential buyer and seller get together. [...] He made it his business to know where [smugglers] were and what they were doing. So, for a small commission, he would lead an American buyer, strange to Beirut, to the bar where he could negotiate his deal. Abou Salim, considering himself honest and forthright in such affairs, would accept his broker's commission and leave the two men to their business."[81]

Security officials provided services to traffickers in the form of protection, assistance, or even transportation of drugs themselves, at a level of efficiency and service unavailable elsewhere. For that, they were paid great amounts of money. For the five hours of work noted in *The Merchants of Heroin*, Inspector Mallouke was paid 800 dollars[82] (over $5,000 in 2010 dollars), an incredible sum considering that the Gross National Product Per Capita in 1968 (the year that The Merchants of Heroin was published) was $1,216.[83] The price was considered money well spent, "for his abilities were unique and they were needed. If he were dissatisfied or felt cheated, he might turn [the French trafficker] over to

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80 Ibid. 67-8.
81 Moscow (1974). 75.
82 Ibid. 71.
83 Barlow, Robin. "Economic Growth in the Middle East, 1950-1972." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14.2 (1982): 129-157.

the police."[84] Customs Chief Edward benefited similarly; El-Khoury commented at one point that the chief was taking around 80% of his profits.[85]

On the other hand, for "black drugs" such as hashish and marijuana, other economic factors facilitated the creation of a PCN. Although hashish cultivation in Lebanon was banned in the 1960s, it was tacitly permitted afterwards[86] for three reasons, all economic in nature. First, it provided an important income for both poor and wealthier farmers, landowners, and workers throughout the Bekaa. In 1973, one farmer, Emile,[87] reported earning 200 Lebanese pounds / $270 an acre for unprocessed marijuana, and 600 Lebanese pounds / $800 for hashish ($1,372 and $4,065 per acre, respectively, in 2010 dollars).[88] Second, the crop was tolerated for national reasons, as the trade was "a valid earner of the dollars needed to help this small trading nation balance its books."[89] Third, the number of powerful political actors benefiting economically from the hashish trade fostered gestures of counternarcotic compliance, yet continued complicity behind closed doors. Lebanese security officials made overtures of fighting the traffic to cater to UN and American demands. For instance, they initiated programs to provide economic incentives to farmers to ditch hashish for alternate crops. The first of these programs was implemented by Director of Internal Security of Lebanon (ISAF) Mahmoud Bana, which persuaded the "Danaji tribesmen" to replace their hashish crops with subsidized sunflower crops.[90] The program saw measurable results: the number of acres devoted to sunflower seeds increased from 250 to 8000 by 1967,[91] and to 10,500 acres by 1969, representing a total of 1,034 farmers who gave up hashish

84 Moscow (1974). 70.
85 Al-Lawzi (1971). 77.
86 Ibid. 57.
87 This farmer claimed to be a police chief's landlord.
88 "Hashish Growers Prosper in Lebanon." *Herald-Journal* 11 March 1973.
89 "Lebanon Orders Inquiry Into Production of Hashish After Political Scandal." *The New York Times* 20 September 1970.
90 Green, Timothy. "The Smugglers: An Investigation into the World of the Contemporary Smuggler." New York, NY: Walker, 1969. 91.
91 Ibid. 92

for sunflowers.[92] And in 1970 there was an effort to crack down on corruption when, under the direction of Interior Minister Kamal Jumblatt, "the combined Justice and Defense Committees of the Lebanese parliament"[93] ordered an investigation regarding allegations that politicians had been involved in hashish smuggling. However, on the ground, the reality was much different. While the U.S. Consulate issued a notice in 1970 stating that the "Lebanese police agencies are working assiduously to suppress the traffic in hashish,"[94] behind the scenes journalists were reporting a different story, one of complicity between farmers paying a reported "3 to 5 percent of their crop for protection"[95] and security officials with a "relaxed attitude toward enforcing the law."[96] One described how hash farmers built up the perception of compliance, fostering a cooperative atmosphere with police officials.

> "[Emile] obligingly surrounds his fields with a thin screen of the yellow flowers. But the cash crop is hash. His father grows it. His brothers grow it. His neighbors grow it in a hundred other villages of the Hermel-Baalbek area in northern Lebanon.
>
> "Sometimes the police have to make an arrest. Then the village gets together and selects someone to take the blame. The volunteer, usually a seasonal worker without land of his own, is paid up to $1,500 to spend a few months in jail. Emile's household refines his hashish right under the nose of the police chief [...]"[97]

George Abou Haidar, the mayor of Haoush Barada, commented on the enforcement of hash laws:

> "All the time I get government circulars saying hashish is illegal. But the law is applied only to the weak, the small farmers. When the police come they never destroy the crops of the big landowners. They collect some fines and go away. The hashish still grows."[98]

Many of the "big landowners" were those with political connections or political positions. After returning from a narcotics fact-finding mission, U.S. congressman Seymour Halpern found that:

> "One of the leading growers of hashish in Lebanon has been [Deputy Naif El-Masri] of the

92 Schmidt, Dana. "Lebanon Seeking to Curb Hashish." *The New York Times* 28 September 1969.
93 "Lebanon Orders Inquiry Into Production of Hashish After Political Scandal." (1970).
94 Reston, James. "Beirut: The Dope Traffic in the Middle East." *The New York Times* 18 February 1970.
95 "Hashish Growers Prosper in Lebanon." *Herald-Journal* 11 March 1973.
96 "Lebanon Orders Inquiry Into Production of Hashish After Political Scandal." *The New York Times* 20 September 1970.
97 "Hashish Growers Prosper in Lebanon." (1973).
98 Ibid.

> Chamber of Deputies. He even has a landing strip... on his property which has been heavily guarded by machine guns. [...] It was from his property that a privately owned Martin 202 took off with 670 kilos of hashish and was later seized by the Greeks on the Island of Crete."[99]

Halpern goes on to state that "despite the notoriety given to this seizure, Masri is still untouched and still serves as an active member of the Chamber of Deputies."[100] He also identifies two other powerful hashish growers, the former Speaker of the House, Sabri Hamadeh, "still a prominent member of Parliament" who has been growing hashish "for years" on his "huge land holdings in the mountainous areas of Hermel,"[101] and Fares Shumayt, the son of Lebanese Chief of Staff General Yusuf Shumayt, who was "picked up recently at an airport with 31 kilos of hashish, all bound for Paris."[102] In a separate report, the son of the Chamber of Deputies, Chawkat al-Masri, was said to be under investigation for meeting with smugglers in a hotel.[103]

In addition to the three societal conditions previously discussed, Godson notes that there are also micro-level factors conducive to the formation of a PCN. For example, some criminal groups seek to affect and manipulate local politics to their advantage. Furthermore, supply and demand dynamics affect PCNs as well - when demand for illegal goods is high, "the effort to supply the demand can contribute in a significant way to the creation of organized crime, and hence facilitates the creation of PCNs."[104]

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[99] Anderson, Jack. "Other Lands Fill Dope Gap." *Herald-Journal* 10 July 1971.

The Martin 202 that Halpern referred to was flown by U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel John Moore and Copilot Philip Amos. Diverting from their flight path, they touched down at El-Masri's farm in the northern Bekaa to unload illegal cigarettes and load hashish. After evading Lebanese jets, they ran out of fuel and were forced to land in Greece, where authorities seized 13 bags of hashish worth about $4,000,000 (~$22,900,000 in 2010 dollars). For more on this incident, see "World: Pursuit of the Poppy." *TIME Magazine* 14 September 1970.

[100] Ibid (Anderson).

[101] Hamadeh is also recognized as a hashish dealer in John Bullock's *Final Conflict: The War in the Lebanon* (Century Publishing, 1983. 205).

[102] Anderson, Jack. "Other Lands Fill Dope Gap." *Herald-Journal.* 10 July 1971.

[103] "Lebanon Orders Inquiry Into Production of Hashish After Political Scandal." (1970).

[104] Godson (2003). 15.

2.4 Conclusion

To recap, a variety of political, social, and economic factors facilitated the creation of a PCN in Lebanon. Politically, an environment composed of a strong unofficial political system outweighed institutions of civil society, perhaps leading to the development of an urban PCN characterized by upperworld dominance. Culturally, Lebanon criminalized narcotics production much later than other countries, meaning that there was significantly less time for Lebanese politicians, security officials, and regular citizens to internalize the stigmatization of drugs. And for economic reasons, actors in the political and security fields had financial stakes in resisting criminalization of the drug trade. Together, these three distinct but interrelated factors played a strong role in the growth of criminal networks in Lebanon.

CHAPTER 3.

THE REGIONAL HASHISH MARKET

In contrast to the previous section, which focused on the causes of drug trafficking at the national level, this section looks at drug trafficking at the regional level. It documents the emergence of the first modern Middle Eastern consumer market for hashish and to a lesser extent opium, Egypt, from roughly the 19th century until the middle of the 20th. With a precipitous rise in demand and an inability to meet it with local Egyptian supplies, smugglers began bringing in narcotics from a number of neighboring Middle Eastern countries. Naturally, the corresponding rise in dependency led to widespread efforts to eradicate the practice. As law enforcement agencies attempted to crack down on drug smuggling throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Lebanon increasingly found itself garnering greater market share, eventually becoming the principal supplier of hashish to Egypt by the middle of the century. The international level is discussed in the following chapter.

Throughout much of modern history, Egypt held the title of largest consumer of hashish in the Middle East.[105] Until the middle of the 19th century, local cultivation in the Nile delta had been sufficient to meet demand. But in 1879, increasing concerns about its harmful effects led to a widespread ban and the destruction of all supplies,[106] reportedly "under pressure" from European powers.[107] As a result, smugglers adapted to the new reality by bringing in hashish from Greece (and to

[105] For a look at hashish usage in the Islamic world prior to the 19th century, see Gabriel G. Nahas "Hashish in Islam: 9th to 18th Century," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 58.9 (December 1982): 814-831.
[106] Nahas, Gabriel G., "Hashish and Drug Abuse in Egypt During the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 61.5 (June 1985): 429.
[107] Nelen, J.M., and Dina Siegel. *Organized Crime: Culture, Markets and Policies.* New York, NY: Springer, 2008. 31.

a lesser extent Morocco).[108] According to the memoirs of a French smuggler, the trade was controlled by a syndicate of Greeks, Cretans, Egyptians and officers in Alexandria and Cairo, and with the complicity of resident Englishmen, chiefs of customs, and police.[109] As Egyptian demand for the drug continued to increase, entrepreneurs from nearby countries with agreeable climates began to enter the trade, most notably individuals from Lebanon (followed closely by Syria), where hashish production was still legal.

Although hashish was banned and regarded as dangerous, soon Egyptian officials turned their attention to much more problematic "white drugs," i.e. heroin and cocaine. Usage of these drugs had been rising dramatically, encouraged by a European pharmaceutical industry looking to dump its excess supplies on emerging markets.[110] Egyptian authorities initially responded to the problem by banning local opium cultivation in 1926. Three years later, they formed a Central Narcotic Intelligence Bureau (CNIB) along with a "Camel Corps" which targeted drugs trafficked via camel caravans.[111] Soon enough, the CNIB, headed by Thomas Russel, was able to make some headway against the white drug trade. Russel "organized the first international intelligence network aimed at discovering the source of the drugs imported into Egypt," appealed to and received commitments from League of Nations member countries to curtail the export of white drugs, and increased interdiction efforts so much that heroin and cocaine traffickers had to dilute existing supplies due to scarcity.[112] Efforts at fighting these white drugs not only focused on the European pharmaceutical companies, but also Turkey, where farmers sold tons of excess pharmaceutical opium on the black market. In 1931, Russel convinced Turkey to "ban illicit manufacture of heroin and to limit cultivation of opium to medical and scientific

[108] Ibid.
[109] Monfreid, Henry De. *Pearls, Arms And Hashish: Pages From The Life Of A Red Sea Navigator.* 1930. Ed. Ida Treat. Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2007.
[110] Nahas, Gabriel G. (June 1985): 433.
[111] O'Callaghan, Sean. *The Drug Traffic*, London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967. 27.
[112] Nahas, Gabriel G. (June 1985): 436.

purposes."[113] Despite Egypt's notable efforts, the flow of drugs into the country continued unabated, no doubt enabled by foreigners unaccountable to Egyptian law (until 1937), a relic of British control over the country:

> "The work of the enforcement agencies at this time was made even more difficult by the system of capitulations to which the Egyptian Government was then subjected. Under the cover of the extra-territorial protection it gave them, many important traffickers and their agents were able to function with impunity. It might even be said that this system was amongst the most important factors which encouraged certain foreigners to venture into the lucrative drug trade. In many cases the consular authorities of the powers concerned were able to turn down Egyptian requests for deporting certain of their subjects involved in the drug traffic."[114]

According to Gabriel Nahas, Egyptian efforts to combat the spread of white drugs "did not spill over into a campaign against black ones, mainly hashish."[115] This meant that while Egyptian and European cooperative efforts were focused on fighting opium, Lebanese and Syrian hashish producers were increasing their yields and smugglers were fine-tuning smuggling routes and techniques. The banning of hashish cultivation in Greece and Turkey in 1932 and 1933 respectively only served to increase Lebanon and Syria's market share, prompting further investments into the black market supply and infrastructure. Despite a nominal Lebanese ban on hashish production in 1926, by 1928 production in the Bekaa Valley had skyrocketed. That year, the United Nations reported that 60 tons were produced, 90 percent of which was sent to Egypt.[116]

Lebanese political and social leaders were complicit in the narcotics trade to Egypt, many of whom were owners of large swathes of cannabis-producing farms.[117]In 1939, the French Sûreté Générale produced a long list of Lebanese hashish producers, which included "several members of

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[113] Nahas, Gabriel G. (June 1985): 437.
[114] ElHadka, Ahmed. "Forty years of the campaign against narcotic drugs in the United Arab Republic." *Bulletin on Narcotics*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 17:2 (1965).
[115] Nahas (1985): 434.
[116] ElHadka (1965).
[117] It is important to recognize that hashish cultivation in Lebanon was not a new phenomenon. It had been performed in the region for centuries, and often times hashish producers came from large families of producers who had cultivated cannabis for generations.

Parliament, a minister of finance, a former minister of agriculture, and local notables and priests."[118] Early news reports from the 1940s illustrated the reputation that the country's politicians had earned. When Egyptian Director General Abdul Monsef asked the Arab League to "take action to obtain an enforcement promise from the Arab countries to eradicate production of the drug,"[119] the New York Times commented that:

> "[...] it is common knowledge that the principal Arab source of hashish smuggled into Egypt is Lebanon, followed by Syria. The role played by the hashish trade is a black spot on the record of the Lebanese Republic. [...] Even men in high position in the country have been involved directly in the hashish trade. Experts in the drug traffic assert that hashish can be grown in Lebanon only through open corruption of responsible officials."[120]

A variety of routes were developed and used to bring hashish into Egypt from Lebanon: some loaded it onto ships in Beirut with the cooperation of crew members and took it to Port Said or Alexandria,[121] while others smuggled it across Palestine on camels through the north Sinai using the local skills of the Sinai Bedouin, "an important route" according to the United Nations.[122]

Eventually, Egyptian anti-narcotics initiatives began targeting the hashish trade. In an effort to encourage eradication in French Lebanon and Syria, the Egyptian CNIB endeavored to strengthen its ties with the Mandate police forces. In 1934, it succeeded in extracting concessions from them. As Schayegh notes, the French:

> "hardened their stance on narcotics with a degree that energized prosecution and ordered the creation of a [sûreté générale] anti-drug squad with a regional mandate. Anglo-Egyptian-French anti-narcotics cooperation peaked around 1937 and 1938, as France attempted to eradicate hashish and as anti-trafficking campaigns were implemented that included systematic information exchanges, extraditions, coordinated actions, and even Egyptian undercover operations on French Mandate territory."[123]

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[118] 115 Directeur, SG, to HC Cabinet politique, report #250, 10, Beirut, July 29, 1939, Box 855, MAENantes. Cited in Schayegh (2011). 301.
[119] "Arab League Told to Act on Hashish," *The New York Times* 29 May 1949.
[120] Ibid.
[121] ElHadka (1965).
[122] Ibid.
[123] Schayegh, Cyrus. "The Many Worlds of Abud Yasin; or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can

Despite these efforts, French anti-narcotics cooperation had declined by the end of the decade due to a re-prioritization of resources during World War II.[124] During the mandate period, there was, in general, a "minimal presence" of French forces in the Levant, meaning that French territorial division had little effect on local trade and trust networks, and "until the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the border zone remained an integrated unit. Regional consumer demands – for narcotics, but also for customs-free legal goods – were easily channeled through border-zone networks of trade, trust, and transport."[125] For the French, Lebanon's "economic and security value was too small to warrant large expenses,"[126] and they suffered from "shaky legitimacy"[127] on the ground. As a result, they endeavored to minimize their physical presence, instead relying on co-opting local political actors and power brokers by "purposely ignoring their cannabis fields and their trafficking activities."[128] In 1939,

> "[Lebanese peasants] 'received formal assurances' that there would be no negative repercussions 'from highest-ranking Lebanese personalities,' whose own resumption of cannabis cultivation constituted a 'most extreme example' to the peasants."[129]

When Egypt again demanded French cooperation, the Sûreté Générale blamed the "complicity of the Lebanese government" and the "inactivity of the Lebanese Gendarmerie."[130]

As mentioned previously, the onset of World War II reduced forces available for fighting the trafficking. However, vigilance at the Palestinian border still led to multiple busts.[131] Several hashish busts were devastatingly large - for example, one seizure of hashish valued at $250,000 (~$3,200,000

Tell Us about Territorialization." *American Historical Review* 116:2 (2011): 297.

[124] Ibid. 298.

[125] Ibid. 276.

[126] Ibid. 278.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid. 277-8.

[129] "Directeur, SG, to HC Cabinet politique, report #250, 10, Beirut, 29 July 1939. Box 855, MAE-Nantes." Cited in Schayegh (2011): 301.

[130] "SG, report #5679, 3, Beirut, 5 July 1939, Box 855, MAE-Nantes. Cf. Directeur, SG, to HC Puaux, #5564, 1, Beirut, July 1, 1939." Cited in Schayegh, Cyrus (2011): 301.

[131] Nelen, J.M., and Dina Siegel. *Organized Crime: Culture, Markets and Policies.* New York, NY: Springer, 2008. 33.

in 2010 dollars) made international headlines in 1943.[132] As a result, traffickers diversified their techniques to account for border crossings, with some going so far as to force camels to swallow zinc pills filled with narcotics, slaughtering them later to remove the pills. But by the end of World War II, interdiction efforts, prohibitive increases in prices, and a "general consensus" that "addictive drugs had an overall damaging effect" caused the consumption of white drugs to nearly disappear in Egypt.[133] However, "Russell's fight against black drugs was not as effective, although the CNIB's measures against hashish smuggling and cultivation did result in a considerable decrease in consumption."[134]

Following the end of World War II, interdiction efforts refocused on hashish smuggling, and hashish confiscations and trafficking convictions rose as a result.[135] The Arab–Israeli War in 1948 and independence declarations by several Arab states had considerable transformative effects on the routes and methods used by Levantine smugglers, as transportation routes closed in the face of the new state boundaries. Some smugglers began employing actors other than Bedouin to move narcotics across borders, such as refugees and military forces.[136] Institutional attempts at combating the trade increased. Within months of Israeli state formation, the new nation began training a special narcotics squad to combat the hashish traffic.[137] The Arab League followed Israel's move by establishing a permanent Anti-Narcotics Bureau in 1950. Levantine traffickers responded by moving narcotics to Egypt in a roundabout manner which avoided Israel, crossing from Jordan to Saudi Arabia, then across the Gulf of Aqaba to South Sinai from where it would be much easier to reach the major population centers along the Nile Delta. This route would go on to become a "major import channel of hashish" for the next 20

[132] "Hashish Ring is Arrested." *The New York Times* 29 November 1943.
[133] Nahas (1985): 438.
[134] Nahas (1985): 439.
[135] Ibid. 439.
[136] "Arab League Told to Act on Hashish." *The New York Times* 29 May 1949.
[137] Gruson, Sydney. "Narcotics Traffic Worrying Israel." *The New York Times* 28 November 1948.

years.[138] In 1951, a new government in Lebanon acquiesced to Egyptian demands for cooperation in fighting the hashish trade, and reportedly under U.S. pressure "rushed through an appropriation for destroying the crops," and sent in workers under police protection to eradicate marijuana crops in the northeastern areas of the country.[139] Despite overt cooperation, journalists had difficulties reporting on the trade. Commenting in 1951, Albion Ross wrote, "the power of the marijuana interests in the [Lebanese government] had been so great that foreign correspondents who tried to mention the marijuana traffic in their dispatches were threatened with expulsion from the country."[140]

In the 1960s and early 1970s, hashish and marijuana consumption in the United States had been skyrocketing. Between 1967 and 1970, Gallup Polls found that the proportion of college students reporting "lifetime prevalence of marijuana use" jumped from 5% in 1967, to 22% in 1969, and finally to 51% in 1971.[141] Lebanon prospered greatly from this increased demand. Unlike opium, which had to be smuggled into Lebanon and then smuggled out, the majority of Lebanese marijuana was grown in the Bekaa Valley, bypassing the need to coordinate its import and reducing risk. Farmers could sell their product to whomever they pleased, and rather than spending weeks or months identifying, casing, cultivating, and manipulating individuals as couriers,[142] people would travel to Lebanon to seek out them or their associates directly. Many of these new "couriers" were tourists and students, and many got caught.[143] In 1970, TIME Magazine reported that Lebanon was "Morocco's main rival as a Mecca for drug-seeking tourists," and as a result, "police arrested eight youthful Americans who were trying to sneak some 70 kilos of hash out of the country. The catch brought Lebanon's current population of

[138] Nelen (2008). 33.
[139] Ross, Albion. "Lebanon Battles Narcotic Traffic." *The New York Times* 2 July 1951.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Harrison, Lana D., Michael Backenheimer and James A. Inciardi. "Cannabis Use in the United States: Implications for Policy." (1995) *Cannabisbeleid in Duitsland, Frankrijk en de Verenigde Staten.* Eds. Peter Cohen & Arjan Sas. Amsterdam: Centrum voor Drugsonderzoek, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1996. 206-230.
[142] For an example of this manipulation, see O'Callaghan, Sean. *The Drug Traffic*. London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967. 23-5.
[143] Green, Timothy. *The Smugglers: An Investigation into the World of the Contemporary Smuggler.* New York, NY: Walker, 1969. 94-5.

Americans imprisoned on drug charges to 15."[144]

> "Often the youthful smugglers are suckers from the start. In Lebanon, tourist guides around Baalbek's famous Roman ruins sidle up to adventurous-looking American kids and sell them not only cheap hash but identical cheap cardboard tourist suitcases to carry it in. Airport customs officials are so familiar with the suitcases that they almost yawn as they arrest the tourists who show up with them."[145]

In 1975, Turkish officials confirmed this trend, commenting that as a result of the increasing difficulty in procuring opium supplies in the eastern Mediterranean, Lebanese and Syrian smugglers were "shifting to hashish [...]."[146] With the outbreak of civil strife that same year, the collapse of legal authority was a boon for hashish farmers in the Bekaa Valley. During the spring of 1975, they "almost doubled the area under [hashish] cultivation," and by 1976 had produced a record crop, "estimated at twice the volume of last year's harvest."[147] Hashish was shipped via Damascus and Jounieh,[148] most to Egypt, but also to Europe. The Syrian intervention and occupation of almost 60 percent of Lebanese territory reportedly had little to no negative effect on drug production, as the Syrians were "reluctant to intervene, saying that their job is to keep the peace, not to get involved in local law enforcement activities."[149]

3.2 Sami El-Khoury in the Hashish Trade

As demonstrated, the PCN in Lebanon played a key role in the Egyptian hashish trade. French Mandate officials were complicit in the trade, as they vacillated between "fundamentally incompatible actions,"[150] at times turning a blind eye at times to hashish producers in order to garner cooperation,

144 "Americans Abroad: The Jail Scene." *TIME Magazine* 13 April 1970.
145 "Americans Abroad: The Jail Scene." *TIME Magazine* 13 April 1970.
146 "Plenty of Poppies - But No 'Turkish Connection'." *The Journal* [Meriden-Southington, Conn] 25 September 1975.
147 "Hash Merchants Riding the Crest." *Reuters.* The Windsor Star 20 November 1976.
148 Ibid.
149 "New Opium Region Pops Up in Lebanon." *Los Angeles Times Service.* The Pittsburg Press 17 July 1977.
150 Schayegh (2011): 277.

and at other times bowing to pressure to crack down on the drug trade. Lebanese politicians reacted similarly, as many had personal stakes in the hashish trade, but reputations which were dependent upon professed cooperation. The following section takes a look at Sami El-Khoury's experiences in hashish smuggling in relation to the transformations occurring during this period.

While the last chapter identified a combination of erratic Egyptian interdiction efforts, production bans in Greece and Turkey, and disruptions to interstate cooperation following major historical events as significant factors leading to Lebanon's rise as a major player in the regional narcotics trade, the country could not have achieved this position were it not for structural changes initiated by French mandate officials.

Beirut emerged from World War I under the French mandate having solidified its position as the leading city of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. While already the coast's largest and busiest city, other major coastal cities such as Lattakia, Akre, Tyre, Saida, and Tripoli lost influence as the French expanded Beirut's port in 1934 and again in 1938, established critical transportation infrastructure, built Beirut's first airport,[151] and expanded and widened roadways, connecting the city with nearby regional hubs. The city was connected by highways to Tripoli, Lattakia, Aleppo and Aintab to the north, Damascus and Baghdad to the east, and Saida, Tyre, Akre, Haifa to the south. From 1919 to 1939, 8,150 kilometers of new drivable roads and 650 kilometers of railway were built.[152] These improvements greatly boosted airborne, seaborne, and land-borne mobility in and around Beirut immensely, for traffickers, smugglers, and the lawful alike. As Schayegh notes,

> "French improvements to the transportation infrastructure boosted the mobility especially of [transnational professional traffickers] and strengthened or even created region-wide networks of trust. Still, traffickers also had to deal with the strong presence of government officials. The

[151] Prior to the building of the Bir Hassan Airport south of Beirut in 1938, airlines landed seaplanes in the water in front of Minet El Hosn/St Georges Bay wharf and rowed passengers to shore. See Chemaitelli, Wassim. *The Cedarjet Pages*. Website. Last updated 27 May, 2010. Accessed at http://wassch71.tripod.com/cedarjet1.html

[152] Schayegh (2011): 287.

result was endemic corruption that left only small segments of officialdom untouched."[153]

Elements from smuggler Sami El-Khoury's past provide a real world example of this transformation in infrastructure on drug trafficking. El-Khoury was born in 1929 in the geostrategic town of Zahlé, a Bekaa Valley trading hub. According to his biography, hashish cultivation was semi-public and many of the people in the region made their living from growing it, as well as smuggling it to "sister countries."[154] He himself followed his father into the drug trafficking trade in 1943 at the age of 14, when many drug shipments were still delivered to Egypt via mule or camel caravan. At this time, networks of trust were necessarily small, and the lack of mobility posed problems to smuggling operations. One night, El-Khoury found his father awake in the middle of the night, worried about a payment that had not been made. Wanting to assuage his father's concerns, he traveled overland by mule to Egypt to secure the payment. Upon arriving, he learned that the distributor had been waiting months to find a reliable and trustworthy individual to deliver the payment, but had been unable to do so.[155] In an era of instantaneous money transfers via Western Union and MoneyGram, it's easy to overlook the logistical problems inherent in carrying out underground black market currency deliveries in the early twentieth century. Without the revenue, it would have been increasingly difficult for father El-Khoury to pay the overhead costs of new operations.

French investments in transportation infrastructure gave El-Khoury the opportunity to reform his business in a more efficient manner. With his father's buyer in Egypt, they colluded to take advantage of the growing expanse of roadways, and plotted to smuggle narcotics in luxury cars with hidden compartments.[156] As El-Khoury's stature grew, he made greater use of land-borne smuggling routes, and began employing fleets of vehicles which retrieved supplies in Syria and delivered them

[153] Schayegh (2011): 277.
[154] Al-Lawzi *(*1971). 19.
[155] Ibid. 27.
[156] Ibid. 25-7.

south to Egypt via British Palestine, becoming the “”uncrowned king of the operations of smuggling between Lebanon and Palestine.”[157] He was able to realize unimaginable profits, until his last operation in 1948 in which eight cars were captured with his “product,” four of his men were arrested, and the border was closed as war broke out between the newly-formed Israel and neighboring states.

The 1948 closure of the Lebanese-Israeli border and the seizure of his vehicles led to logistical problems for El-Khoury, as his overland routes were suddenly cut off. He responded by turning towards airborne transportation, and joined an aviation institute to build relationships with the appropriate officials.[158] Eventually, the deeply indebted director of Beirut International Airport, Josef Akre, approached him for an under-the-table job. Their plan was relatively simple - Akre chartered a plane, which was filled with drugs by Khoury’s father, loaded by Akre's staff, and sent to Egypt, touching down at disused airstrips in the Nile delta to disburse their loads on their way to their final destination.[159][160] However, luck was not on their side, and they were caught by Egyptian police and sentenced to jail for importing hashish and opium.[161] Apparently El-Khoury must have formed relatively powerful connections prior to his imprisonment, as Lebanese parliamentarian and lawyer Sheikh Behij Taqi Al-Din and Speaker of the Parliament Habib Abou Chahla both visited him in prison, and the latter even personally reviewed El-Khoury’s legal case.[162]

El-Khoury's success in the regional hashish market – while no doubt partially attributed to his business acumen and adaptability – was dependent upon the collaborations that he was able to initiate with political actors and security officials. He worked aggressively to build relationships with

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157 Ibid. 34-35.
158 Ibid. 36-44.
159 The two had been caught because an air control officer noticed the discrepancy between the estimated time of arrival and the time the plane actually touched down in Al-Maza, notifying police.
160 Al-Lawzi (1971). 34-44.
161 O’Callaghan (1967). 12.
162 Al-Lawzi (1971). 45-6.

whomever he could. His biography provides plenty of fanciful stories concerning his propensity to bribe whomever he could. Reportedly, he initially bribed British border patrols at the entrance to Palestine by giving out gifts and generous amounts of money. Supposedly, they waited for his drug runs and the associated gifts "enthusiastically."[163] When his name came to the attention of higher-ranking British authorities, they sent a man named Naif Nimr (a.k.a. Abou Rashid) to Lebanon to investigate Sami and the officers, workers, and men working with him. Reportedly at their first meeting, when El-Khoury was only 16 years old, he brazenly asked Naif how much his pension was. Naif responded, "70 guineas" - Sami's reply was, "Starting today, it's 1,070."[164] While probably embellished, stories such as these may have a kernel of truth to them, and at the very least provide insight into El-Khoury's confidence in his abilities to "turn" officials.

3.3 Conclusion

The prior sections reveal a number of truths about Lebanon's role in the regional trade supplying hashish to Egypt. First, a PCN was quick to form in the country, and it was initiated by actors on both sides of the table. On one hand, smugglers like El-Khoury made great attempts to co-opt or buy off security officials or politicians. The latter's ability to circumvent the legal process meant that their smuggling and protection services were in high demand, and the amounts being charged were exorbitant (at one point El-Khoury said that Customs Chief Edward was taking 80% of his profit). On the other hand, certain land-owning politicians grappled with the fact that an expanding source of income for them was turning from legal to illegal before their very eyes. Keen to resist this transformation, they turned to criminals for assistance in the smuggling.

Second, it is safe to say that the country did not take on its important role in the hashish trade

[163] Ibid. 28-9.
[164] Ibid. 30-33.

without outside influence. Rather, the indirect effects of French mandate officials were important, especially considering the effect their infrastructure expansion projects had on expanding smuggling routes. Furthermore, their physically-removed administrative position was extremely influential, as they encouraged the drug trade by seeking to co-opt local political actors and power brokers by ignoring drug related activities.[165]

Third, despite occasional Lebanese officials' attempts to eradicate hashish, it is a testament to the strength of the political resistance that despite significant international pressure, the actions of concerned regional antinarcotics bureaus, foreign law enforcement agencies (such as the U.S. FBN), and international organizations (the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board and INTERPOL) to fight the hashish trade, Lebanon remained one of the largest marijuana producers in the world well into the 1970s.

Fourth, regional politics undermined regional interdiction cooperation. Not only were Arab countries not cooperating as much as they could be, but the absence of Israel in regional efforts created a "large loophole of which the traffickers of the Middle East drug ring take full advantage."[166] The United Nations was well aware of this when they commented that:

> "The smugglers' efforts along [the Jordan-Israel-Egypt smuggling route] are well organized and co-ordinated but there is no co-operation [sic] whatever between enforcement forces. The reason for this situation is a well-known political one and thus beyond the scope of the mission to comment on – it can only point out that while the situation exists the smugglers have all the advantages."[167]

The lack of law enforcement cooperation between Israel and neighboring countries continues to benefit criminals to this day. In 2009, the Associated Press reported that the "state of war between Israel and Lebanon prevents their security forces from cooperating," and the only anti-narcotics efforts on the

[165] Schayegh (2011). 277-8.
[166] O'Callaghan (1967). 28.
[167] "Report of the United Nations Mission Investigating the Narcotics Problem in the Middle East." 1959. Paragraph 42. Cited in O'Callaghan (1967). 28-9.

Lebanese-Israeli border occur between the Israeli military and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). However, even these ties "appear to be used only seldom for cooperation against smugglers."[168]

While this chapter examined Lebanon's role in the regional hashish trade, the following chapter looks into the country's role in international opium markets.

[168] "On Jumpy Lebanon-Israel Frontier, A Quiet Drug War." *Associated Press.* Haaretz 12 April 2009.

CHAPTER 4.

THE INTERNATIONAL OPIUM TRADE

Whereas the previous section examined Lebanon's role in regional hashish networks, the following section looks at Lebanon's role in international opium/heroin networks. It follows Lebanon's transformation into a pivot between trans-Atlantic heroin distribution networks and Anatolian/Syrian opium supply networks.

Like Egypt, growing western markets faced a serious decline in the supply of opiates during the late 1930s and through World War II, a time in which it is said that "smuggling was nearly impossible."[169] But consumption was on the rise, with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics estimating the number of addicts post-war at three time's pre-war levels.[170] The rise in consumption combined with the fall in supply meant prices soared, and riches could be had by smuggling a few kilos of white powder across a border or two. Much of the opiate supply was siphoned off legal European pharmaceutical production. What didn't come from Europe came primarily from Turkey, where poppy cultivation was legal. Turkish opium was transferred via a variety of routes to reach Europe, the largest of which involved refinement facilities in Syria, where it would be processed into morphine base, and then shipped out across the Mediterranean. More often than not, smugglers would bring the morphine base into Lebanon, from where it would leave via either air or sea. Lebanon, and Beirut in particular, increasingly became a bottleneck between Asian opium fields and European markets for several reasons. The first of these is linguistic. Due to the French occupation and the pervasiveness of French-

[169] Davenport-Hines, Richard. *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. 348.

[170] Chepesiuk, Ron. *The War on Drugs: An International Encyclopedia.* ABC-CLIO, 1999. 126.

language education, the second language of the country was French. This not only meant that French-educated Lebanese could communicate with French and Corsican traffickers, but that they could also communicate with French-speaking couriers who had unobstructed access to travel to Europe. Arabic as a mother tongue meant that these same Lebanese could communicate across the region with Arabic-speaking poppy growers, smugglers, border guards, and more. Linguistically, they held a monopoly on communication. In Turkey, on the other hand, there was no commonly-spoken "international" language that could be drawn upon in a similar fashion. Due to Ataturk's impressive Turkish language reforms, which began in 1928 and continued until the 1940s, an entirely new language was effectively forced upon the whole population of Turkey, leading to a decidedly mono-linguistic culture.[171]

The second reason Lebanon emerged as a bottleneck is structural. As mentioned before, due to the prioritization of French investment in Beirut and Lebanon's infrastructure, the city increasingly the most important shipping hub in the eastern Mediterranean. The port was expanded in 1934 and again in 1938 to handle growing traffic and cargo ships with deeper displacements. The vastness of these vessels meant that endless possibilities existed for concealing drugs, and that the odds of police locating them were extremely low. That didn't mean that there weren't arrests - for example, in 1953, when French narcotics officers arrested six Corsican sailors from the St. Helene and seized 200 kilos of opium, the sailors provided sworn statements that the sacks of opium had been carried aboard by Lebanese police officers[172] (an event mentioned in El-Khoury's biography). Despite these arrests, the reality was that once the drugs found their way onto a ship, the chances of them being discovered by narcotics agents were slim to none.

In contrast, the infrastructure of Syria's largest port, Lattakia, took many years to catch up to

[171] For more on the Ataturk's recreation of the Turkish language, see Lewis, Geoffrey. *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success.* Oxford University Press, 2002.
[172] O'Callaghan (1967). 13.

Beirut. Part of the reason was surely political, as Lattakia had a troubled history in coming to terms with Syrian authority. As capital of the Alawite State from 1923, it became part of the Syrian Republic in 1936. In 1939 Lattakia became once again the capital of the autonomous territory of the Alawites, not again reunited with Syria until the Proclamation of Syrian Unity in 1944. Port expansion projects were proposed in 1948, but the first stage of construction wasn't completed until 1951. And strong road networks similar to what had been established in Beirut years earlier weren't built around Lattakia until years later - the city wasn't connected with a highway to Aleppo until 1968. A railway line didn't follow until even later.[173] In contrast, the first railway connecting Beirut with Damascus and the hinterland was established in 1895.

The third and perhaps most important reason for Lebanon's prominence is its role in the hashish trade. As a principal supplier of hashish for the Egyptian market, a black market and smuggling infrastructure had already been in place for years. Entrepreneurs had formed groups, alliances, and networks of trust with their associates. They had already spent years experimenting and developing successful techniques for smuggling across Lebanese borders, out of the port and airport. Vulnerable border guards and customs officials had already been identified, paid off, employed, black-mailed. Couriers has been hired and manipulated. The entire infrastructure was already in existence. It was the path of least resistance and in many ways, the only difference was the product. Sami El-Khoury himself states that he used the same couriers for both hashish smuggling to Egypt, and opiate smuggling to Europe. Referring to one hotel and cabaret owner who worked for him, El-Khoury stated that he would have him dispatch foreign girls with large quantities of drugs both to Egypt and to Europe.[174]

Smuggling via Beirut airport was an efficient method of transporting narcotics for reasons of

[173] Ring, Trudy, and Robert Salkin, Sharon La Boda. *International Dictionary of Historic Places: Middle East and Africa.* Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1996. 455.
[174] Al-Lawzi (1971). 95.

speed and efficiency. However, taking multiple trips back and forth between cities was bound to raise suspicion by security officials, so couriers had to be employed. Many traffickers attempted to recruit airline staff to act in this capacity. Writing in 1967, O'Callaghan commented that in Beirut, airline staff were constantly being approached and recruited for heroin smuggling operations with bribes equivalent to a year's salary. Often times, these "recruitments" were extremely organized, well-planned, and coordinated. One English captain's account of being approached by a "drug ring" in Beirut seems to border on espionage fiction. At the beach, an "accidental" meeting between his children and two others led to a conversation between mothers, who, after talking, figured their husbands would get along and arranged for them to meet at the Casino de Liban. Once there, the Englishman had a (well-timed) round of bad luck at the tables, losing a sizable sum of money which was promptly paid by the Lebanese husband. Wanting to return the favor, the Englishman offered anything in return. The Lebanese man asked him to deliver a packet to New York, and then offered to pay him $3,000 (over $20,000 in 2010 dollars) to do it. The Englishman later bemoaned the rigged meeting and losses at the casino, commenting that "the ring obviously investigates all the aircrew on the New York run, and they must have found out […] that I was a gambler and decided that that was where I was 'soft'."[175] Diplomats were also employed for aircraft runs, due to their ability to use diplomatic pouches to transfer goods. In 1960, the Guatemalan ambassador to Belgium and the Mexican ambassador to Bolivia were both arrested and convicted for transporting opiates via some of these networks.[176]

The United States Federal Bureau of Narcotics recognized the changing nature of the international drug trade and attempted to take the lead in disrupting the Lebanese leg of the networks, requesting permission to open a regional office in Beirut from which to conduct investigations against traffickers. In a show of their capabilities, trial investigations were mounted with the cooperation of

[175] O'Callaghan (1967). 23-4.
[176] Giordano, Henry. "The Dope Smuggling Diplomats," *Popular Science* June 1965. 100.

Lebanese officials. The first investigation targeted a ring operated by Cafe Palestine owner Mahmoud Abou Suleiman that specialized in smuggling hashish to Egypt, converting opium to heroin in Tel Aviv, and moving narcotics to Italy.[177] The second targeted Beirut moneychanger Abou Sayia Basanti, head of the "Abou Sayia group," which operated in Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, and Syria.[178] This case made international headlines, as rare coordination between Lebanese Sûreté chief Emir Faoud Chehab, Customs chief Edmond Azizi, and Syrian, Greek, and Turkish law enforcement agencies successfully identified Abou Sayia's sources in Syria and Turkey.[179] Due to their successes, Lebanon granted the FBN permission to open an office in 1954.

Towards the end of the 1960s, opium networks connected to Lebanon began to unravel as new areas of opium cultivation took greater portions of the market share. These areas were located primarily in the "Golden Triangle" of Southeast Asia and the "Golden Crescent" of Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a result, many routes supplying North America with opiates transformed and fragmented. Turks had already been asserting their autonomy as key traders in the networks rather than just cultivators, and by 1966, smugglers in Turkey had "[bypassed] their traditional Syrian and Lebanese middlemen and [begun] dealing directly with the Italians and Corsicans."[180] Like the Lebanese, they were better enabled by a growing network of Turkish immigrants spanning Europe and Anatolia with whom they shared a common language and culture. And of the key players invested in the Lebanon-linked French Connection, several were dead or arrested.[181] By 1971, the same year that the Turkish government

[177] Siragusa in Rome to Anslinger, 19 July 1954. Cited in Valentine (2004). 122.

[178] "Raids by U.S. Agents Smash Big Dope Ring." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 3 Dec 1954. It is unclear what the long term effects of this operation were, as in 1959, *The Middle East Narcotics Survey Mission* (United Nations. September-October 1959) identified the Abou Sayia group as one of the region's biggest criminal entities.

[179] Luciano died in 1962, and El-Khoury had been killed in 1965. Others had retreated from the eastern Mediterranean to refocus their energies elsewhere; for example, Corsican crime boss Marcel Francisci was forced to direct his attention on maintaining his position amongst the Corsican syndicates vying for power in France. For more on Francisci, see Siragusa, Charles. *The Trail of the Poppy*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1966. 3-32.

[180] Valentine (2004). 405.

[181] Ibid. 406.

banned the legal cultivation of opium, Lebanon's role had been eclipsed by that of Turkey. At one point, the Los Angeles Times reported that morphine base was more frequently smuggled out of eastern Turkish cities than Lebanon.[182]

As Lebanon's role in heroin smuggling was eclipsed in the late 1960s, so was Turkey's in the mid-1970s for several reasons. First, citing a lack of pharmaceutical supplies, Turkey resumed opium production in 1974,[183] which effectively provided a legal buyer of opiates to farmers, and allowed the government to monitor production. In order to combat illegal diversion of poppies, two new reforms were made. First, licenses were only given to farmers without criminal records. Second, farmers were forbidden from extracting the opium themselves, and instead had to deliver the stalks to factories for processing. A short while later, it was reported that "Turkey has clamped tight controls on opium cultivation and collection that have apparently stymied professional drug traffickers."[184] Since there were no signs that demand was decreasing in the West, suppliers from other countries with less oversight arose to meet it. By 1975, it was reported that "at-least two-thirds of the heroin now entering the United States comes from Mexico [...].[185] However, it was considered low-quality.

4.2 Sami El-Khoury

Enterprising individuals from all over the world began entering the extremely profitable trade in opiates. One of these men was Charles "Lucky" Luciano, an Italian immigrant to the United States who, in the 1930s, transformed from small-time gangster to the ruler of one of the largest and most powerful mafia groups in the country, Cosa Nostra. After being arrested and sentenced to serve 30-35 years in 1936, he traded his cooperation and assistance to the United States government during World

[182] Tuohy, William. "Opium Fields: Bumper Crop May Be Last." *Los Angeles Times* 1 July 1971.
[183] Royce, Knut. "Turkey Increases Flow of Heroin to U.S." *The Evening News* 11 September 1974.
[184] "Plenty of Poppies - But No 'Turkish Connection'." *The Journal* [Meriden-Southington, Conn] 25 September 1975.
[185] Ibid.

War II for his freedom. The government upheld its end of the bargain, freeing Luciano but deporting him to Italy. Once there, he promptly gained control over the Sicilian mafia and began importing heroin to the United States.[186] His upbringing in the United States and deep social connections on both sides of the Atlantic allowed him to create a network which siphoned heroin from local Italian production, which was legal in Italy for pharmaceutical purposes, and brought unprecedented levels to American cities (eight million dollars[187] worth of heroin were reportedly brought into the U.S. in a four-year period),[188] "one of the more remarkable [narcotics syndicates] in the history of the traffic."[189] Between 1946 and 1953, 800 kilograms of legal heroin had been diverted to the mafia in this way.[190] In recognition of the Italian connection in the opium trade, the United States Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) opened an office in Rome, from which they coordinated joint operations across Europe.

However, Luciano's enterprise would not last long. An extensive joint Italian-American counternarcotics operation led to the arrest of dozens of Luciano's associates, contacts, and supply sources across Italy and Detroit, decimating the network and bringing his enterprise to a grinding halt.[191] Luciano avoided arrest, although the exact cause is up for debate - one source says that he (along with some of his closest contacts) evaded capture,[192] whereas another states that there was not enough evidence to hold him.[193] Reportedly under American threats to cut off foreign aid, the Italian government went on to ban the local manufacture of heroin, removing a "major source of supply" for Luciano and the networks supplying the United States.[194]

It wasn't long before Luciano went about rebuilding his business from a new home in Naples.

[186] O'Callaghan, Sean. *The Drug Traffic*. London: Anthony Blond Ltd. 1967. 10.
[187] 1967 dollars, which is about $52,500,000 in 2010 dollars.
[188] O'Callaghan (1967). 11.
[189] McCoy, Alfred. *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003. 38.
[190] Valentine (2004). 111.
[191] O'Callaghan (1967). 11.
[192] Valentine(2004). 112.
[193] O'Callaghan (1967). 11.
[194] Valentine(2004). 111.

However, the supply side of things had been turned on its ear with the blanket bans of opiate production in Italy and other European countries following revelations that so much had been converted into heroin. So, for a new source of morphine base, Luciano turned to longtime associate Meyer Lansky. Evidence suggests that Lansky collaborated with his own associate Corsican Marcel Francisci,[195] "France's top heroin dealer,"[196] to locate a new supply source. This, they found in Lebanon. Lansky and Francisci were both familiar with the country, the former having owned gambling concessions there, and the latter having made trips to Beirut in the late 1940s to tend to businesses he owned, and according to one source, acting as the manager of the "Casino Liban [sic]."[197] Through their work and travel in Lebanon and the Mediterranean, Lansky and Francisci had developed a number of crucial contacts there, and were familiar with the growing presence of Turkish and Syrian raw opium and morphine base for sale in Beirut. After having successfully identified new sources in Lebanon, Lansky and Francisci (as well as Corsican Joe Renucci in Tangiers) and their "lieutenants" were said to have collectively "controlled" Mediterranean smuggling routes.[198] They then established heroin refinement laboratories in Marseille and Sicily. According to McCoy, the first Marseille lab became operational in 1951,[199] the same year that the Italian government suspended the production of pharmaceutical heroin.

One of the most important Lebanese connections made by the Corsicans and Italians was Sami El-Khoury. According to Valentine and O'Callaghan, El-Khoury took an active and leading role in positioning himself as one of the Luciano's main morphine base suppliers,[200][201] and he was also a

[195] Block, Alan. *Masters of Paradise: Organized Crime and the Internal Revenue Service in the Bahamas.* Transaction Publishers, 1991. 51.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Charbonneau, (1976) 98, Valentine (2004). 111, and Hougan, Jim. *Spooks: The Haunting of America: The Private use of Secret Agents.* William Morrow & Co, 1978. 213.
[198] Valentine (2004). 98.
[199] McCoy(2003). 63.
[200] Valentine (2004). 111.
[201] O'Callaghan (1967). 12.

critical access point to opium for the Corsicans. The heroin trail henceforth developed was extensive. First, Turkish gangs managed poppy cultivation in rural Anatolia. Raw opium would be extracted and then smuggled into Syria, where Syrian and Lebanese groups would oversee its conversion into morphine base. From there, an assortment of security officials and smugglers bought the product and oversaw the transfer of the morphine base from the border crossings into Lebanon, all the way to point of exit. This is where El-Khoury operated most heavily. According to sources, to obtain supplies, El-Khoury, along with an officer from the antinarcotics section of the Lebanese Sûreté, would drive to Syria to buy morphine base. Back in Lebanon, he would arrange shipments and payments with Marcel Francisci. They "often met in Tangiers or in the Casino du Liban in Beirut, where Francisci had the concession to operate the gambling games. This served as a cover for his Lebanese trips."[202] Or, at the Casino de Liban, he would make arrangements "through Corsican associates of Marcel Francisci, to transport it to secret labs in and around Marseille."[203] From the port, Customs Chief Edward would facilitate the drug shipments and take a cut.[204] In Marseille, the morphine base would be converted into heroin by Corsicans such as the Francisci and Guerini gangs.[205] Refined heroin would then be shipped by both the Corsicans and the Sicilian mob to major hubs for distribution to the United States. One drug capture from the period illustrates the massive quantity of drugs serving this route: on 28 October 1951, 240 kilograms of opium were found concealed on a camel caravan headed from Syria to Lebanon.[206]

This network through which opium traveled was infamously called the "French Connection" as southern France and Corsican gangsters were involved in such a great part of it. According to

[202] Newsweek. *The Heroin Trail*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1974: 138.
[203] Valentine (2004). 121.
[204] Al-Lawzi (1971). 70.
[205] Valentine (2004). 112.
[206] "Opium in Caravan." *Associated Press*. Reading Eagle 28 October 1951.

Friesendorf, there are several reasons why Luciano and the Sicilian mob left heroin refinement to the Corsicans and the French. First, the chemists of Marseille were considered "among the best in the world," and were capable of creating the highest quality heroin.[207] Second, Marseille "offered a safe political environment."[208] In 1970, US ambassador to France Arthur Watson noted that "few French officials regarded heroin addiction and the traffickers as a menace, and that the number of French police assigned to anti-drug forces was negligible" (there were eight officers in the anti-narcotics unit).[209] The third reason was the proximity of perfume-production facilities with access to acetic anhydride used for refinement.[210] According to Chepesiuk, the "French Connection[211] supplied an estimated ninety-five percent of the heroin distributed to the United States."[212]

El-Khoury's role in the French Connection prompted some to describe him as the "most important supplier of drugs between the Middle East and Europe."[213] Part of El-Khoury's success in this position came from his "betweenness centrality," that is, his position as an intermediary or broker between networks,[214] increasing his value tremendously. His role as a key player stemmed from a brokerage position "that [brings] flexibility, integration, and creativity to the ensemble of an organization that benefits the individuals occupying such positions."[215] In their research, Desroches (2005), Natarajan (2006), Pearson and Hobbs (2001), and Zaitch (2002) have all found brokers to be valuable players in drug-trafficking networks.

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[207] This is called No. 4 heroin, which is 80 to 99 percent pure. No. 4 heroin is water-soluble and injectable.
[208] Cusack, JT. "Response of the Government of France to the International Heroin Problem," in Simmons, LRS, and AA Said (eds). *Drugs, Politics, and Diplomacy: The International Connection.* Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974. 249.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Friesendorf, Cornelius. "US foreign policy and the war on drugs: displacing the cocaine and heroin industry." New York: Routledge, 2007: 44
[211] The French connection was a term used to refer to the smuggling networks established to import heroin to the United States. They were so called because Corsicans and French Canadians were so involved in the process.
[212] Chepesiuk, Ron. *The War on Drugs: An International Encyclopedia.* ABC-CLIO, 1999. 126.
[213] Charbonneau (1976). 98.
[214] Morselli (2008). 16.
[215] Ibid.

> "[...] People in such a position maintain a competitive edge because they control the information asymmetries that make up entrepreneurial networks. Participants on either side of the brokerage position rely on the broker for indirect access to resources beyond their reach. The broker is pivotal within such a social configuration and profits from the reliance of others. In turn, the group that emerges around the broker benefits overall because the broker extends the collective venture to wider reaches and a greater variety of opportunities."[216]

According to Burt (1992), an individual occupies a position of network broker or intermediary by filling so-called "structural holes" between non-redundant contacts, that is, voids where unique information is not being passed. El-Khoury positioned himself as a broker between networks by filling these structural holes, bridging nonredundant contacts to succeed and diversify his network. Undoubtedly aware of the power of his position, he expanded his reach when opportunities allowed. According to the editor of his autobiography, "[The Corsican] François soon became a small component of Sami's network after Sami got to know the biggest drug traders in Europe and was able to arrange big deals with them."[217] His biography provides insight into his ability and propensity to use his betweenness centrality to his advantage - at one point, frustrated that his Lebanese police contacts were taking around 80% of his profits, he commented:[218]

> "I wondered, why do I import opium from Turkey and Aleppo to Lebanon, then export it to Europe, with the result being that [Customs Chief Edward] controls its entry and exit? Why do I use Lebanon as a transit base, instead of sending the product immediately from Aleppo or Turkey to Europe, especially since the customs law in France is different from that of Lebanon? In France, they don't issue a verdict against a trafficker until after he's been arrested with a known crime, whereas in Lebanon they are content with a confession from an associate even if it's unjust or slander [...]."[219]

In this instance, he decided to cut out redundant contacts in the network, his Lebanese contacts facilitating the smuggling of drugs via the port of Beirut, and instead use car caravans with secret compartments to transport opium to France directly.[220] He also at times capitalized on his position to cut

[216] Ibid.
[217] Al-Lawzi (1971). 70.
[218] Ibid. 77.
[219] Ibid. 78.
[220] Ibid.

out individuals in narcotic refinement, traditionally the domain of the Europeans, by building up "heroin refining laboratories in Lebanon and in Syria, [recruiting] the best chemists in the Middle East to supervise them, paying them more per month than they could earn in a year in legitimate practice."[221]

It's interesting to note that while El-Khoury's relationship with Luciano is discussed extensively in both O'Callaghan and Valentine's books, his own biography doesn't specifically mention a relationship with the Italians, only with the Corsicans. It discusses the origins of his ability to position himself in the key brokerage position - it seems that he had previously and inadvertently blown an operation organized by Lebanese Customs Chief Edward, sparking Edward to fear damage to his career and reputation. Edward's solution was to reduce their exposure by moving operations overseas. He actively encouraged El-Khoury to act as a liaison with his Corsican contacts:

> "[Customs Chief Edward] said, 'Listen. We have to change the plans for smuggling operations.' 'How?' 'You need to begin working in Europe!' I was surprised by the idea. Smuggling to Europe? The idea was exciting and attractive, as it was fraught with danger! I decided to carry out a reconnaissance operation, so I boarded a plane and flew to Paris!"[222]

In El-Khoury's description of his trip to Paris, he remarks that Customs Chief Edward gave him a phone number to call in order to reach a man named François. It is possible that François was actually Marcel Francisci, given the number of sources commenting on his relationship with Sami El-Khoury.[223] When he called it and arranged a meeting, a woman showed up to his hotel and after seducing him, drugged him. The following day, François met with him.

> "'I'm sorry for what happened last night, but you know the nature of our work. I had to distract you for 24 hours in order to call our friends in Beirut to learn who you were - but anyway, welcome to Paris!' They sat down and *prepared a plan to fill Europe with drugs*. The next day they took a train to Marseille, the center for operations between Europe and the Middle East. Everything was arranged according to the determined plan, and Sami returned to Beirut to begin his new operations in Europe with the assistance and oversight of [Customs Chief Edward]."

[221] O'Callaghan (1967). 16.
[222] Al-Lawzi (1971). 64.
[223] It is possible that François was actually Marcel Francisci, given the number of sources commenting on his relationship with Sami El-Khoury.

[emphasis mine][224]

Although El-Khoury appeared to be the key broker between the networks, he was not always in complete control. The early part of his relationship with Customs Chief Edward can be characterized as one of symbiotic balance. For both actors, the other was necessary for personal and financial gain. On one hand, El-Khoury needed Edward to facilitate the trafficking of drugs across borders and out of the port of Beirut. Edward even ordered police searches away from the port or Beirut's beach at times when El-Khoury's shipments would be coming in. But on the other hand, while Edward certainly held a powerful security position and could exercise his powers against whomever he wished, the reality on the ground was that El-Khoury's cooperation and assistance was absolutely necessary to him. In order to fulfill his duties as a Customs Chief, he had to conduct investigations and make arrests. However, since real investigations could jeopardize his relationships with traffickers (and therefore his own profits), he relied on El-Khoury to help him coordinate bogus arrests. These "fake" arrests would not only improve his standing in the department, but also deflect any accusations or rumors that he was working with the traffickers. Coordinated arrests between Edward and El-Khoury, and their results, are discussed throughout his biography. For instance, when Edward first met El-Khoury after being detailed to the Chtoura post, rumors began to surface that they were working together. In response, Edward made two arrests - the first targeted Nadreh Al-Harouk, an insignificant trafficker, and the second was Sam'an Al-Madour, the uncle of El-Khoury's driver. The arrest of the latter was planned with El-Khoury's help using El-Khoury's hashish, and considered a resounding success. Edward was promoted to Captain, made the General Commander of Customs in Beirut and all of Lebanon, and transferred to Beirut, giving him control over the port.[225] A short while later, El-Khoury relocated his operations from Zahlé to Beirut to take advantage of Edward's new position, and abandoned shipping

[224] Al-Lawzi (1971). 69.
[225] Al-Lawzi (1971). 60-2.

drugs via cars and airplanes. Once relocated, they carried out another "fake" operation catering to Edward's new role as protector of Lebanon's ocean frontier - they loaded up a small boat with "bad" hashish and let it go into the waters, which was then promptly captured by Edward's men after an "investigation." They told newspapers that the navigators had jumped overboard.[226]

El-Khoury's impunity and symbiotic relationship with Customs Chief Edward began to break down in the latter half of the 1950s as a budding feud grew. Years of constant disagreements and repeated attempts to undercut each other took their toll, and Edward began working to establish alternate smuggling networks that would bypass El-Khoury, one with Sabhi Saleh Al-Khatib at its head, and another run by Na'ma Khalil Hanna that focused on cigarette smuggling. As a result, El-Khoury's market share diminished noticeably, and slowly he began to back out of trafficking. A number of El-Khoury's contacts were arrested at this time. On 18 June, 1956, Lebanese Customs along with the FBN arrested his close partner, Ali Ahmad Halawi, a Beirut bar owner, the day after seizing 100 kilos of opium and 23 kilos of morphine-base which the chief steward of the SS Ronsard was preparing to deliver to Albertini in Marseille.[227] And in 1957, undercover FBN agents along with Azizi set up a sting to capture El-Khoury's courier, Youseff El Etir, who surprisingly showed up with "the most wanted chemist in Lebanon," Omar Makkouk.[228][229] The bust led to the seizure of several kilos of heroin and morphine base, the identification of Makkouk's lab in Syria, and the indictment of 62 traffickers in New York composing a worldwide ring managed by Lansky's associate Harry Stromberg.[230] Another series of arrests following a two year investigation led to individuals in Detroit, Havana, Marseille, in

[226] Ibid. 63.
[227] Charbonneau (1976). 98.
[228] Valentine (2004). 164.
[229] O'Callaghan (1967). 17.
[230] "Last night Frias and Salm knocked off El Etir and Omar Makkouk." Letter from Tartaglino to Siragusa dated 19 June 1957. *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs*. By Valentine (2004). 164.

addition to Beirut, with 80 pounds of narcotics seized.[231]And Mustapha Al Harriss and Gamil Husseini were arrested, although "strong pressure must have been brought to bear on the judge trying the case," as Al-Harriss was an associate of El-Khoury, and let off with a small fine.[232] Irish journalist O'Callaghan argues that these arrests coincided with a temporary increase in counternarcotics cooperation from a Lebanese government fearful of damage to the country's image as a holiday destination,[233] but Valentine hints that it represented a string of successes brought upon by undercover FBN agent Ralph Frias posing as a smuggler.[234]

Following the 1958 civil conflict and the arrest of so many of his associates, El-Khoury withdrew completely from smuggling. Hoping to keep an eye on him, or perhaps arrange for him to be set up and incarcerated once and for all, Customs Chief Edward encouraged him to return to the drug trade, but El-Khoury refused. Edward responded by arranging a setup with Abd Al-Karim Hamed, the head of the counter narcotics division of the Lebanese Sûreté. Abd Al-Karim invited El-Khoury to his house, and upon sitting down, asked El-Khoury for financial assistance. As El-Khoury was handing him 500 liras, police burst into the room and arrested him for bribery. He was placed in jail for four months. Upon his release, he continued to refuse to work for Edward, instead opening a legitimate business in imports / exports.[235]

El-Khoury's business eventually failed, and he decided to return once again to smuggling. He chose to try his hand at smuggling cigarettes from Tangiers to Beirut. As he needed a new actor from which to secure protection, he turned to another influential power in Lebanon, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics. "By 1959" El-Khoury had become FBN agent Paul Knight's "best informant."[236] El-

[231] "Cleanup Nabs International Dope Sellers." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 12 February 1957.
[232] O'Callaghan (1967). 17.
[233] Ibid. 16.
[234] Valentine (2004). 164.
[235] Al-Lawzi (1971). 113-4.
[236] Valentine (2004). 197.

Khoury used his role as informant to target competitors and enemies, while protecting his own interests. For example, after accomplice Araman and former bodyguard Antoine Harrouk broke away from his group,[237] El-Khoury provided the FBN with information leading to their arrest.[238] And with the loss of Makkouk, El-Khoury hired a new Syrian chemist, Mahmoud Badawi.[239] Aware of his continued business, the FBN was forced to choose between arresting him or using him for the information he gave. They chose the latter.

A new agent-in-charge Dennis Dayle took over the FBN office in 1963. According to Dayle, the "millionaire" El-Khoury invited him to his beach house:

> "He was among the top international traffickers of all time. [...] Khouri offered me a bribe. How much? Name your own price. What do I have to do for it? Anything I ask. What are you going to ask? I'm going to ask that things I do be facilitated. I knew what he was worth and I knew he was sincere. He was talking about an endless amount of money. A million dollars? Two million? I think it intrigued him that I didn't take the bribe. [...] He wanted to exploit me, and I let him think he was so I could exploit him. Ultimately he became an informant."[240]

Reportedly "fresh out of prison for cigarette smuggling, and looking for free passage to traffic in narcotics, Khoury identified Corsican traffickers and provided information that led to the seizure of morphine base on Turkish ships. He also provided valuable information about South America, where several nations were emerging as major drug transit points."[241]

Due to his protection, El-Khoury continued to operate "with impunity."[242] At some point, he also reportedly became the "prize informer" to the CIA and Mossad.[243] When questioned if his informants worked for the CIA, Dayle responded affirmatively, attributing his knowledge of the matter

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237 Charbonneau (1976). 115.
238 Valentine (2004). 197
239 Ibid. 202.
240 Mills, James. *The Underground Empire: Where Crime and Governments Embrace.* New York, NY: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1986. 70.
241 Valentine (2004). 325.
242 Charbonneau (1976). 108.
243 Valentine (2004). 278.

to his own employment for the Agency.[244] As a result, when FBN investigations ultimately led to El-Khoury, they would be inexplicably called off, or deliberately thwarted.[245]

4.3 Conclusion

Lebanon's role in the opium trade differed markedly from its role in the hashish trade. Rather than being a major source country, with marijuana being cultivated by powerful landowners, Lebanon took on the role of bottleneck in the international heroin trade, connecting Asian opium fields and European and American markets. As mentioned, there are several reasons for this, ranging from the linguistic background of Lebanese, to the benefits accrued due to French infrastructural investments, as well as the countrymen's prior expertise with brokering, smuggling techniques, and a plethora of corrupt officials. And as there are bottlenecks, so there are brokers controlling those bottlenecks, bringing us to Sami El-Khoury, and his experience with the Italian and Corsican mafias, as well as Customs Chief Edward. The section describing El-Khoury demonstrated that despite El-Khoury's pivotal role, one Lebanese security officer held quite a large influence over the makeup of the drug trade, and were extremely influential in the establishment and makeup of the PCN in Lebanon opium networks. Lebanese journalist Al-Lawzi was aware of their disproportionate control, commenting that:

> "Sami El-Khoury's story reveals terrifying details concerning the role played by some officials in the Lebanese state. They turned Lebanon into a consort of drug traffickers, complicit with their dealings. They didn't hesitate to exploit the good in the hearts of its citizens by presenting the appearance of pursuing traffickers and curbing corrupting hashish. But in reality, they were accomplices to the crimes, and their responsibility for [the crimes] far outweighs that of Sami El-Khoury and those like him."[246]

Given that there was less involvement of political actors in the opium trade than in the hashish trade, there is evidence of greater political cooperation in combating heroin smuggling than hashish

[244] Mills (1986). 399.
[245] Valentine (2004). 277.
[246] Al-Lawzi (1971). 9-10.

smuggling. Whereas on one hand an October 1959 United Nations mission reporting on the narcotic situation in the Middle East commended the seizure of over 61 kilograms of morphine base in transit through Lebanon in 1951, on the other it noted that the "Lebanese spokesman" (identified as Customs Chief Edmond Azizi in a news article[247]) defiantly claimed "the large-scale production of hashish is almost inseparably linked with other social and economic problems and cannot be isolated as a technical or enforcement issue."[248] This reluctance to crack down on the hashish trade was further noted - the mission reported that Lebanon failed to identify any concrete plans to eliminate hashish cultivation, didn't attend a special meeting of the Permanent Anti-Narcotic Bureau of the Arab League in Cairo, and proceeded to oppose the recommendation of the establishment of a United Nations regional narcotic bureau.

[247] "Hashish Trade Studied by UN." *The New York Times* 20 September 1959.

[248] "Report of the United Nations Mission Investigating the Narcotic Problem in the Middle East." 1959. *The Drug Traffic.* By Sean O'Callaghan. London: Anthony Blond Ltd, 1967. Appendix.

CHAPTER 5.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The goal of this paper was to parse Lebanon's flourishing role in the international drug trade during the country's "golden age." It has done so by evaluating the trade from three perspectives: the local, regional, and international. From the local / national perspective, this paper looked at the theoretical basis of political-criminal collusion in the drug trade. It introduced the concept of the political-criminal nexus (PCN) at the national level, commented on the ideal type and alternate types of the PCN, and looked at some of the political, cultural/social, and economic factors which enabled a PCN to develop in Lebanon. Politically, an environment composed of a weak state and powerful non-state actors may have been instrumental. Culturally, Lebanon criminalized narcotics production later than other countries, meaning that stigmatization of drugs had less time to internalize than in other countries, by politicians, security officials, and regular citizens. And for economic reasons, actors in the political and security fields had financial stakes in resisting criminalization of the drug trade. Together, these three distinct but interrelated factors played a strong role in the growth of criminal networks, and helped them take on a dimension of upperworld and underworld collusion, in addition to the points I mentioned above.

On a regional level, the politics of supplying the first modern Middle Eastern consumer market for hashish and to a lesser extent opium, Egypt, were examined closely. With a precipitous rise in demand and an inability to meet it with local Egyptian supplies, smugglers brought in narcotics from a number of neighboring countries. Lebanon's role in this supply was examined closely, and the conclusion was reached that a number of historical and political attributes led to Lebanon taking a

predominant role in supplying hashish to Egypt. First and foremost, it was due to the political-criminal collusion that had been quick to form in the country. On one hand, the ability of security officials or politicians to circumvent law enforcement mechanisms meant that their smuggling and protection services were in high demand, and the amounts being charged were exorbitant. On the other hand, politicians who owned marijuana fields detested the fact that an expanding source of income for them was turning from legal to illegal before their very eyes. Keen to resist this transformation, they turned to criminals for assistance in selling their product. Second, external actors played an important role in developing the hashish trade. The indirect effects of French mandate officials were important in this regard, especially considering the effect their infrastructure expansion projects had on the emergence of smuggling routes. Furthermore, the physically-removed administrative position of French Mandate officials was extremely influential, as they encouraged the drug trade by seeking to co-opt local political actors and power brokers by ignoring drug related activities.[249] Third, it is a testament to the strength of the political resistance that despite significant international pressure, the actions of concerned regional antinarcotics bureaus, foreign law enforcement agencies (such as the U.S. FBN), and international organizations (the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board and INTERPOL) to fight the hashish trade, Lebanon remained one of the largest marijuana producers in the world well into the 1970s. Fourth, regional politics undermined regional interdiction cooperation. Not only were Arab countries not cooperating as much as they could be, but the absence of Israel in regional efforts created a "large loophole of which the traffickers of the Middle East drug ring take full advantage."[250]

On an international level, Lebanon's role in international opium smuggling networks was examined. I argued that Lebanon became a bottleneck in the supply line of the international heroin

[249] Schayegh (2011). 277-8.
[250] O'Callaghan (1967). 28.

trade, connecting Asian opium fields and European and American markets, for a number of reasons. These include the linguistic background of Lebanese, the prioritization and rise in importance of the port of Beirut due to French infrastructural investments, prior expertise with brokering and smuggling, as well as a plethora of corrupt officials.

Throughout this essay, the life of Sami El-Khoury was used as a case study to look at the real-world career of a smuggler as it relates to these three spheres. His career has been wholly remarkable, as he rose to become one of the most successful smugglers in Lebanon's history. This paper has shown that his success could not have been achieved were it not for his extensive connections in the political and criminal establishments, which were employed and relied upon to great effect for many years. Almost every major event of his career (for better or worse) involved the input of an upperworld actor, suggesting that he could not have gotten where he did without their input and influence.

The information gathered in this essay is invaluable for its ability to help place into context the establishment of extensive drug trafficking networks, alliances, and collaborations during the Lebanese civil war which have been a topic of analysis in a number of works.[251] Some of these analyses see the outbreak of the civil war and collapse of the state as the event after which the country "became a center of regional and international arms dealing, drug smuggling and money laundering – an icon of destruction."[252] This essay has established that Lebanon has played role in various drug trafficking networks for decades before the civil war broke out in 1975. Lebanon did not become a drug trafficking "center" following state collapse and civil war, as Endres argues[253] - in reality, it already had been a drug trafficking center for decades, in no small part due to extensive political-criminal collaborations.

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[251] See Endres, Jurgen. "Profiting from War: Economic Rationality and War in Lebanon." *Shadow Globalization, Ethnic Conflicts and New Wars: A Political Economy of Intra-state War.* Ed. Dietrich Jung. 2003. 119.

[252] Schneider, Jane, and Ida Susser. *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World.* Berg Publishers, 2003. 271.

[253] Endres (2003). 119.

When the war broke out, militiamen, politicians, security officials, and opportunists had an absolute wealth of experience to turn to and draw upon in their endeavors to re-establish opium and cannabis fields and smuggle drugs via Lebanese ports.

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