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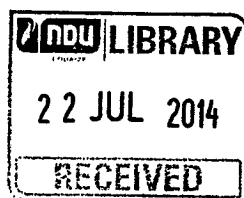
Faculty of Law and Political Science

**ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION
PROCESS:
THE CASE OF LEBANON**

M.A. Thesis

by

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STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis work titled “ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS: THE CASE OF LEBANON” submitted to the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Notre Dame University Louaize – Lebanon, is my original work under the guidance of Dr. Fares El Zein from of Faculty of Law and Political Science at Notre Dame University Louaize – Lebanon. This thesis work is submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirements degree of Master of Arts in Political Science. The results embodied in this thesis have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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This thesis work is dedicated to Notre Dame University, civil activists in my beloved country Lebanon, my family and friends and to every person who may get insightful help from it.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to uncover the extent to which Lebanese civil society can contribute to social and political changes and be an agent to the democratization process. The study also aims at presenting an appraisal of the reality of the Lebanese civil society in terms of advocating for changes and reforms according to civil society activists through the case of the “Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform” (CCER). The study contributes to the growing body of research on the role of civil society in democratization process

Interviews were conducted with organizers of CCER in Lebanon and key civil society activists as a method of collecting data. The case of the CCER was chosen a research for the purpose of extracting factors and conclusions from this specific experience and making it available to the general public. Six parameters were used to draw an appraisal of the CCER case and they are: advocacy and campaigning means, methods of awareness dissemination, methods of communication and networking, internal organization, political framework, and socio-economic factors.

Results show that civil society organizations in Lebanon have limited influence over state policies and further confirm the literature that most of civil society organizations’ impact is through welfare provisioning rather than public and political advocacy. For civil society to be a countervailing power against state domination and corruption, and thus be an agent toward democratization in Lebanon it needs to be better organized and acquire proficiency in networking and associating for cooperative action. It also needs to be more realistic in approaching Lebanese politics given the constraints that confessional consociational politics places on movements of civil society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Civil society activists and enthusiasts have always believed that Lebanon's major systematic changes, in terms of a democratizing process, can be brought up and achieved through the efforts of civil society organizations (CSOs). In fact, Lebanese CSOs have historically served to fill in numerous gaps left by a weakened state. However, there is debate on the extent to which Lebanese civil society can contribute to social and political changes, and that debate rests on the arguments outlined in the following lines. First, civil society in the Arab region is seen as a bulk of organizations, associations and movements that support the status quo, advocate conservative reforms, or are mostly not inherently liberal and democratic (Hawthorne, 2004). Second, no genuine empowerment of citizens' democratic skills and values (to mention a few, civic participation and holding state officials accountable and responsible) has been prevalent in the region. Third, in socio-political contexts with pressing issues such as insecurity and poverty, CSOs would be mostly service-oriented rather than dedicated to the empowerment of democratic and liberalization skills (Fung, 2003). As such, Lebanese civil society contribution to social and political change remains an issue of debate to be tackled throughout this research study while also examining its role in the democratization process. In order to make a good sense of the purpose of this research, it is important to begin with a background of the key terms that will be extensively mentioned in it such as: civil society, associational life, representative versus direct democracy, democratic practices, and the role of civil society in deepening democracy.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 The Concept of Civil Society

The concept of civil society is found to be difficult to pin down empirically and one of its primary problems starts with its definition. According to Allen, the earliest uses of the concept do not separate ‘civil society’ from ‘society’ as it is believed that society, as a whole, is perceived as a civil society when the first is self-consciously politically active and creative (Allen, 2006). This perception can also be reflected in Harbeson et al.’s (1994) works where they suggest that the basic rules of the political procedural game and the state’s structure emerge from within society and economy at large, and that ultimately, ‘civil society’ refers to the points of agreement, among societal groups, on what those rules ought to be. This point of view basically summarizes ‘civil society’ as broadly as such: society apart from the state. On the other hand, a more practical and specified definition of the concept of civil society has been found to predominate research works where many researchers suggest that civil society can be defined in accordance to its relation with the state. Shaw (1994) defines civil society as a context, rather than an actor, within which groups in society are formed and interact. It encompasses formal organizations of a representative kind, both to each other - in a socio-cultural sense, within networks that are within civil society - and to the state – in a political sense, in relation to the state. Such organizations include parties, unions, religious institutions, trade unions, and professional bodies. The context of civil society, according to Shaw also includes formal organizations of a functional kind (such as schools,

universities, and mass media), as well as more social and political networks ranging from local voluntary groups and ad hoc activists coalitions at the lowest level, going up to nationally and internationally coordinated social movements at a larger level. Further researches offer very similar explanations and definitions of civil society. For example, Callaghy (1994) considers that civil society consists of “autonomous societal groups that interact with the state but delimit and constrain its action”. Bratton et al. (1992) also define civil society as an entity that embodies a core of universal beliefs and practices about the legitimation of, and limits to, state power. He elaborates on the universal practices by further explaining that they include protests for the purpose of achieving certain political transition, and he believes that protests have often led to reform in countries where popular forces have had the privilege to exist in a strong civil society characterized by an independent material, organizational and ideological base. Gramsci’s perception of civil society also concurs with those of the previously mentioned researchers; especially that he includes the economic factor in the formula of a strong civil society. He suggests that “between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society” (Gramsci, 1994).

1.1.2 The 'Associational Life' version of Civil Society

What is noticeable among the definitions demonstrated beforehand is that at the core of most of those definitions, the notion of 'associational life' can be recognized. The notion denotes that societal associations and civil society organizations organize themselves in a way that allows them to express their objectives and bring about their interests - which are independent of kinship and are not structured by binding forms of hierarchal authorities (for instance political parties) nor market incentives (Baicocchi et al, 2008). Associational life is considered by many researchers as a prerequisite to the fulfillment of the democratization process to any political system as it carries with it high levels of citizen engagement and participation in public affairs; without it, civil society would be considered a factor that weakens liberal democracy rather than a driving force toward its achievement (Chambers et al, 2001). The concept of associational life carries with it proclamations that a robust, active and effective civil society is the primary drive of, and gives a strong impetus to the democratization process. The concept also proclaims that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by themselves, as a significant part of civil society, have come to be one of the primary forces driving democratization as a result of the void left by states that are corrupt, autocratic and inefficient (Fowler, 1992). In this context, it is important to distinguish the notion of civil society from that of non-governmental organizations or civil society organizations (henceforth NGOs and CSOs respectively) as they more often than not overlap with one another. While civil society can be described as the arena in which all societal

groups and active citizens operate and interact – both with one another and with the state - the Center for Civil Society Studies at John Hopkins University defines CSOs as:

“Any organization whether formal or informal, that are not part of the apparatus of government, that do not distribute profits to their directors or operators, that are self-governing, and in which participation is a matter of free choice. Both member-serving and public-serving organizations are included. Embraced within this definition, therefore, are private, not-for-profit health providers, schools, advocacy groups, social service agencies, anti-poverty groups, development agencies, professional associations, community-based organizations, unions, religious bodies, recreation organizations, cultural institutions and many more.”

1.1.3 What Makes Civil Society Strong?

According to Ibrahim (1998), the common usage - and in some cases the over usage – of “civil society” has only been introduced in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of several factors, one of which was the downfall of totalitarianism (with the collapse of the Berlin Wall) and with it the springing up of democracy in most parts of the world. Other factors include the weakening of some nation-states and the poor performance of several development paradigms. However, apart from the surge that took place during the last two decades, Merkel (1999) proposes that the correlation between a strong civil society and democracy has a long tradition in history resting on arguments by John Locke, Montesquieu, and more recently by Ralf Dahrendorf and Jürgen Habermas. Extensive research has been conducted up to date on the importance of an empowered civil society to the democratization process. The cumulative literature on the subject at hand has found that there is a deep affinity between the concept of civil society, in its associational structure version, and ideas of democracy. According to

Emirbayer et al. (1999), the growth and reduction of the momentum of civil society organizations depends largely on the extent to which democratic practices prevail in a certain society, and that associational life inspires in citizens increased levels of “civic commitment, reflexivity, and critically informed judgment”; and those are among the basic elements that make up for the concept of democracy. Following this, it is found common that governments where democracy thrives increasingly accept CSOs as primary players in the state’s decision-making and policy-making processes, as intermediaries that promote civic participation, and as a countervailing power against state domination and corruption (Rakner et al., 2007). CSOs are also accepted by such governments as advocates for minorities’ political representation as well as representation of their own interests and public concerns. It is because of those various operative roles of CSOs, that civil society derives its impetus, strength, and thus its pivotal importance to changes in societies – be it political, social, economic or any aspect of change which affects the public as a whole. The literature on the subject shows that factors which account to an empowered civil society could be either internal (i.e. pertaining to the relevant structure and governing procedures of each individual CSO) or external (i.e. pertaining to the environment and system in which they find themselves operating). When tackling the issue of empowerment of social movements, Villeval (2008) proposes two means: partnerships and capacity building. Partnership is defined as the political framework within which capacity building of CSOs occurs, supported by tools, in order to encourage empowerment (which is regarded here

as a social process to reach political objectives). Eade (1997) also defends this proposal by emphasizing that investment in the three levels of capacity building – in people, organizations, and networks – would be an immense support for organizations working toward social justice. Furthermore, support to the various capacities which these organizations require to accomplish their objectives is necessary, be it intellectual, organizational, social, political, cultural, material, practical, or financial support. It is crucial to mention that empowerment must be understood not only in terms of peoples' skills and capacities, but also in terms of practices performed by citizens and organizations. Within this context, the World Bank (2005) categorizes four areas of civil society empowerment practices:

- *Access to information*: ease of flow of information from government to citizens and vice versa, which is important for responsible citizenship as well as accountable and responsive governance.
- *Inclusion and participation*: an empowering approach to participation treats poor people as co-producers, with authority and control over decisions and resources devolved to the lowest appropriate level.
- *Accountability*: the ability to call public officials or private employers and holding them answerable and responsible for their actions and use of funds.
- *Local organizational capacity*: the ability of people to work together, organize themselves, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest.

The UNDP (2010) further builds on the importance of capacity building to an empowered civil society by highlighting the significance of encouraging CSOs

to undertake assessments of their own performance. The argument goes as follows: “by helping CSOs to diagnose weaknesses within civil society and its organizations, civil society assessments can help to strengthen civil society and make it an effective force in building accountable and responsive governance systems”. Assessments could also provide information about the external challenges facing CSOs. The aforementioned factors are of course few of many factors that are needed for the flourishing of a robust civil society. An appropriate and facilitating environment is also vital to promote a civil society which is solid enough to engage with the government and exert pressure or reform. On the external factors which account to an empowered civil society, Gorg et al. (1998) postulate that the effectiveness of civil society highly depends on the extent to which nation-states are open to democratic processes, subject to institutionalized and constitutional procedures, and functioning in accordance with uniform laws; and vice versa. Moreover, Merkel (1999) reaches the conclusion that the more vibrant a civil society is, the better it can fulfill its potential as an agent of protecting democracy against external shocks and internal crises. Kamrava et al. (1998) support this conclusion as well, and they go further to add that “the forces that determine whether or not CSOs can emerge and act as agents of democratization are varied and diverse, often differing according to the particular characteristics of a region or country.” Hence, it is found that the predominance of democracy is a fundamental prerequisite in order for a solid and robust civil society to flourish.

1.1.4 The Concept of Democracy

The concept of democracy is complex and contentious, and it is beyond the scope of this research to try and pin down its various aspects and usages. However, a briefing on the literature conducted to conceptualize democracy is important to mention in this research study. Shuifa (2008) and Emirbayer et al. (1999) see a profound relationship between democracy and the principle of fundamental individual rights which serve as a safeguarding agent to democratic advances achieved within the civil society. Fundamental individual rights are referred to as those rights that are “fully actionable, limited only by another right and universal in their application (i.e., not related to the characteristics of a particular group but pertaining to individuals as such)” (Habermas, 1996). Therefore, and based on the individual-rights approach, democracy is perceived as encompassing the citizens as core elements; those citizens who equally share the fundamental individual rights; who act as the final decision-makers on the state’s constitution; who choose whom they want to entrust with legislative and executive powers; and who can exert a veto on the present government (Shuifa, 2008). Embedded in the beforehand elaborated perception of democracy is the notion of representative democracy which is more practically prevalent in our modern times than the primitive notion of Aristotle’s direct or participatory democracy. Representative democracy pertains that citizens do not participate in direct governance. That is, that the legislative, executive and judicial bodies are governed by minorities, who are elected by the vast majority of the citizens. Here, citizens do not rule those state bodies, but they delegate the rule of those

institutions to specific agencies (e.g. parliament and government) while still having power and sovereignty over them. In other words, the rule is in the hands of that minority which is entrusted with power by the citizens. In this sense, Schumpeter's stance on democracy goes as follows: "democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them" (Gerry, 2009). Following the context of his statement, what is referred to as democracy by Schumpeter is evidently representative democracy.

1.1.5 Link between Civil Society and Democracy

It is clearly shown that there is a general consensus among scholars on the principal that there is a strong relationship between a solid and effective civil society and democracy. However, the literature on the subject also clearly shows that scholars have failed to pinpoint the ways in which CSOs contribute to democracy, or converge on the direction of the causal relationship between the two (i.e. whether a solid civil society results in democracy or vice versa). Warren (2001) and Rosenblum (1998) argue that it is difficult and ill-considered to draw forthright generalizations on the linkages between CSOs and democracy as several considerations intertwine that make these linkages specific to individual socio-political contexts. Westheimer et al. (2004) draw attention to the spectrum of ideas related to what good citizenship is and what good citizens do to advance democracy. They contest that there are three conceptions of good citizenship – personal responsibility, participatory citizenship and justice-oriented citizenship which were embodied in democratic education programs across high schools in the US. The study conducted on a sample of those US

high schools where the democratic education programs were delivered shows that the three conceptions have had varied impacts in terms of exposing considerably different beliefs regarding the capacities and commitments that citizens need for democracy to grow. Following the same stream of thought, Fung (2003) proposes that there are six ways in which CSOs contribute to democracy through (1) the intrinsic value of associational life, (2) promoting civic virtues and political skills, (3) exerting resistance to power and checking government, (4) improving the quality and equality of representation, (5) facilitating public deliberation, and (6) creating opportunities for citizens and groups to participate directly in governance. However, not all of these contributions are achieved by all CSOs; on the contrary, different forms of CSOs are better suited to promote some contributions than others. This highly depends on the socio-political context in which CSOs find themselves operating in as it plays a considerable role in shaping those contributions, where variations in socio-political contexts can change the priority of particular CSOs' contributions to democracy. Fung (2003) further suggests that in tyrannical contexts for example, resistance to power and state domination may be far more pressing than other contributions such as the development of civic virtues like toleration and respect for the rule of law. Popularity of civil society has been spreading since the 1980s, and more so with the recent springing up of democracy across most parts of the globe. According to a paper issued by the UNESCO (2009), some see the services-oriented NGOs, especially those that are involved in community development, as an agent of democratization

through fostering associational life, empowering individuals and providing them with civic virtues and political skills. Ultimately, this would promote democratic values among the direct beneficiaries and would eventually spread to the broader society. On the other hand, and despite all this optimism, Hawthorne (2004) contends that CSOs are not inherently liberal as they can be dominated by apolitical, pro-government or illiberal groups that work toward achieving goals other than democratization, especially in authoritarian contexts. For civil society to be an agent to democratization in such contexts, Hawthorne (2004) suggests that the bulk of CSOs must develop the following attributes: autonomy from the regime, a pro-democracy agenda, and the ability to establish connections and coalitions among themselves and with other forces such as political parties, or else CSOs would be of marginal influence.

1.1.6 Representative V/S Direct Democracy

Some might argue that representative democracy is no different than autocracy if the power will ultimately reside in the hands of the minority. Representative democracy pertains that citizens do not participate in direct governance; that citizens do not rule the state bodies (i.e. the legislative, executive, and judicial) but that they delegate, through elections, the rule of those bodies to specific institutions. Therefore, the rule is in the hands of that minority which is entrusted with power by the citizens. Drawing on this, politically engaged citizens and enthusiasts for civil society organizations would greatly approve of a form of direct democracy which allows for more opportunities to participate in policy-making than representative democracy does. Bowler et al. (2007) find

that many people who support direct democracy consider it as a way to make elected officials more representative of them and less influenced by special or personal interests. Enthusiasm and approval of direct democracy may reflect what such citizens find dissatisfying in representative democracy in terms of more civic participation, decentralized governance, and increased accountability and responsiveness of the state. However, it is important to point out that direct democracy does not suggest the replacement of representative democracy; instead, it implies that citizens have better opportunities to participate than merely the periodic elections. Nevertheless, outlined hereunder are the ways in which direct democracy ideally elevates such practices. Direct democracy entails taking further steps toward strengthening citizens and promoting civic participation. Strengthening citizens is achieved through transforming citizens from passive subjects in dependent relationships with politicians and parties into active citizens who are fully aware of their rights and duties and are capable of exerting pressure on the government to acquire their rights (Goldfrank, 2007). The literature shows that researchers postulate that enthusiasm for direct democracy and more civic participation entails wide approval of the use of referendums as a means for generating public opinions on major decision-making issues, as well as for keeping an eye on the government. In political contexts, there is a tendency to link and merge decentralized governance and direct democracy (Chapman, 1973). Decentralization is defined by Roche (1973) as “shifting as much power as is compatible with the national interest to provincial levels of government and from the provinces to the

municipalities”. It is thus, a way of empowering citizens and giving them a greater say in decision-making and policy-making, as well as a process that facilitates governance on state and local governments. In this sense, Samuel (2007) proposes that public advocacy makes use of democratic instruments and decentralization to employ and network governance institutions in order to empower the marginalized and to resist unequal power relations at every level. Accountability, which means the obligation to be called to account and held answerable and responsible, is yet another powerful democratic tool that focuses on making powerful institutions responsive to less powerful publics. Hence, public accountability pertains that citizens are authorized to call to account state officials. According to Mulgan (2003) this authorization is based on two justifications: first is the principle of ownership of citizens (or stewardship of governments), meaning that democratically elected governments accept and owe an obligation to all their citizens, including the poorest, for protection and provision of basic services. Second is the principle of affected rights which means that those citizens whose rights have been harmfully affected by the actions of someone else have a right to hold that person to account for the way they have been treated.

1.1.7 Role of Civil Society in Democratization Process

Research has suggested that here comes the role of civil society; to act as a supervisory body on state officials for the purpose of good enhancement of democracy. There is a consensus among researchers on the assertion that a healthy democracy requires a strong civil society and associational practices.

Researchers, however, do not agree on the ways in which CSOs contribute to a healthy democracy. The literature on the subject shows that many researchers attempted to compile ways of contributions that CSOs supposedly make to enhance democracy (Warren, 2001; Avritzer, 2002; Habermas, 1996; Cohen et al., 1994). Fung (2006) builds on this standpoint and further proposes six practices with which civil society enhances democracy. Among Fung's (2006) proposed democratic practices is the concept of civic socialization and political education, and it refers to the civic values (e.g. attention to the public good, habits of cooperation, toleration, respect for others, respect for the rule of law, willingness to participate in public life, self-confidence, and efficacy) and skills (e.g. how to organize themselves, run meetings, write letters, argue issues, and make speeches) that CSOs foster in their members and impart to the public. Fung argues that as long as society as a whole possesses those virtues and skills, democracy would be more effective and robust. Another way CSOs can potentially enhance democracy is through organizing themselves and acting as a source of countervailing power against state authority or any other orchestrated influence that could threaten democracy. Mechanisms that allow CSOs to countervail possible authoritarian or merely corrupt state practices include governance, monitoring and holding state officials accountable to the law and public expectations of responsible governments (Diamond, 2002). In addition to holding public deliberations to enhance public policies, political representation, as well as representation of their interests and public concerns.

1.2 Thesis Statement

After broad secondary research and comprehensive review of the relevant literature conducted for the purpose of formulating the conceptual framework of the research study, the following thesis statement was formulated: An empowered and autonomous civil society is key to the democratization process of the Lebanese system because it serves as an intermediary that promotes civic participation, a countervailing power against state domination and corruption, a representative for public concerns, and a primary player in a state's decision-making and policy-making processes.

1.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The main purpose of this study is to uncover the extent to which the Lebanese civil society can contribute to social and political changes and be an agent to the democratization process. In trying to find an answer to this question, the study examined the relation between an empowered civil society and democratic practices. The study also aims at presenting an appraisal of the reality of the Lebanese civil society in terms of advocating for changes and reforms according to civil society activists through an appraisal of a case in the Lebanese civil society (the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform in Lebanon), and based on the effectiveness of six parameters: advocacy and campaigning means, methods of awareness dissemination, methods of CSOs communication, methods of internal organization and networking of the campaign, the Lebanese political system, and socio-political factors. It is to note that the latter parameters were identified through analyzing the campaigns main areas of

activity and the external factors that affected its progress and main outcomes. While addressing the thesis statement, this research attempted to tackle the following questions:

- What are the parameters of an empowered and autonomous civil society in Lebanon?
- What practices does democracy entail?
- Does Lebanon contain clearly defined elements of an empowered and effective civil society? Has done so historically?
- What is lacking in the Lebanese civil society to achieve social and political changes?
- How does Lebanon's confessional system influence the mission of its civil society?

1.4 Proposed Methodology

Three methods were used in attempting to go about the thesis statement presented previously, and they are:

I. Revision of secondary data including all related work in the field of civil society organizations and democratic practices. The background validates the importance of the analysis and helps in creating the conceptual framework in order to accomplish this study. This revision provided sufficient background on the issue being studied. In addition, it familiarized the conceptual framework, or the theory behind the issue being studied, and this is served to be helpful in two ways:

1) Ensure reliable preparation for asking the right questions in the interviews to be conducted.

2) Ensure the ability to conduct a reliable analysis of the collected data.

II. The experience of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (henceforth CCER) in Lebanon was taken as a case study. Thus, the *Case Study* was also used as a strategy for the selection of instances of research suited for the subject under study especially that subject is complex and particular. The use of case study as a technique is for the purpose of extracting factors and conclusions from a certain, unique situation (the experience of the Campaign) and making it available to the general public. It did not aim at generalizing the findings to other cases; on the contrary, it served as a specific case in the experience of the Lebanese civil society in advocating for democratic changes.

III. *Interviews* were to be conducted with organizers of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform in Lebanon and key political figures. Interviews were chosen as a method of collecting data for a number of considerations. First, they provide more depth and detail of the information collected as they are a personal experience. Second, direct contact means that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance as it is collected and this ensures a significant level of validity. Moreover, interviews ensure a relatively high level of response rate as they are pre-arranged and scheduled for a convenient time and location. Five key civil society and political figures were interviewed: Member of Parliament Joseph Maalouf, former consultant for Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Khaled Jbara, Said Sanadiki (Spokesman of CCER and former Executive Director of LADE), Said Issa (Grassroots coordinator at LTA), and Yara Nassar (coordinator at CCER). The

interviewees were requested to answer questions on the performance of the CCER in advocating for democratic change, challenges impeding its role as an agent of democratization, and civil society-government relations from the perspective of both civil society organizations and activists. Overall, six parameters were used in an attempt to draw an appraisal of the CCER case and they are: advocacy and campaigning means, methods of awareness dissemination, methods of CSOs communication, methods of CSOs organization and networking, the Lebanese political system, and socio-political factors. Interview questions for all three interviewees were categorized according to the first three parameters (advocacy, awareness, communication and organization). Two further interviews were also conducted and were representative of the government's perspective on civil society-government relations, challenges of the legislative work, on the performance of the CCER in particular; and they are: Member of Parliament Joseph Maalouf and former consultant for Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Khalil Jbara. Three parameters were used in an attempt to draw an appraisal of the CCER case and they are: advocacy and campaigning means, methods of awareness dissemination, and the Lebanese socio-political circumstances. Interview questions for both interviewees were designed and categorized according to the three parameters. The following chapter, Chapter 2, gives a revision on the Lebanese political system and its relation to civil society, in addition to a historical overview of the Lebanese civil society (its composition, characteristics, laws governing its operation, and how strong and empowered it is). Chapter 3 presents the case of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform in Lebanon and the analysis of primary collected data. Chapter 4 presents a discussion of obtained results in light of the literature review and includes the conclusions and limitations of the study, ethical precautions taken, research contribution, areas of future investigation, and the personal statement. An Appendices Section of a list of acronyms and abbreviations is attached

at the end of the thesis, in addition to the two forms of interview questions (for organizers of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Campaign and for politicians).

**Chapter 2: Background on the Lebanese
Political System & Civil Society**

This chapter of the research study does not aim at presenting a detailed historical background on the emergence of Lebanon as a nation-state, nor a comprehensive critique of the Lebanese political system, civil society and its organizations, as this is beyond the scope of the study. However, it is quite pertinent to the testing of the hypothesized thesis statement - that an empowered and autonomous civil society is key to the democratization process of the Lebanese system as it serves as an intermediary that promotes civic participation, a countervailing power against state domination and corruption, a representative for public concerns, and a primary player in a state's decision-making and policy-making processes - to preface an overview on the Lebanese political system. This will help in gaining a better understanding of the political framework in which the Lebanese civil society is functioning. It will also ensure a reliable preparation for the interviews to be conducted, and validate the analysis of collected data.

2.1 The Lebanese Political System

The twentieth century witnessed the rise of nationalism and nationalist movements across the Middle East region as uniting points against European colonialism. In these Middle Eastern countries, which were subject to foreign domination, the call for independence, sovereignty, and self-governance took

the form of political struggles in order to establish their sovereign nation-states. National movements across the region took the form of different and sometimes coinciding facets. Even in states that are generally tolerant modernizing states, such as Lebanon as Berberoglu (1999) describes it, a multitude of national, political, cultural, and religious conflicts in the context of larger regional military confrontations have surfaced where the resurgence of national, ethnic, and fundamentalist religious movements have led, on multiple occasions, to sectarian strife or civil war.

Lebanon's consociational model of democracy places great emphasis on elite negotiation. Therefore, the role of the political elite is seen as central in moderating and curbing inter-group conflicts. Dekmejian (1978) describes the 'elite cartel' as "a comprehensive coalition of elites, representative of the segments of society (subcultures and special interests) and committed to the preservation of the existing system." The existence of the elite cartel in the Lebanese context could be traced back to the Ottoman period.

Under the 'millet' system, Ottomans dealt with each confessional group through their acknowledged religious leader. The fact that under the Ottoman rule both Druzes and Christians, and particularly Maronite Christians in the Mutesarrifate, were granted complete autonomy and thus considered as a distinct separate community (i.e. not part of the Ottoman political body) contributed to the strengthening of solidarity among its members. The identity

and rights of this community was defined by religious belief and not by any national orientation. According to Vatikiotis (1984), centuries of exclusion from the Ottoman political life institutionalized and legitimized the sectarian or confessional foundation of their political outlook, and kept the bonds and allegiance among them on familial, tribal, sectarian or religious basis. Maronites of Mount Lebanon developed ties with the West and with France in particular as early as the reign of the Crusades and the embracement of the Vatican to the Maronite church (Kaufman, 2001). This resulted in the establishment of Christian missionaries in the form of schools, colleges and hospitals in the Christian predominant area of Mount Lebanon, and further distinguished their belonging and identity from other communal groups under the Ottoman rule.

On the other side, the Sunnis in Beirut and the north had been loyal to a Muslim Sunni Ottoman Sultan and had no bonds with Maronites and Druzes of the Mutesarrifate. Although they were not fully part of the Islamic body polity, but the elite among them also formed part of the local governing class. A sizeable percentage of Greek Orthodox groups also co-existed in areas of a Sunni-majority and they had grown accustomed to dealing with one another (Fawaz, 1985).

The geographical remoteness of the Shiaa villages that fell under the dominion of the Ottomans was also in parallel to their confessional and political isolation. Shiaa communities of the south and Bekaa valley, although Muslims but they

were cut off from the power of the Ottoman Sultanate and even from the culture of its coastal trade cities (Ajami, 1985). Despite all their differences and individualities though, Fawaz (1985) claims that those separate confessional communities all shared a common understanding of where they stood in the bigger Lebanese society, and this mutual recognition helped preserve a civil peaceful coexistence for a long time, only to be interrupted on some instances of history (i.e. the sectarian conflict between Maronites and Druzes in 1860, and the civil wars of 1958 and 1975). With the establishment of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the areas of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and the Bekaa were incorporated in a new nation-state with Mount Lebanon. This establishment brought in more Sunni Muslims who had an allegiance to a larger pan-Arab Islamic community, and this was at variance with that of the Christian Lebanese who had close ties with the West. The Shiaa allegedly fit into neither of these two ideologies according to Ajami (1985).

2.2 The Lebanese Civil Society

2.2.1 Roots of Lebanese Civil Society

The development of the Lebanese civil society can be distribute over four phases each characterized by specific features that differentiate it from the other and at the same time affect the other pahses. The first phase is the one that goes from the Ottoman Empire through the French mandate early years of independence until 1958. During this period, associations in Lebanon were given a legal structure through the 1909 law and this also contributed to the organization of the whole

phenomena later. It was also noted that at this period most of the organizations were religious based inspired by religion to aid the needy and the poor. As such, all associations formed in the period of the Ottoman Empire were affected by the political structure set at that time so associations were at the origin, a place to defend cultural, political or social interests. Each group tried to impose, through associative action, its own identity, synonymous with independence or allegiance. The French mandate didn't change anything with the 1909 law and this period witnessed also the rise of some associations and trade unions. The second period was the one between from 1958 and 1975; this was mainly characterized by the establishment of non-sectarian associations. During this time, 1958 clashes reflected the fragility of the 1943 pact and few progressive movements were flourishing affected by the regional situation. The assigning of Fouad Chehab as a President was accompanied by several reforms that had set up the main pillars of the state of Lebanon and his period had altered the society and the associative scene whereby existing associations continued to grow with developed structures, new associations were founded on the basis of social development rather than charity and they also refocused their objectives tackling the issues of social justice, citizen participation, development and administrative decentralization for rural areas. It is at this period were the students association were created , the sociocultural centers in different regions the Lebanese scouts- a movement on the national level- and social movement. The third period in the phases of development of the Lebanese civil society dates from the civil war in 1975 through 1990. During this period of complete paralysis of the government, associations became more active to substitute the role of the state and its absence,

they provided many services but that was mainly in the presence of militias. This period also witnessed the entrance of international organizations to the Lebanese scene, in addition to more coordination between organizations.

The last period in civil society development is the post-war period during which associations perceived a role complementary to that of the government, new concepts started to emerge due to certain donor policies such as democracy, sustainable development, good governance, transparency, and accountability....etc. Within the mosaic of the civil society there remained the charitable, religious organization in addition to the confessional ones that emerged during the war. Moreover local and specialized organizations were also present at the local and regional level and major large organizations that provide services remained providing support to their communities. Finally, as mentioned earlier, new kind of civil society organizations emerged during this period and these are mainly characterized by being civic movements calling for certain reforms through campaigns and they usually adopt causes related to human and political rights and are usually made up of young educated and urban people that are interested in politics. Although these movements created a huge awareness of certain issue of system reform and rights and despite its activism to relay new concepts within the Lebanese political and social life, however the confessional power sharing system adopted constituted a huge burden which prohibited them from achieving most of their goals.

2.2.2 Rise of CSOs in Lebanon

The 1990s and 2000s have witnessed a remarkable increase in the rise of CSOs around the globe, and particularly in developing countries, as is the case of Lebanon. Many international organizations and Western governments have increased funds to CSOs for the purpose of political liberalization. Non-political, services-oriented CSOs have also been supported to fill the void left by the retreat of governments from welfare provisioning. In Lebanon, there are nearly 6,000 registered CSOs, although the figure for those active on a regular basis is estimated to be much lower (Altan-Olcay et al., 2012). Researchers postulate that civil society cannot be examined apart from the structure of political system. In light of this, Altan-Olcay et al. (2012) emphasize the role of the confessional structure of the Lebanese political system in shaping its civil society activism, and that Lebanese CSOs also acquired this feature in their structure, repeating by this, patterns of the political regime and therefore its problems. In addition, the history of political instability and widespread corruption also placed its burdens on the civil society. Despite its weaknesses and inequalities, Lebanese civil society was strengthened not by virtue of its solidity but by the absence of a powerful state that fosters the needs of its communities. This weakness is translated by a lack of institutionalization in terms of the absence and weakness of resource centers, information services, technical assistance programs and inactivity in self-regulation (Chartouni, 2000). Civil society organizations and activists respond by acting as watchdogs on state performance, establishing research and policy making centers and pushing for reforms. Their role is further strengthened

by international donors who aim to promote democratic values and human rights especially those donors are constantly reaching partners that are more reliable than the weakened state, and supporting services CSOs as a counterbalance to widespread Islamic networks (Altan-Olcay et al., 2012). Moreover, what further contributed to the empowerment of Lebanese civil society was years of war and civil conflict that have promoted a high degree of political pluralism expressed through associational life and being recognized as one of the few very diverse and active civil societies in the region (Hawthorne, 2004). In order for democratic spirit to flourish and for civil society to be robust, adequate diversity is required to produce a degree of tension among the society's constituents. This same diversity is amply existent in the Lebanese civil society and this effective tension, according to Issawi (1956) results in the clash of ideas and interests represented by various groups, to place an effective monitor on the power and performance of the government. However, despite this diversity, CSOs themselves in Lebanon expressed in a recent survey study, that most of their performance impact is through welfare provisioning rather than policy advocacy. While some CSOs raised the voice on some government policies, they are still dissatisfied with their own performance and regard themselves as limited in terms of influencing and monitoring governments and their policies (Altan-Olcay et al., 2012). This inconsistency between the endorsed values and the actual impact could be understood in light of the prevailing political actors and factors. Roy (2005) advocates this thought by highlighting the central role of the state in promoting democracy. He further claims that democracy changes societies and their values including the most deeply rooted values such as sectarianism. However, the change

has to do first with politics and any approach to democratization has to take into consideration the real political actors first and foremost, and address what political legitimacy means. Building on the above mentioned ideas, specifically the role of the confessional structure in shaping the civil society activism in Lebanon in addition to its role in prohibiting certain reforms to preserve itself, the subsequent chapter will undertake further deliberation into trying to examine and explain this inconsistency, and attempt to extract factors leading to the ambiguity of civic internal practices, translated in a lack of democratic practice, transparency, and accountability. Therefore, the experience of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reforms in Lebanon will be taken as a case study in the following chapter.

**Chapter 3: The Case of the “Civil Campaign for
Electoral Reform in Lebanon”**

The previous chapter concluded that there is indeed an inconsistency between endorsed values of an empowered civil society in Lebanon on the one hand, such as diversity, and a level of existent democracy relative to neighboring authoritarian countries, and the actual impact of the Lebanese civil society on the other hand. Following this, this chapter of the research is dedicated to undertaking further deliberation into trying to examine and explain this inconsistency, and attempt to extract factors leading to the ambiguity of civic internal practices, translated in a lack of democratic practices, transparency, and accountability. To this end, a revision of the experience of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform in Lebanon (hereinafter, “Campaign” or CCER) will be presented for the purpose of laying a foundation of knowledge on the issue, on which subsequent description and analysis of findings will be undertaken.

3.1 Background and Overview of CCER

Following the Lebanese Parliamentary elections in 2005, an independent commission was set up under the name of “National Commission on Electoral Law” and headed by former Minister Fouad Boutros (abiding by Decree number 58 issued by the Council of Ministers on August 8, 2005). The “Commission” comprised of experts in political science, lawyers and civil society activists aimed at designing a new electoral law. This initiative constituted a new precedent for political reforms in Lebanon and marked a departure from past practices of a last-minute election law compromise driven by narrow interests. In May 2006, as a result of its work, the “Commission” suggested a draft electoral law which introduced comprehensive

reforms for the electoral system of Lebanon (The National Commission on Electoral Law, website). It specifically included:

- A mixed electoral system with proportional representation in Provinces (i.e. Muhafazat) introduced in parallel to the majoritarian representation in Districts (i.e. Cazas);
- An independent electoral commission to oversee the elections;
- Out-of-country voting;
- Regulation of campaign spending;
- Regulation of media coverage on election campaigns;
- Lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 years old;
- Voting from the place of residence;
- Holding national elections on one day instead of current multi-day elections;
- Encouraging women candidacy by introducing a women's quota on candidates' lists;
- Acknowledging the special needs of voters with disabilities (Lebanese Transparency Association, website).

In parallel with the release of the draft law, the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), in close collaboration with the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), formed the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER) in an attempt to initiate among major stakeholders (including members of parliament, cabinet, community leaders, and activists) immediate, open, non-partisan, and public examination of the draft law; to

generate public debate around it, and to secure passage of the reformist elements in it.

3.1.1 What is CCER?

As per the Campaign's official website, the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform is a broad alliance which included upon its formation eighty five civil society organizations, municipalities, and syndicates covering all of Lebanon. It aims and calls for reforming electoral systems in general, focusing mainly on the municipal and parliamentary electoral systems since they influence the political, public and private lives of Lebanese citizens. Since its launching, the "Campaign" has been working on pursuing a number of reforms in line with the international standards for democratic elections, these being:

- Proportional representation;
- An independent committee to manage and organize the elections;
- Participation of expatriates in the parliamentary elections;
- Adoption of the official pre-printed ballot by the authorities in charge of organizing the elections;
- Finance reforms for electoral campaigns;
- Adopting women's quota by a third in the electoral lists;
- Lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 and the candidacy age from 25 to 22;
- Organizing the electoral media and advertisement;
- Implementing the necessary reforms to facilitate the electoral process for voters with disabilities;
- Lowering the municipal councils mandates from 6 to 4 years;

- Allowing the army members to vote;
- Giving voters the right to vote for their own municipal councils according to place of residence as opposed to place of birth;
- Providing voting mechanisms for the sick and the disabled;
- Counting the votes inside the voting centers rather than in the ballot boxes chambers, and thus guaranteeing a secret ballot;
- Allowing voters to choose their own representatives without succumbing to pressures before and after the elections (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, website).

The “Campaign” had introduced the concept of electoral reform into the political life in Lebanon and has influenced the general discourse on reforming the last municipal and parliamentary election laws. Besides, it shed light on the importance of collaboration between public and civil society organizations, through its participation in the parliamentary administration sessions of the Parliamentary Committee on Administration and Justice in order to discuss the general parliamentary elections law for 2008 where they lobbied for the adoption of a large number of reforms within the parliamentary elections law 2008/25 and succeeded to pass three reforms: a committee to regulate electoral campaigns finances, media and advertising. In addition, the campaign set up an office for consultation located in the Ministry of Interior during the 2009 parliamentary elections (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 5). In 2009 and 2010, CCER intensified its activities where it organized meetings with Lebanese parties, youth organizations, university students, municipalities and citizens in general. For the first time, CCER opened a special

office in the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, in an attempt to bridge the communications gap between the civil society and the public administration, and provided technical assistance for the ministry's employees in the field of operational reformist procedures such as pre-printed ballots and capacity building (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 5). The step was viewed as an unprecedented cooperation between civil society and the public administration and a cooperation based on partnership. CCER continued its activities during the period between the parliamentary elections of 2009 and the municipal elections of 2010. As per a booklet issued by the "Campaign", the latter organized several activities and issued countless statements calling on the concerned parties to introduce the needed reforms to the municipal electoral law thus creating the appropriate environment for conducting the elections on time with no delay (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 6). The booklet however, does not mention an exact number of the organized activities or issued statements. Following the timely conduct of local government (municipal and mayoral) elections, CCER developed a three-year action plan with a start date of July 2010 and covered the period reaching the 2013 elections. CCER members agreed on standards and principles upon which the "Campaign" would base its activities and lobby towards the introduction of a reformed electoral law. As such, it cooperated and consulted with several legal and constitutional experts and devised an accurate vision about the necessary reforms that should be implemented and introduced into the law. Moreover, it conducted a number of official visits to prepare a comprehensive draft law to be submitted (Imad, 1).

3.1.2 CCER Lobbying Politicians

Since its establishment, CCER worked on intensifying meetings and communications with political parties, parliamentary blocs, independent members of parliament, cabinet ministers and political leaders for the purpose of introducing the mission and objectives of the “Campaign” and its proposed reforms, and ultimately lobby politicians for adopting needed reforms. In this context, over 150 visits were made to the President, Prime Minister, members of parliament, cabinet ministers, representatives of political parties, unionists, academics, non-governmental organizations and bloggers in order to disseminate awareness of the proposed electoral law (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 6). CCER attempted to persuade its audiences of the importance of adopting such a law and to collect their signatures on the draft law. In an attempt to exert further pressure on members of the parliament, CCER managed to collect over 5,500 signed letters from Lebanese citizens across the country and deliver them to members of the parliament during a sit-in event in front of the parliament in what was called the “National Advocacy Day” in 2009 (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 7).

3.1.3 Networking with CSOs

CCER attempted to bring the electoral reform discussion outside the centralized framework in the capital Beirut, and worked on turning the issue into a public concern through rallying for its mission in all regions across the country for the purpose of elevating the civic consciousness among citizens of all the walks of life and convincing them of the importance of achieving an electoral law that would guarantee fair representation of their interests and allow them to practice a more

transparent, impartial and democratic political life. To reach their goal of turning the issue of electoral reform from a small circle of experts and interested audience into a public concern, and to propagate a culture of responsible elections among citizens, CCER conducted a total of 146 open meetings, workshops, and seminars in all Cazas and provinces across Lebanon, in addition to recruitment of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations that would be an integral part of the “Campaign” and adopt its cause (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 8). In this context, CCER succeeded in recruiting a total of eighty five civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations working in the fields of women rights, disabled rights, and community development. In addition, CCER recruited study and research centers and a number of municipalities and syndicates that adopted the Campaign’s principles and believed in the significance of working in an organized campaign that would generate a deep knowledge of the principles, concepts and mechanisms of reform, and propagate a culture of responsible elections among Lebanese citizens (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 3). The purpose of this network of organizations was to urge citizens to participate in the making of public policies, and exert pressure on policy and decision makers to execute change and reforms, aiming at improving the political conduct in Lebanon. CCER was able to establish a cross-national network of organizations operating according to a unified work plan that is representative of interests of all members of the CCER, and targeting political as well as civilian spheres from different regional, political and confessional affiliations. Three regional committees emerged from this network of organizations – in the North, the South, and Bekaa – to follow up closely and more

effectively on the activities of the “Campaign” and to better distribute tasks, elevating by this the sense of ownership and responsibility among them (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 4).

3.1.4 Utilizing Media Platforms

According to a document issued by CCER in July 2012 (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform 10-11), members and organizers of the “Campaign” managed to break through the Lebanese visual media (most notably LBCI, MTV, and NewTV) that is mostly characterized by partisan and sectarian domination, and to appear on news segments as well as political talk shows on a number of Lebanese television stations. They utilized their appearances on media to disseminate awareness of the “Campaign”, its objectives, and the importance of their proposed legislation in rectifying the political life in Lebanon. The “Campaign” also used media outlets to exert pressure on policy and decision makers as well as politicians, where they would issue statements and pronouncements, supporting or denouncing as the need calls, and rally for popular support (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 12). CCER held four awareness meetings with visual and written media representatives, issued sixteen press releases, and distributed supplements with Annahar and Assafir newspapers as well as six newsletter periodicals for a number of considerations (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 12). First, the meetings aimed at introducing the objectives and work of the “Campaign” and further advocating their proposed electoral law. Second, the objective was to persuade media representatives of the importance of establishing a solid collaboration with the “Campaign” regardless of

differences with them, given that media is an integral partner of electoral change and reform. Third, meetings were meant to discuss the most appropriate media and advertising methods for promoting electoral reforms. In addition, organizers of the “Campaign” relied on issuing and distributing periodical newsletters to member organizations, cabinet ministers, and members of parliament, and politicians that showcase their work and explain and promote proposed reforms, in order to mobilize organizational as well as popular support (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 8).

3.1.5 Democracy in Lebanon: Case Study of CCER

Throughout the year of 2013, the country’s political elites failed to agree on an electoral law considering that more than 10 proposals of different district sizes have been discussed. Knowing that the parliament’s mandate ended on the 20th of June, 2013 and the country’s major political groups were unable to reach a consensus on what electoral law to adopt, the parliament’s mandate was extended by parliament members to November 2014. However, elections could be held before this date only if the key political groups agreed on an electoral law. In this context, CCER organized a series of demonstrations and sit-ins between the months of January and July 2013 mobilizing civil society members to raise their voice against what was labeled by many activists as a “constitutional massacre “in a country which is well known for its deeply rooted culture of democracy and rotation of power (National News Agency, 2013; Elnashra, 2013). The “Campaign” postulates, in the first issue of its newsletter that civil society has a significant role in the promotion and reinforcement of democracy in Lebanon, and this can be achieved through advocating for the issuance of a new and reformed electoral law (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 1). The “Campaign”

further argues that the adoption of a democratic electoral law is the cornerstone to ensuring fair parliamentary representation of political elite that would be responsible and held accountable before Lebanese citizens. Researcher Archon Fung supports this stream of thought and contests that the ways in which CSOs contribute to democracy are as follows: through exerting resistance to power and checking government, and improving the quality and equality of representation (Fung, 2003). Those were among the stated objectives of CCER (Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, 3). However, the extent to which CCER succeeded in achieving its objectives has not been empirically studied yet. Following this, the remaining part of this chapter outlines the findings and results of conducted interviews based on the six criteria of CCER's performance appraisal.

3.2 Description of Obtained Data

Data from the five conducted interviews with CCER organizers (Said Issa, Said Sanadiki, Yara Nassar) and politicians (MP Joseph Maalouf and Khalil Jbara) were obtained from interview questions which were formulated and asked based on six criteria shown hereunder (four internal criteria in addition to two external ones) in order to methodically study the CCER case. The remaining part of this chapter will present the findings obtained and categorized according to these six criteria.

3.2.1 Internal Factors

3.2.1.1 Advocacy

There was a consensus among all five interviewees, CCER organizers (Said Issa, Said Sanadiki, Yara Nassar) and politicians (MP Joseph Maalouf and Khalil Jbara) alike, regarding the absence of a clear and detailed work plan that proposes going about accomplishing their specific tasks and approaching measurable and attainable

objectives of their campaign. According to organizers of CCER, no scientific approach was followed in formulating a clearly defined and well communicated work plan that includes an overview of the campaign, a breakdown of how individual campaign-related tasks would be accomplished, or a timeline for completion and cost projections for implementation. Their advocacy plan was lacking a well-defined route that takes them from the problem to the proposed solution as well as the tools to be used in the attainment of their objectives (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview). In this context, organizers point out that even though CCER had a clear vision of introducing reforms to the electoral law upon its establishment, but not all member CSOs shared long-term objectives or even had basic knowledge of what advocacy entails and what its tools are (Sanadiki, interview). Even though there was a common belief among member CSOs in the necessity of making changes and reforms in the electoral law, electoral reform did not figure on agendas of many CSOs as the list of member CSOs was diverse in terms of sizes and fields of work, and as per organizers of CCER, these CSOs joined for reasons such as prestige or media exposure. This resulted in a high turnover rate where several organizations would leave CCER and others would join. To overcome this weakness, CCER established committees in the peripheral areas to follow up closely and more effectively on the activities of the “Campaign” and to better distribute tasks, in an attempt to increase the sense of participation and involvement among all CSOs (Nassar, interview). Lobbying politicians was considered a major asset and skill among organizers of CCER. CCER was able to participate in discussion meetings both inside and outside of the parliament through its

representatives. Organizers all cited that prior to the parliamentary elections that were conducted in 2009, public and personal relationships were leveraged as a means of exerting pressure on politicians, MPs, and heads of parliamentary blocs (Issa, interview; Sanadiki and Nassar interview). According to them, the accumulation of their hard work in this matter helped in making CCER an essential partner and decision-maker in the formulation of the electoral law and introduction of electoral reforms in 2009 where they found a strong cooperation from some politicians because they were able to convince them that “civil society is not a group of nagging people; but they are activists that have proposed solutions and had an empirical approach to policy making” (Sanadiki, interview). Politicians, on the other hand, had a different stance on the advocacy tools that CCER used when lobbying them, and they cite two weaknesses. First, CCER succeeded in researching optimal methodologies of observation of elections and obtaining international best practices, but “they were not practical and grounded when attempting to adapt their research findings to the Lebanese public administration” (Jbara, interview). Therefore, CCER failed in explaining its objectives and proposed solutions to politicians in practical terms, failing by this to bring politicians closer to their perspectives and exert pressure on them. Moreover, CCER did not take action to push for their proposed electoral law and reforms and exert pressure on politicians through proper advocacy means; “they were always on the bench watching and waiting for appropriate political circumstances or politicians’ interest in discussing reforms” (Sanadiki, interview). In this context, politicians’ point of view is that after the experience of former Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Ziad Baroud, there was an orientation

toward including civil society figures and activists in political parties; not because such political parties perceive civil society to be a countervailing power against their domination, but so that they appear democratic and more into reform, and thus gain more popularity (Jbara, interview). Moreover, politicians differentiate between the approaches of CCER when lobbying politicians in 2009 with that of 2013. According to them, in 2009 CCER communicated better with politicians than in 2013 when politicians started to find their approach as offensive. After the experience of former Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Ziad Baroud, CCER's approach was to create confrontations with politicians and make them opponents (Maalouf, interview). "CCER, and Lebanese civil society in general, is secular by character and it has a negative stance and a fundamental problem with the confessional political system in Lebanon" (Jbara, interview). Therefore, they exerted minimal efforts to try to overcome this challenge in an attempt to achieve cooperation from the political elite to push for reforms. The incident of the "Tomato Revolution" where protestors threw tomatoes on MPs in front of the parliament building in Downtown Beirut, negatively affected the previously established relationships with politicians who could have been potential partners to the CCER had the latter adopted a more constructive way of exerting pressure. As a result, politicians belittled the efforts of CCER and came to be less responsive to possible cooperation with them. Despite their strong belief in the appropriateness of their approach to lobbying politicians, organizers of CCER also attribute the achievement of some of CCER's objectives in elections of 2009 to former Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Ziad Baroud himself, who was a representative of CCER in Mr. Fouad Boutros's "Commission on Electoral Law",

and then became Minister of Interior and Municipalities in the Cabinet which supervised the elections. Organizers of CCER and politicians alike believe that Minister Baroud was the pioneer in the issue of electoral law reforms and that the “Campaign” was able to achieve what it achieved because of his connections, approach to lobbying and character. They confess that “at its best, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) could be described as the biggest engine of CCER” (Sanadiki, interview). Politicians further emphasize on this, and believe that “CCER was able to penetrate the political sphere through individuals like Minister Baroud and not through a network of integrated CSOs” (Jbara, interview). They believe that civil society as a whole, and CCER in particular, was given ample opportunities to develop and prove proficiency and productivity but they were not able to seize those opportunities (Jbara, interview; Maalouf, interview). Before the 2009 elections, there was a general belief among CCER organizers that “the route to passing their proposed electoral law and reforms was advocacy, solely through targeting the political elite, and they paid less attention to the effectiveness of public advocacy” (Nassar, interview). Organizers themselves are dissatisfied with their performance on public advocacy and they admit that CCER was not able to overcome the political parties’ influence on the public or even recruit and reach citizens outside the circle of its affiliated CSOs. CCER acknowledged the fact that it would have been more effective to have mobilized the popular masses in parallel with lobbying politicians “because ultimately MPs will not be responsive to any reform unless their base of voters is targeted; only then they would sense their voters’ dissatisfaction with them” (Nassar, interview). Politicians go further to say

that “CCER is politicized and that they consider themselves a better version, or substitutes of politicians” (Jbara, interview), and that explains why they chose to work unilaterally as an elite of intellectuals, researchers and political activists, “in confrontation with politicians and with no inclusion and mobilization of the grassroots or even other civil society components such as syndicates, labor bodies, economic bodies and the such” (Maalouf, interview).

3.2.1.2 Organization

Organizers of CCER did not have a clear, planned and detailed organizing method by which they governed internal relations and communications with all member CSOs within the “Campaign”. The executive management comprised of representatives of the bigger CSOs within the “Campaign” who overwhelmed the remaining CSOs as they were the real decision makers on most matters. At the same time, smaller CSOs viewed themselves as incapable of managing the “Campaign” and they often left matters to the bigger ones (Issa, interview). CCER organizers classify the bulk of the 80 member CSOs under the “Campaign” as “supporters rather than constitutional and effective members” for a number of considerations (Nassar, interview). Most of member-CSOs operated in the peripheral regions in Lebanon at the time when CCER’s operations and management are centralized in Beirut, and because most of these CSOs depend on volunteerism in character and have limited financial abilities, they find it difficult to mobilize themselves and attend periodic meetings in Beirut or be active in their local communities. Moreover, electoral reform does not show on agendas of many of those CSOs, some of which work in the fields of environment or women rights, hence they believe that being part

of CCER, even though they have no influential presence, is prestigious and view it as an opportunity to achieve higher visibility on the national level through media coverage, and attract more funding. According to organizers, all these factors were impediments to a clear and detailed organizing plan among all member CSOs whereby everyone would be involved (Nassar, interview). The structure of CCER and character of its member CSOs had their toll on the internal communications strategy which was not customized according to the capacities and mentalities of members. Organizers state that they had a challenge of internal communication and continuous coordination with all members. Matters are often resolved verbally over the phone between the major players of the “Campaign”. Minutes of meetings would be sent to all members through emails, but not all members would be responsive. Organizers relate this unresponsiveness to the individual mentalities of members who are not only organizations but also clubs, committees, syndicates and individual activists (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview). Such members found it difficult to attend periodic meetings in Beirut, and so local committees were established in an attempt to achieve a level of participation and inclusion (Nassar, interview). However, as far as their inclusion in the decision-making, the executive management board of CCER admits that “they do not believe in the smaller members’ capabilities so as to involve them in the process of strategic decision-making” (Sanadiki, interview). Organizers are dissatisfied with the internal organization of the “Campaign”, and they view it as ineffective in terms of achieving the overall objective of the “Campaign”. They view the Lebanese civil society as divided and does not function in cooperative action. They claim that several big and influential

entities in the country refused to join CCER on the basis that they work unilaterally and not within the framework of partnership and cooperation (Nassar, interview). They go further to say that the “favoring political circumstances were in fact the main cause behind the advancement or retreat of the “Campaign” and not the accumulation of hard, networking and cooperation efforts among all members” (Issa, interview). Politicians, on the other hand, blame organizers of CCER for working unilaterally and excluding major civil society components such as bigger syndicates, labor bodies, economic bodies and such, instead of mobilizing them and taking a more comprehensive approach on the issue of internal organization (Maalouf, interview).

3.2.1.3 Awareness

The biggest component of CCER’s campaign to disseminate awareness was advocacy and lobbying politicians and electoral candidates, which was achieved partly through conducting workshops on and providing them with technical assistance on electoral matters. In addition, CCER conducted town hall meetings in local communities to introduce CCER, its mission and objectives, distributed flyers and had several media appearances on high-rated political TV talk shows and prime time news segments (Nassar, interview). However, organizers were not precise in terms of providing numbers of conducted town hall meetings, distributed flyers or media appearances. Moreover, they converge on the fact that there wasn’t any clear, detailed strategy to achieve maximum public outreach, and that the tools used to

achieve visibility of their work were not fully utilized, nor were they customized to target and reach citizens coming from different social, educational, and political backgrounds. As per CCER's organizers, this lack of planning cost them many lost opportunities (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview). First, as a result of the absence of a detailed strategy for dissemination of awareness to the wider public, CCER was only able to reach members and volunteers of member CSOs, and failed in reaching different segments of the wider public. Compared to political parties, CCER had a very small audience of mobilized supporters, and they are only those who are very informed and active on the issue of electoral law and reforms. Second, they received a considerable number of citizens who were interested and willing to work with the "Campaign" in their local communities, but one of the mistakes which CCER did was that they would only contact them to participate in movements and protests, and they did not ignite a sense of participation and responsibility among them through employing them as mobilizers in their own local communities (Sanadiki, interview). Third, even town hall meetings in peripheral regions and activities conducted by the local committees did not receive proper follow up and appropriate consideration from CCER's executive management where local committees were left to design and implement their own plan. There was a lack of a system and allocated staff to oversee CCER's performance and progress in local communities and to integrate their work with that implemented in the center of operations and decision-making, Beirut (Sanadiki, interview). Fourth, all funds received by CCER were acquired through, and thus managed by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE). Organizers criticize the management's approach of funds management

which entitled that the bulk of these funds were used to cover staff expenses, as well as central organization and marketing expenses instead of utilizing them to expand scope of activities in the local communities. This negatively affected the aspired objectives of the “Campaign”, in particular the awareness and grassroots mobilization part of it, because according to organizers, had there been a bigger budget allocated to implementation in the peripheral regions, considerable results could have been achieved (Issa, interview). Like organizers of CCER, politicians also believe that the “Campaign” did a remarkable job in spreading awareness of the electoral reforms among politicians which ultimately resulted in including some of these reforms in the law in 2009. However, they cite weaknesses in the Campaign’s approach to a comprehensive awareness strategy. First, politicians believe that the Lebanese in general received intensive awareness on the issue of electoral reforms, but not on the electoral law in terms of proportionality and electoral constituencies (Jbara, interview). Politicians further claim that CCER was far from the Lebanese reality and more theoretical in their suggestions, and they neither explained their proposed law to politicians in practical terms to persuade them of the law’s applicability, nor mobilized grassroots, especially in the local communities, in order to exert pressure on the political elite and convince them of the urgency of adopting the law. Moreover, politicians claim that CCER could have done more effort to spread awareness and gain popular and political corroboration through media, but that they used up their time on prime time shows for issuing political stances (Maalouf, interview). “Before 2009, the mainstream thought used to be that peripheral regions do not influence politicians’ decision-making, and that the best

way to achieve the Campaign's objectives was through centralization of activities, movements and political lobbying in Beirut" (Sanadiki, interview). Organizers came to the conclusion that Beirut hosted the political and intellectual elite, and peripheral regions on the other hand were very interactive with the "Campaign". Yet organizers exerted minimal efforts to ensure inclusion and participation of these regions and treat them as partners, with authority and control over decisions and resources. In this context, no mobilization or networking was done with the Lebanese University for example, which contains a considerable number of students coming from low-income families. Such an initiative would have made students more aware of the benefits of a reformed electoral law to their financial situation and standard of living, and it would have introduced them to democratic practices, increasing by this the possibility of having them more engaged and active as citizens (Maalouf, interview). According to organizers and politicians alike, CCER took a one-sided approach to spreading awareness where they chose to work on the level of political, social, and intellectual elite instead of taking a more comprehensive approach where they should have established solid and cooperative networks with other civil society components such as syndicates, labor representatives, economic actors, universities, researchers, media anchors and producers, and even "build strategic partnerships with the private sector that could have supported their mission and helped in realizing their objectives" (Maalouf, interview). Organizers are dissatisfied with their performance and claim that "more efforts must have been exerted in the direction of lobbying reporters and media persons to help in bringing the issue of electoral law and reforms on the table of discussion and further spread awareness of it" (Sanadiki, interview).

Some organizers criticized the awareness and public outreach campaign and preferred to have given CCER a social aspect instead of a purely political one, because only then it would have been able to reach all groups of society. They elaborated on this and explained that they should have dissected CCER into several subjects instead of presenting it as a whole. In other words, take specific subjects of the electoral reform and present them to the public according to their fields of interests and concerns (elections, people with disabilities, women rights, youth empowerment, fighting corruption and so on). By doing so, they could have turned CCER into a public, social concern which could have helped in two ways. The first, to reach maximum public outreach and support from all groups of society. The second, to keep CCER active in times when there are no elections especially that there is currently a general agitation among citizens from political issues (Sanadiki, interview). There was a deficiency of knowledge among most of the 80 member CSOs who are under CCER on issues such as advocacy tools, civic virtues, and political rights. Organizers converged on the fact that member CSOs, especially those in the peripheral areas which are smaller in number of members and volunteers, had almost no knowledge on such issues. Hence, no capacity building trainings were conducted by CCER to such CSOs that could have increased their knowledge and empowered them to be more proficient and effective on fundamental issues such as networking among civil society players, organizational structure, access to information, and accountability, in addition to the previously mentioned subjects (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview; Nassar, interview). To make matters worse, because CCER seldom conducted performance evaluations, “they realized the

importance of conducting capacity building trainings only after the work was done and not during implementation” (Sanadiki, interview).

3.2.1.4 Communication

A comprehensive communications plan that explains how to convey the right message, from the right communicator, to the right audience, through the right communications means, at the right time, and that is updated periodically and customized according to the audience’s needs and interests was not put in place by CCER. Such a plan would have facilitated the process of disseminating awareness and ensuring proper visibility of CCER in order to achieve maximum public outreach, as well as to achieve its desired objectives. Instead, CCER admitted that their “usage of conventional and new media platforms was random, when opportunities presented themselves, and not as a result of pre-set measurable plan” (Issa, interview). Conventional media platforms are quite influential in Lebanon, but no efforts were done to try and establish cooperation with them in order to reach their objectives. Organizers say that CCER representatives were hosts on many TV talk shows but their appearances were mostly guaranteed through the connections of former Minister Baroud. Therefore when he left, CCER did not have a substitute plan put together and so their media connections were closely tied to the absence of a national champion (Sanadiki, interview). CCER’s communications tools “comprised of flyers, billboards, few TV appearances and merely creation of a Facebook page. Organizers cite several weaknesses in this matter” (Issa, interview). First, no proper utilization of social media tools was done as a result of the absence of a new media strategy. Second, no segmentation of audience was undertaken in order to customize

usage of conventional and new media tools and therefore achieve maximum public outreach and proper visibility. Third, even though there was a budget allocated for the communications and marketing “Campaign”, periodic evaluation was not conducted during implementation, nor were there scientific indicators put in place to try and measure the effect of their usage of conventional and new media platforms on the overall objectives (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview). Any communications plan must address six basic elements: communicator, message, communication channel, feedback mechanism, receiver/audience, and time frame (Tennyson et al., 2005). CCER failed in designing such a detailed, comprehensive plan and were random and unsystematic in their choices of tools. CCER organizers converge on the fact that no scientific and methodical evaluation was undertaken of the Campaign’s performance on advocacy, internal organization, awareness dissemination and mass communications throughout its progress. “General meetings took place for the purpose of a free and floating discussion of the Campaign’s progress but only after the work is done and not during implementation” (Issa, interview). They admit that this is one of the major weaknesses of the “Campaign”, in addition to not setting reliable indicators and criteria, upon which they could base their progress evaluation and improve their performance (Issa, interview; Sanadiki, interview; Nassar, interview).

3.2.2 External Factors

3.2.2.1 Political System

CCER organizers consider that “consociational democracy in Lebanon cripples everything in the country and is a major impediment to the role that civil society plays because it diminishes the state’s openness to democratic processes” (Nassar, interview). Organizers were challenged in situations where some MPs who had previously agreed on their proposed electoral reforms receded because of pressure put on them from the heads of parliamentary blocs or political parties to which they belong. They justified their action by disclosing to CCER that they are with the reforms on a personal level but that they cannot vote on the passage of such reforms in the parliament because they have to abide by their leaders (Issa, interview). Moreover, politicians themselves consider “consociational democracy to be in direct opposition with pure democratic procedures” such as transparency, accountability, and access of information to the wider public, including civil society organizations because it is committed to maintain and sustain the existing system and limits the momentum of civil society (Maalouf, interview). On several occasions, CCER had “requested that the minutes of meetings of parliamentary committees be available to the public through TV broadcast. MPs rejected on the basis that parliament bylaws state that such minutes are confidential. They further used this excuse to keep discussions discreet among them” (Nassar, interview). Organizers consider this as a major impediment to access of information which is a primary constituent of real democracies, and which entails that the public be made aware of all parliamentary and legislative work progress so that citizens are well-informed and empowered to

hold officials accountable and responsible for their work, and to fight corruption. This negatively affected CCER's advocacy campaign because they could not obtain reliable information that exposes to the public this inconsistency between what MPs would share with them in private meetings and what they disclosed on media platforms (Nassar, interview). The Lebanese confessional political system was also an impediment to the role of CCER according to its organizers because the real representatives in such a system are the confessional-based political parties. This formed a big challenge for CCER when trying to penetrate the political sphere because the political elite came to reject involvement of civil society in electoral matters (Sanadiki, interview). On the other hand, because CCER is secular by character, they denied the legitimacy of the elite's popular representativeness and were not realistic in their approach to lobbying the political elite. Moreover, they were not able to overcome this impediment when they refused to work on mutual interests with politicians or reach a common ground with them in order to push for the electoral reforms and law (Jbara, interview). Related to Lebanon's confessional system is a system of political clientalism between the political elite and their supporters, which was cited by organizers of CCER to have also been a major challenge to their role. Confessional-based political parties overwhelmed CCER and the civil society in general, especially in terms of supporters because under these clientalist exchanges, the political elite gains acceptance in return for offering protection and distribution of resources to their supporters (Nassar, interview). Politicians themselves said that the political elite in Lebanon is more concerned with targeting potential electoral voters while CCER was asking for their full adoption of

all subject matters in their proposed electoral law. Even when former Prime Minister Saad Hariri “decided to be attentive to their demands and asked for a proposal of their suggested reforms, they did not send him anything; they had no tangible solutions to many of the politicians’ questions” (Jbara, interview). As per organizers and politicians, CCER failed to overcome this challenge again by being “more passive in their approach than active where they refused to make compromises: accept what is offered to them, and exert more effort to gradually acquire their demands” (Sanadiki, interview).

3.2.2.2 Socio-Political Circumstances

Socio-political circumstances played a major role in supporting or impeding the work progress of CCER at different instances. Politicians and CCER organizers differentiate between three periods during which CCER was working that had a major contribution to its advancement or retreat: the period before the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005, the period after this event until the parliamentary elections in 2009, and the period after 2009 until our present day (Issa, interview; Maalouf, interview). During the period preceding 2005, there was an external, Syrian decision dominating the Lebanese political life whereby “Syrians would design and pass on an elections law that was in line with their own interests. Therefore, any movement to oppose such a decision was not possible because no one would cooperate with it. After 2005, Syrians withdrew from the country and political circumstances fully changed, making it possible for enthusiasts and supporters of change and reforms to cooperate with CCER” (Issa, interview). Therefore, these political circumstances and the

achievement of independence from the Syrian regime gave momentum to CCER which was expressed in terms of remarkable cooperation and responsiveness from politicians with the “Campaign” resulting in a reformed elections law in 2009. The period between years 2005 and 2009, CCER played its role and achieved aspired results. However, organizers and politicians do not attribute this success to the accumulative work of CCER alone; they take into consideration the political circumstances at the time which were in favor of CCER and paved the way to its accomplishments. In 2009 “there was a general lack of knowledge on electoral issues among MPs such as electoral law and reforms, and CCER received demands from politicians to conduct trainings for them and offer their technical assistance. As for today, MPs acquired this knowledge and no longer believe in the necessity of cooperating with CCER” (Nassar, interview). Moreover, in light of the current regional circumstances, politicians and statesmen are fully aware that the passage of a new electoral law is very difficult and therefore cannot find a place for negotiations with CCER (Sanadiki, interview; Maalouf, interview). After 2009, political circumstances in Lebanon changed again and “CCER lost momentum because democratic processes deteriorated to an extent that the previously dominating mentality of imposing an electoral law by the parliamentary majority in the country became prevalent again” (Issa, interview). CCER organizers believe that “the political elite have taken the decision to solve the issue of elections on its own and without the inclusion of other parties such as CCER” (Nassar, interview). They go further to say that “the decision lies in the hands of regional powers which are impeding the execution of parliamentary elections and the formation of cabinet”

(Issa, interview), and in this case CCER no longer has an influential role to play. On this matter, politicians believe that “political alignments in the country place a bigger burden on CCER than the confessional political system because it takes a unilateral approach to the issue of elections and leaves no place for CCER to play their role” (Maalouf, interview). Other social issues also have a contribution on the extent to which CCER was able to achieve its objectives or not. Organizers claim that the deteriorating security situation in dispersed Lebanese regions place their toll on CCER’s ability to create momentum for a discussion on electoral law and reforms. They rest their claim on the basis that “CCER cannot invite citizens and mobilize grassroots to discuss electoral reforms when there are clashes in Tripoli between Bab Al Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, or when there is a Syrian refugees’ crisis in Akkar and Arsel, as elections does not figure on the list of priorities of these communities” (Sanadiki, interview). On another note, “the political sociology of Lebanon shows that Lebanese are non-revolutionary by nature and that throughout history Lebanon did not once witness a popular revolution on its system because they are traders and traders are concerned with preserving stability” (Sanadiki, interview). Moreover, Lebanese people are generally divided and labelled on sectarian basis and therefore “it is unlikely that they would revolt on their confessional-based political parties” (Jbara, interview). Taking all this into consideration, CCER organizers believe that such factors had a major contribution on the advancement or impediment of the role of CCER at different times. The following chapter presents a discussion of obtained results in light of the literature review and as well as a conclusion of the study including the main weaknesses and strengths of the case of CCER, and

accomplishments and failures. The chapter also discusses limitations of the study, ethical precautions taken, research contribution, areas of future investigation, and presents the personal statement.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1 Analysis & Discussion of Research Findings

There is a general consensus among scholars on the principal that there is a strong relationship between a robust civil society and democracy where CSOs have come to be one of the primary forces driving democratization (Fowler, 1992). Based on this, and the accumulation of revision of primary and secondary data conducted in this research study, the formulated thesis statement - that an empowered and autonomous civil society is key to the democratization process of the Lebanese system because it serves as an intermediary that promotes civic participation, a countervailing power against state domination and corruption, a representative for public concerns, and a primary player in a state's decision-making and policy-making processes – is confirmed by the findings of the research which were collected through the conducted interviews. Findings show that the experience of CCER failed on many levels in being a countervailing power against state domination and in promoting civic participation; it is its internal weakness and uncoordinated efforts on the one hand, and the inappropriate political context in which it operates on the other hand that diminished its role in the democratization of Lebanese political practices. The absence of a clear and detailed work plan that proposes going about accomplishing CCER's specific tasks on aspects such as advocacy tools, internal organization among member CSOs, disseminating awareness of the campaign's mission and objectives, and a comprehensive marketing and communications plan and that approaches measurable and attainable objectives of the campaign was a major impediment to CCER's proficiency and ability to achieve desired objectives. The random and unsystematic approach in dealing with the campaign as a whole,

expressed in terms of not having a clear timeline, well-communicated agenda, solid organization and networking means with members, segmented and customized communications and a well-defined public and political advocacy plan prevented CCER from making effective decisions on how to allocate its financial and human resources in a way that will enable the campaign to reach its objectives, maximizing by this potential proficiency of the campaign. Moreover, the act of exclusion of other partners and members under the campaign from decision-making on strategic issues made partners have a lower sense of commitment, responsibility and ownership to the campaign's mission. Taking into account the Lebanese political context, CCER started out with a far-fetched goal of accomplishing fundamental changes in the Lebanese electoral law and system, and were not specific in defining the tactics in going about this goal. Setting an achievable and measurable goal is also essential when forecast results are compared to actual results. In this sense, CCER did not conduct scientific and methodical progress evaluation on a regular basis to measure performance of their work based on reliable criteria and indicators. A methodical assessment of their performance would have helped them diagnose weaknesses and identify potential areas of improvement by analyzing significant variances from forecast and take action to remedy situations where accomplishments were lower than planned. Self-assessments could have helped reinforce CCER and make it a countervailing force against political elite domination as well as in setting the groundwork for building accountable, transparent and responsive governance systems. They could also provide information about challenges facing CCER in the external, socio-political environment in which it operates. Findings show that one of

the major weaknesses of CCER was the lack of a shared vision among all member CSOs under the network, as well as a deficiency in knowledge of political and advocacy work. Had CCER conducted periodic assessments they could have identified their need of organizing capacity building that is supported by tools, on the organizational, networking and popular levels, in order to encourage empowerment of member CSOs in reaching their political objective of a fair and representative electoral system. Such an initiative takes even bigger importance knowing that electoral reform did not figure on agendas of many CSOs as the list of member CSOs was diverse in terms of sizes and fields of work. By empowering members of the campaign on issues such as accountability, advocacy means, and access to information, members would have played a more active role within the campaign in reaching its objectives and formed a stronger network of informed and empowered CSOs that would be working in collaborative action. The management board of CCER did not make use of this wide network of diversified CSOs in terms of sizes, fields of work and dispersed geographical locations. They were monopolistic in assuming roles of leadership and decision-making and were characterized by an inability to associate for cooperative action or to act on the level of local government, whether internally from within the campaign or externally with other civil society components. Findings show that there was insignificant networking with all civil society components which according to Shaw (1994) include not only organizations but also parties, unions, religious institutions, trade unions, and professional bodies. A more comprehensive approach would have been to establish partnerships with media platforms and even the private sector. In this sense, CCER

failed to make their cause a public issue by making it appeal to all groups of society having different fields of interest and concerns, and thus their ability to work together, organize themselves, create common interests, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest was very limited and often dominated by individualistic rather than collective work. Bratton et al. (1992) cite that protests have often led to reform in countries where popular forces have had the privilege to exist in a strong civil society characterized by an independent organizational and ideological base. Even though CCER conducted several movements but could not mobilize citizens for their cause because findings show that it had no strong ideological base that is shared among all members under the campaign. In addition, CCER focused more on political advocacy and paid less attention to public advocacy and fostering a stronger associational life which carries with it high levels of citizen engagement and participation in public affairs. In the pursuit of a more representative electoral system, lobbying politicians cannot go without mobilizing grassroots in the peripheral local communities because ultimately political leaders will not be responsive to any reform unless their base of voters is targeted; only then they would sense their voters' dissatisfaction with them and accept inclusion of civil society. The Lebanese are sharply segmented along sectarian and political lines; they have long ceased to exist in an integrated single national community that transcends confessional boundaries. Having an ideology that is closer to secularism, CCER was unrealistic and judgmental in attempting to appeal to both the public, and the political elite because they refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the political elite's popular representativeness and work on mutual interests or reach a common

ground with them in order to push for the electoral reforms and law. Moreover, they were not able to overcome the influence of confessional political parties on citizens partly because they had no plans of mobilizing and engaging citizens in participation in the campaign's work toward a reformed electoral system, and partly because they disregarded the reality of Lebanese confessional political politics that brings with it deeply rooted political clientalism. The findings concur with the literature found that the Lebanese civil society is too weak and divided and thus couldn't possibly associate and establish advocacy networks for cooperative actions, and that due to its lack of cohesiveness, civil society politics in Lebanon could only be examined within a patron-client framework rather than a state-society framework. Confessional politics and consociational democracy in Lebanon were a factor in the restriction of CCER's scope of work because political elite are inclined to preserve the existing system that provides them with sustainability based on clientalist exchanges with their followers who in return find protection and access to resources in the existing system. As a matter of principle, CCER refused to satisfy the confessional political elite and accept compromises that would ensure improved involvement of grassroots. Apart from Minister Baroud's connections with politicians and his approach to lobbying which allowed CCER to penetrate to an extent the political sphere before the 2009 elections, they chose to be in confrontation with the political elite after that period, failing by this to mobilize political and popular support for their cause. The conducted literature review shows that scholars have failed to converge on the direction of the causal relationship between civil society and democracy (i.e. whether a robust civil society results in democracy or vice versa), although it is found that

there is indeed a strong relationship between decentralized governance and democracy on the one hand, and a pervasive associational life and an empowered civil society on the other hand. The Lebanese confessional politics and consociational democracy puts primary emphasis on elite negotiation and leaves no place for decentralized governance, which is a practice of direct democracy, to be adopted as a way of empowering citizens and giving them a greater say in decision-making and policy-making, not to mention that it is a process that facilitates governance on state and local governments. Taking this into consideration, CCER's work was undermined in terms of its operation within a political framework where democratic practices such as decentralized governance and accountability of politicians do not exist. The existence of a centralized governance system in Lebanon makes it extremely difficult for a more direct form of democracy to prevail and thus remarkably impedes the efforts of civil society because it further promotes clientalist exchanges between politicians and citizens, and thus diminishes the sense of citizenship translated in terms of civic awareness and engagement, as well as participation in public affairs. Such a system further entrenches sectarian tension and triggers a sense of injustice and marginalization among the less fortunate confessional groups, especially when adding the security and poverty factors, and possibly causes a feeling of aggressiveness directed toward the more privileged confessional groups which results in resorting to the confessional political leaders for refuge. This reality directly affected the effectiveness of CCER in its mission because in such a context, Lebanese citizens are mostly preoccupied in fulfilling their basic needs

of daily life necessities, protection and a sense of belonging, and they are less inclined to practice their democratic political rights of holding politicians responsible and accountable to their actions through an electoral system that provides them with this mechanism, as this does not figure on their list of priorities and needs. In this sense, CCER failed to appeal to the Lebanese citizens' concerns by turning the issue of electoral law and reforms into a social public issue that has an economic and security dimension to it in order to mobilize maximum support for their cause and continue pushing for aspired reforms. Challenges to CCER's working progress were not only limited to internal and national considerations but also related to a set of regional considerations. Findings of this study confirmed researchers' postulations that in underdeveloped institutional contexts, as the case of Lebanon, consociational agreements tend to intensify rather than reduce inter-confessional tensions due to the emphasis that would be placed on maintaining primitive divisions rather than creating an over-arching state loyalty that is transcendent to minorities. Given that the Lebanese political scene is highly sensitive to external regional shocks, whenever Lebanese sectarian politicians find themselves losing in the 'elite cartel' opposite other sectarian politicians, they would try to extend the scope of conflict to invite external supporters in an attempt to defeat their opponents (Dekmejian, 1978). This reality placed a massive toll on CCER's ability and effectiveness to achieve aspired results and it was evidently shown in the level of responsiveness politicians showed to CCER's activism regarding the electoral issue before the 2009 parliamentary elections and later close to the presumed 2013 elections which did not take place for

reasons beyond the scope of this study. During Syrian hegemony over Lebanese matters between the years 1990 and 2005, there had always been an external, Syrian decision on all internal matters including the electoral issue, whereby Syrians would design and pass an elections law that is in line with their own interests in Lebanon, and therefore any civil movement to oppose the Syrian decision was not possible. With the withdrawal of all Syrian troops and thus of political and military hegemony of Syrian regime over Lebanese matters, regional political circumstances became in favor of allowing civil society to retain forcibly lost momentum during the hegemony period, and politicians' responsiveness to CCER was therefore largely attributed to the favoring regional circumstances at the time. The assumption is further verified when prior to the 2013 presumed elections, CCER's efforts were undermined by the currently prevalent regional political circumstances which imply that a compromise among regional political powers is in the happening. Democratic processes deteriorated to an extent in this period and this negatively affected CCER's progress, because the previously dominant mentality of imposing an electoral law became predominant again between the years 2009 and 2013. As a result of Lebanese political elite's dependency on external political variations, they became less responsive to CCER as they took the decision to solve the issue on their own without the inclusion of civil society. It would even be plausible to say that the decision lies in the hands of regional powers that are impeding parliamentary elections and formation of cabinet for their own interests.

4.2 Conclusion of Discussion

The discussion of findings above focused on extracting the reasons behind the failure of CCER to reach its aspired objectives of introducing a fairly representative electoral law and a set of electoral reforms to the Lebanese politics. The discussion also aims at transferring the findings at hand to other settings with similar factors as the CCER rather than making generalizations from specific models, and additionally leads to the conclusion that civil society activism in Lebanon must be viewed within the patron-client framework of exchanges that characterizes Lebanese politics in general. It is not to be contested that Lebanese civil society is described as one of the most vibrant and diverse civil societies in the region as it acts as a watchdog on state performance mainly through establishing research and policy making centers. However, taking CCER as a representative model of civil society showed that CSOs have limited influence over state policies and further confirms the literature that most of CSOs' impact is through welfare provisioning rather than public and political advocacy.

Following this, it would only be fair to claim that CSOs in Lebanon remain at the stage of a “communal society” and do not elevate to the status of a well-established “civil society” that brings with it principles of civic awareness, coordinated networking and advocacy tools. For civil society to be a countervailing power against state domination and corruption, and thus be an agent toward democratization in Lebanon it needs to be better organized and acquire proficiency in networking and associating for cooperative action. It also needs to be more

realistic in approaching Lebanese politics given the constraints that confessional consociational politics places on secular movements of civil society. This is achieved through establishing connections with politicians based on mutual acknowledgment of representativeness and legitimacy, cooperation and collaboration in order to penetrate the predominant rigid system, acquire maximum popular support and push for changes and reforms from within. Continuing to be in confrontation with the political forces and denying the importance of establishing such connections with them cannot lead to any changes in a country where confessional politics is undoubtedly entrenched in its constitutional articles and deeply rooted among its popular masses.

4.3 Limitations to the Research Study

Conducting interviews as a method for collecting data, has many advantages. The first one is related to the possibility of examining the research problem more in depth and in details as interviews are not restricted to specific questions and can be quickly guided or redirected by the researcher in real time as new information emerges. However, throughout the process of conducting the research study, we were faced with a number of challenges and limitations. First, the volume of data obtained through the series of conducted interviews makes the process of organizing, categorizing, and then interpreting data for analysis very time-consuming because not all interviewees' answers would be relative to the research problem being examined. Second, obtained answers were heavily dependent on the interviewees' perception of the interview questions as well as their personal biases and individual

stances in regards to the CCER, both organizers and politicians alike. To try and limit this challenge, the interviewer made sure that questions were asked in a very impartial way and would redirect any deviation from impartiality, as much as possible, to ensure reliability of data. Third, an interview session with one of the most prominent figures of CCER, former Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Ziad Baroud was scheduled to take place but was not conducted due to his travel commitments on the one hand, and the limited time-frame of our research study on the other hand. To overcome this challenge, a substitute interview was conducted with one of the public figures who were closely associated with CCER and has a civil activism background, Khalil Jebara, former Consultant of Prime Minister Saad Hariri. However, we believe that Minister Baroud's insight on the research problem being examined would have been more enriching especially when taking into consideration that his name was mentioned more than once by all interviewees and thus was a reference to the experience of CCER. In addition to that, there is very limited and inadequate prior empirical research studies on the subject of civil society activism and democracy in Lebanon. Citing previously conducted research studies forms the basis of literature review and helps lay a foundation for understanding the research problem under investigation. However, the bulk of found research studies was mostly theoretical in their approach and not expressed in terms of practicality. Therefore, our research study took an exploratory approach to the subject of Lebanese civil society efficacy rather than an explanatory one. Lastly, the size of the sample taken to conduct interviews with was relatively small and not comprehensive of all members of CCER for example or inclusive of other factors to the formula of

democracy and civil society, such as the citizen-factor for instance; and that was due to the limited time-frame of the study as well as to the geographical dispersion of member CSOs under CCER over Lebanese regions. Data was collected from a few individuals, who were thought most influential on CCER's organizational decisions, thus findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Findings, however, can be transferable to another setting with similar factors. Therefore, we believe that the last limitation, in addition to the inadequacy of related prior research on the subject would form possible areas of future investigation that could be built on our study.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting this study, especially the interview part of it. First of all, voluntary participation, which requires that participants are not forced to be a part of the research, was assured. Second, informed consent, which means that research participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate, was guaranteed. Third, procedures for interviews were laid out in writing, and were clearly explained to interviewees before interviews proceeded. Fourth, confidentiality, which entitles that participants are assured that any information they give would not be available to anyone who is not directly involved in the research or that their names would not be explicitly used, was also guaranteed. There are requirements to ask for permission to disclose the name of the interviewee and the organization that she or he is representing and also to ask for permission to tape or video record the

interview and to take notes of their contribution. All considerations were taken into account and the interviewer made sure that the will of interviewees was respected in order to prevent unethical situations from presenting themselves and thus jeopardize credibility of the research study.

4.5 Expected Outcomes and Research Contribution

The expected outcomes and research contributions of this research can be outlined as follows:

4.5.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research attempts to extend the debate on the role of civil society in the democratization process in Lebanon and uncovers the extent to which the Lebanese civil society can contribute to social and political changes and be an agent of the democratization process, by unveiling additional information and making use of theories in this field. This research study allowed us to reach the conclusion that no adequate, empirical and relevant prior research studies were undertaken on the subject and so this will guide researchers to further investigate democratic processes and develop theories which would be adapted to the Lebanese reality in practical terms, for the purpose of advancing the work of Lebanese civil society in the democratization of its political system.

4.5.2 Practical Implications

This research is believed to have practical implications that would be taken under consideration. It is important, both on the organizational level of CSOs, and also on the national level to offer insights and analysis of the reality of Lebanese civil society. Even if the aim is not to formulate the right strategy for civil society to achieve democracy, this research study will leave the door open for researchers to perform further investigations and find better explanations on the best strategies that lead to the empowerment of Lebanese civil society in terms of better political and public advocacy tools, networking and organization among civil society organizations and components and ways of mobilizing and engaging the wide public in political and developmental public affairs. It is true that findings of this case study cannot be generalized to the whole population of Lebanese civil society at large, but findings can be transferable to other settings with similar characteristics. Thus, civil society organizations and components could make use of this study as a learned lesson and build on it in the improvement of their performance.

4.6 Areas of Future Investigation

In this research study, the role of civil society in the democratization process in Lebanon was examined through taking the case of CCER as a representative model of Lebanese civil society. The conducted study based its analysis on data obtained from politicians and organizers of CCER, but did not include the citizen-factor in the formula of empowered civil society-democracy due to time

limitations. As previously cited, according to Emirbayer et al. (1999) levels of civic commitment, reflexivity, and critically informed judgment among citizens are among the basic elements that make up for the concept of associational life and democracy. Therefore, one area in which future research studies could undertake further investigation on the subject is through conducting questionnaire surveys and focus groups with citizens in order to measure the level of civic awareness on electoral issues and be able to analyze the extent to which this factor influenced the performance of CCER, either as an impediment or a support to it, and thus to conclude the extent to which civic awareness influences the role of civil society as a whole, in the democratization process. On another note, obtained data from organizers of CCER as well as politicians allowed us to undertake analysis and extract the reasons of why CCER failed in achieving its objectives, and to a bigger extent why Lebanese civil society is failing to be a driving force toward democratization. However, the obtained data, along with constraints related to limited time-frame, did not allow us to carry out reliable analysis on the optimal means that Lebanese civil society, in its unique structural particularity, could follow to achieve a well-institutionalized and well-established democratic system. Following this, and having exposed the impediments to Lebanese civil society's progress to democratization, future research studies could build on the findings at hand to undertake further investigation and produce empirical, practical recommendations on the most appropriate, Lebanese-tailored methods for civil society to adopt in their pursuit to a more democratic political system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Abbreviations & Acronyms

CCER	Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform
CSO/CSOs	Civil Society Organization/Civil Society Organizations
LADE	Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
LCPS	Lebanese Center for Policy Studies
LTA	Lebanese Transparency Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO/NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization/Non-Governmental Organizations
PACE Lebanon	Promoting Active Citizenship Engagement in Lebanon
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Appendix 2: Interview Questions Directed at Organizers of CCER

→ *Advocacy*

- 1) How did you as, organizers of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform, use information and take action to shape the opinions of the wider audience on a public affairs issue such as the electoral reform?
- 2) What plan did you follow when taking action to further advocate for its implementation? Did you leverage relationships and influence to advocate for the implementation of your proposed electoral law? How did you lobby politicians and statesmen for the proposed electoral law? What indicators did you use to measure the impact of your plan?
- 3) Was there cooperation from the politicians and statesmen? If yes, how would you evaluate this cooperation? Were there any mechanisms by which you measured this?
- 4) Did you face any kind of pressure or opposition from the clergymen - whether Muslims or Christians? If yes, what kind of pressure? How did you work on overcoming this challenge?
- 5) The Lebanese Constitution entrenches sectarianism by stipulating, in Article 95, that the government shall be proportionately representative to the sizes of the respective religious sects, giving way by this for sectarianism to permeate non-elective positions in the government. How did you deal with this burden that is placed on civil society, in terms of actions and advocacy plan? Was there an advocacy plan directed towards clergy men? How did you measure its success?

- 6) Consociational democracy places primary emphasis on elite negotiation and compromise, and stability is secured through the promotion of compromise on key segmental issues. How did you deal with this reality when lobbying for your Campaign?
- 7) Did you use any indicators to measure the performance of your Campaign in lobbying and advocating for a reformed electoral law? If yes, what were the indicators and how did you use them to measure success or failure?

→ **Organization**

- 8) What kind of organizing method did you follow to coordinate and network between over 80 CSOs under the Campaign?
- 9) Taking into consideration the remoteness in distance of CSOs with respect to each other, what procedures did you take to ensure involvement of all CSOs in the Campaign?
- 10) Were there arranged periodic meetings between all allied CSOs under the Campaign? Were minutes of meetings clearly communicated with all member CSOs? What exactly was the mechanism used to ensure involvement of all parties in decision making process?
- 11) It is said that Lebanon's civil society is characterized by its inability to associate for cooperative action or to act on the level of local government. Do you believe this applies well to the approach of coordination and networking of different segments within the Campaign?

- 12) What indicators did you follow to measure the performance of your organizing method? How did you use these indicators to measure success or failure of organizing?
- 13) Would you say that the organizing method that you followed successfully contributed to the overall objective of the Campaign? Why or Why not?

→ *Awareness*

- 14) How did you disseminate awareness of your Campaign and its objectives to the wider public?
- 15) What kinds of events did you conduct to ensure proper awareness of your Campaign and its movements?
- 16) Do you think you had a contribution in raising the level of civic awareness and the acquired importance of a reformed electoral law among citizens? If yes, how did you measure this contribution?
- 17) Despite all criticisms, the Lebanese confessional political system has endured all hardships and remains to be considered by many as a safe haven for minorities. What means of awareness dissemination did the Campaign use in an attempt to change this reality?
- 18) Despite the indignation which most Lebanese feel toward the ever-deteriorating economic and political situation, some still won't give up on the current sectarian system without a convincing alternative that brings back their rights and needs. What means of awareness dissemination did the Campaign use in an attempt to change this reality?

19) Did you set any indicators to measure the performance of dissemination of awareness? If yes, what are these indicators and how did you use them to measure the success or failure?

→ ***Communication***

20) How did you use conventional media platforms (TV, radio, newspapers) to raise awareness and also to lobby for your reforms? Would you say that these media platforms were supportive of your mission?

21) How did the Campaign utilize new media (social networking platforms, websites and blogs) to reach out to the wider public, spread awareness of its agenda and lobby politicians and statesmen for electoral reform?

22) On what basis did your choice of a specific media platform (whether conventional or new) rest? Did you identify and segment your audience before choosing a certain media platform and not another?

23) What were the elements of your communications/marketing campaign? Did they move you closer to the Campaign's overall objective of achieving electoral reform?

24) Did you set any indicators to measure the results of the communications/marketing campaign? If yes, what are these indicators and how did you use them to measure the success or failure?

Appendix 3: Interview Questions Directed at Politicians

→ *Advocacy*

- 1) Did organizers of the CCER leverage relationships and influence to advocate for the implementation of their proposed electoral law? How did they lobby politicians and statesmen for the proposed electoral law?
- 2) Was there cooperation from the politicians and statesmen with the CCER? If yes, how would you evaluate this cooperation? Were there any mechanisms by which you measured this?
- 3) Did you face any kind of pressure or opposition from the clergymen - whether Muslims or Christians – to being responsive to the CCER? If yes, what kind of pressure? How did you respond to this challenge?
- 4) The Lebanese Constitution entrenches sectarianism by stipulating, in Article 95, that the government shall be proportionately representative to the sizes of the respective religious sects, giving way by this for sectarianism to permeate non-elective positions in the government. Do you see that this places a burden on your legislative or executive work as statesmen? If yes, how do you deal with this burden in terms of actions? Do you collaborate with the civil society in this matter? What mechanisms do you use to measure the success or failure of this collaboration?
- 5) Consociational democracy places primary emphasis on elite negotiation and compromise, and stability is secured through the promotion of compromise on key segmental issues. To what extent does this reality influence the level of cooperation and responsiveness from your side to the CCER?

6) The Campaign set up an office for consultation located in the Ministry of Interior during the 2009 parliamentary elections. How would you evaluate this partnership between civil society and the public administration? Would you say that this step was the result of successful advocacy means from the CCER?

→ *Awareness*

7) Do you think you the CCER had a contribution in raising the level of civic awareness and the acquired importance of a reformed electoral law among citizens and politicians alike? How can this be measured?

8) Despite all criticisms, the Lebanese confessional political system has endured all hardships and remains to be considered by many as a safe haven for minorities. What means of awareness dissemination are you, as reformist politicians, using to change this reality? Are you cooperating with the CCER in this matter?

9) Despite the indignation which most Lebanese feel toward the ever-deteriorating economic and political situation, some still won't give up on the current sectarian system without a convincing alternative that brings back their rights and needs. What means of awareness dissemination are you, as reformist politicians, using to change this reality? Are you cooperating with the CCER in this matter?

10) Did you set any indicators to measure the performance of dissemination of awareness? If yes, what are these indicators and how did you use them to measure the success or failure?

11) In 2009, the Lebanese parliament agreed on conducting the parliamentary elections based on the 1960 Law, but with modifications. Do you attribute this achievement to the continuous work of the CCER or to other factors?

→ ***Political Factors***

12) To what extent do Lebanese governments accept involving civil society organizations and activists in making decisions and developing public policies? How did you deal with the CCER in this context?

13) Do Lebanese public institutions abide by institutional and constitutional criteria in dealing with public affairs? Is there a monitoring mechanism?

14) What methods of monitoring and accountability did CCER apply with politicians? To what extent were you responsive?

15) Do local and regional political factors play a role in the extent to which politicians are responsive to advocacy campaigns conducted by CCER?