

THE LEFTIST POLITICAL SONG IN LEBANESE BROADCAST MEDIA DURING THE  
1975-1990 CIVIL WAR: A LASTING IDEOLOGICAL PHENOMENON?

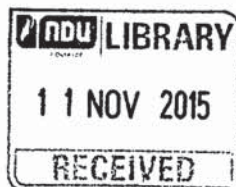
A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment  
for the requirements to the degree of  
Master of Arts in Media Studies-Electronic Media

By

Zoya Jabra Awky

Department of Media Studies  
Notre Dame University – Louaize  
Lebanon

Spring 2014



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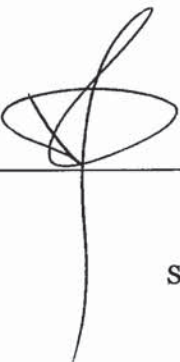
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**Abstract**

The Lebanese leftist political song is an expression of a position and a belief, at times political and at others cultural. This study explores the reasons behind the emergence of the leftist political song. It analyzes more specifically the role of the Lebanese communist party and other leftist parties in supporting the artists that produced this type of songs and their role in using this particular genre as a motivator and a communication tool to mobilize their public. The study therefore examines the relationship between the political engagement of the artists and the existence of this song as well as the role of the artists in using this song as a communication tool in order to make a change and motivate people in the Lebanese society. One of the study's aims is also to find out the reasons behind the relative disappearance of the Lebanese leftist political after the end of the war while investigating people's point of view about the existence of this song and perhaps its demise today. Finally, this study suggests considering the political song not only as "a product of the war culture" and a tool to understand social conflict and reconciliation but also as an artistic form represented by all its elements (lyrics, melody and music arrangement).

**Keywords**

Political Song. Maslow's Motivation/Content Theory. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Lebanese War. Leftist Parties.

## **To Karma My Beloved Son,**

I dedicate this work, hoping to read your thesis in the near future.

I want you to know that you are my motivation, my joy and my inspiration.

I am proud of you mama and I am grateful to have you in my life.

I love you Karamishtica

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## Introduction

Cultural artifacts such as folksongs and tales have been used since the early beginnings of human history to encode cultural meanings. These forms of communication gained popularity because they appealed to audiences using entertaining yet meaningful melodies and simple lyrics. Lebanese culture is rich in artwork such as folksongs. Songs are used in almost all social and mass related events and they reflect the state of mind of the audience. These social events are related to marriage, death, festivities, and why not...politics. The song as an artifact<sup>1</sup> depicts the experience people live in their daily life; their emotions, their social status and their respective experiences. I believe that the history of song is closely related to the history of people and their nation. There is no doubt that both art and politics originate from the same source, and people are the product of their environment. Analyzing the Lebanese environment will lead the researcher to analyzing the way Lebanese people have expressed themselves through songs, in particular the Lebanese leftist political song which emerged a few years before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). All Lebanese parties during the war had their respective political songs or propaganda songs. In its discourse, the Lebanese political song can be interpreted as a medium through which song writers and party leaders intended to convey not only politically ideological messages, but also to criticize the status quo and mobilize followers into action. Why those political parties specifically the leftist parties and their respective artists are not producing a political song today in Lebanon, even though the reasons that motivate them still exist is one of the main questions posed by this study.

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<sup>1</sup> An artifact is an object or tool, or the remains of one, used by past cultures. A song can be considered an artifact and represents our culture.

Although the civil war in Lebanon started in 1975, Lebanon had been in social, economic and political turmoil since the late sixties, and arguably before that.

An overview of the Lebanese war and the political parties in Lebanon is necessary to understand the context that contributed to the emergence of the political song during the war. It is also necessary to juxtapose the political song vis a vis the Lebanese song.

### **The Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to explore the Lebanese Leftist Political songs that emerged as a political-cultural tool during the Lebanese war, and how it engaged people politically. Through context analysis, specifically time and socio-political context analysis, the study will show how the Lebanese leftist song reflected the ideology of the concerned parties to motivate civic engagement and promote party ideas among the divided Lebanese political community. The study will also shed light on how the political song was used as a motivational tool by all the Lebanese groups, regardless of their affiliations, and how each group interpreted it according to its party's ideology in order to entice its followers. It will finally attempt to explain the reasons behind the relative disappearance of the Leftist song despite the remaining divisions among the Lebanese and the somewhat visible presence of the Leftist parties.

### **Definition of the Political Song**

The connection between music and politics, particularly political expression in music, is depicted in many cultures. Although music influences political movements and rituals, it is not clear, how or even if general audiences relate to music on a political level. Political music is used to relay a specific political message.

Abido Bacha<sup>2</sup> defined the political song in Lebanon during the war “as a genre encompassing the trajectories of artistic ventures that wanted to say something new and to breach the embargo of the prevailing songs in Lebanon” (Bacha, 2005).

Revolutionary songs are political songs that advocate or praise revolutions. They are used to boost morale, just as they are used for political propaganda or agitation. Amongst the most well-known revolutionary songs is "La Marseillaise", written during the French revolution in 1792; it was later adopted as the French national anthem.

Cerulo (1993) says, “The design of ‘La Marseillaise’ is credited to General Strasburg of France”, who is said to have directed de Lisle, the composer of the anthem, to “produce one of those hymns which conveys to the soul of the people the enthusiasm which it (the music) suggests”.

There is a major difference between a political and patriotic song: “A patriotic song is a song with strong patriotic content. It usually eulogizes the history, culture, traditions and struggles of the people of a particular nation. National anthems are prominent examples of patriotic songs.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Significance of the Study**

Most of the previous scholarly work was done mainly by ethnomusicologists on the Lebanese song in general, and has mainly focused on religious, folk, and nationalistic contexts (Chouairi 2006; Habib 2005; Hood 2006; Racy 1985 and 1996; Stone 2008), with the exception of Thomas Burkhalter’s research on Beirut’s alternative music scene (Burkhalter 2006 and 2007), and Abido Bacha’s book (Maout Moudir Massrah), “The Death of a Stage Director” on the leftist political song.

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<sup>2</sup> A Lebanese journalist and writer

<sup>3</sup> The free online Dictionary

By focusing on the leftist Lebanese political song this thesis aims to fill the gap existing in previous studies. In the process, the study details the socio-political context of this song. It links and analyzes the leftist political song in relation to the psychological theory, “The Motivation/Content Theory; Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.” The psychological perspective will lead to a better understanding of the role of songs as a motivational tool especially during war.

### **Personal Interest in the Subject**

Three major reasons made me interested in choosing this subject of study. First, growing up in Beirut during the civil war has troubled me and created many question marks about our Lebanese socio-political and cultural identity. Second, being raised in a communist family made me grow up with the Leftist political song. And finally, having a passion for singing attracted me to those young communist and leftist artists who produced this leftist political song since the beginnings of the war and who were popular back then. All I did during the early years of the war, when it was impossible to leave the house, was to listen to their songs on radio and to look for their tapes all over west Beirut. My only dream was to sing with them. My dream came true when I met Ziad Rahbani in the early eighties and through him Khaled el Haber and Ahmad Kaabour. Since that time I sung in most of their concerts and my voice was recorded in many of their songs. When the war ended in 1990, the leftist political song disappeared and left a gap in my musical and cultural identity. That’s why I decided to dedicate my master thesis research to the study of this leftist political song, the context of its emergence and the reasons behind its relative disappearance.

## **Scope**

The scope of this research is limited to the period between “1975-1990”, the period that witnessed abundance in the production of the political song in Lebanon; it deals with a specific type of political song, the leftist Lebanese political song. The reason behind choosing the leftist political song in particular, is because it is the only political song produced in Lebanon during the war. The rest of the songs that are considered political are not in reality political songs, but parodies and political criticism songs. This issue will be discussed in chapter four as a part of the analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on four of the main leftist artists mentioned in the methodology section. I also wanted to understand the reasons behind the relative disappearance of the leftist Lebanese song.

## **Chapter Overviews**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the Lebanese civil war, focusing on the existing local political parties. It also presents a brief historical background about the Lebanese song in general and the political song around the world, the Arab countries and the Lebanese political song during the civil war. Chapter two discusses the theoretical frame work of the research, by linking the leftist Lebanese political song to The Motivation / Content Theory; Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Chapter three presents the methodology and the respective research methods used for this research. Chapter four analyzes and interprets the results of the research. It examines the role of the political parties and artists in the emergence of the leftist Lebanese political song and investigates its relative disappearance after the war. Finally chapter five contains the conclusion and recommendations.

## Chapter I: Background and Review of Literature

This chapter consists of two main parts: An overview of the Lebanese war and the Lebanese parties, and a historical background of the Lebanese song and the political song around the world, in the Arab countries and in Lebanon during the war.

### Overview of the Lebanese War

The Leftist Lebanese political song which is the subject of this research was popular during the war (1975-1990). Since the beginning of human history songs were closely related to the socio-political situation of people. Revolutionary and patriotic songs as well as war songs emerged every time a country faced turmoil. To understand the reasons behind the emergence of this type of song, we need to understand what was happening in Lebanon during the civil war, since this political song reflected the socio-political situation at that time.

The Lebanese society is composed of many sectarian communities. The present Lebanese Constitution officially acknowledges 18 religious groups<sup>4</sup>. These groups have the right to handle family law according to their own courts and traditions, and they are the basic players in Lebanon's complex confessional politics.

The author's generation is called the war generation. For almost two decades, people lived between what was called at that time East and West Beirut. To the world, what happened in Lebanon appeared to be a dispute between Christians and Muslims. The reality was more than that; the war was the result of both internal and external factors, and it is not the only civil war that took place during the last two centuries in Lebanon.

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<sup>4</sup> Lebanon – International Religious Freedom Report 2010 U.S. Department of State. Retrieved on 14 February 2010.

In 1841 a civil war started with Maronites hunting on Druze land and ended with the death of 3000 people in sectarian fighting and the division of the mountain into separately ruled Christian and Druze districts “Quaem maquamiyya” (Hitti 1965, p193). Several writers mentioned that the 1860 civil war was a flashpoint that erupted sectarian hatred to the surface (Hitti, 1965; Johnson, 2001). During that period Lebanon was still under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The intervention of European countries like France, Britain and Russia created a new system of governorship called “Al Moutassarifiya” ruled by a Christian Ottoman, and the establishment of a council based on a sectarian quota, that still exists until today. In 1920, France was given a mandate over Lebanon and Syria during the San Remo conference that was approved by the leagues of nations in 1922. Greater Lebanon was declared. It included Muslim Sunnis that were hostile to the French rule, so the French policy favored Christians, especially Maronites in administrative and political positions by “playing upon their fears of Moslem persecution” (Hourani 1947, p 69). The confessional system was already established under the Ottomans in Mount Lebanon; the French only continued this tradition.

Lebanon gained its independence in 1943 and functioned as a confessional democracy. Some argue that the Lebanese electoral system designed at that time was not representative of the Lebanese population and the National pact along with the constitution did not reflect the relative weight of the various religious groups. The Maronites got the presidency and the army commander position, the Sunnis got the prime minister’s office and the Shiites got the speaker of the parliament. The Druze had the defense ministry.

The newly independent country had to cope with accommodating 150.000 Palestinian refugees mainly Sunni, in 1948 because of the Nakba (the Palestinian term for the events of 1948, when many Palestinians were displaced by the creation of the new state of Israel),

affecting the balance of power in the existing confessional system and creating loyalty issues among the Lebanese population: Christians being pro-Western and Muslims pro-Arab.

The second civil war took place in 1958 during Camille Chamoun's<sup>5</sup> presidency. Defeated in a controversial election, the Leftist opposition went to the street over pan-Arab unity which was led by President Nasser in Egypt, and this was followed by more political and ideological clashes over whether the Palestinian revolution should be allowed to operate in and from Lebanon. It was mostly that last thorny issue which led to the eruption of the civil war in Lebanon (Salibi, 2003, p. 2).

Fighting between the Maronite and Palestinian forces began in 1975, and Left Wing, Pan-Arabist and Muslim Lebanese groups later allied themselves with the Palestinians.

The strike of fishermen at Sidon in February 1975 was considered one of the major reasons that triggered the fighting. That event involved a specific issue: the attempt of former President Camille Chamoun (also head of the right wing-oriented National Liberal Party - Ahrar) to monopolize fishing along the coast of Lebanon. The demonstrations against the fishing company were quickly transformed into political action supported by the political left and their allies in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The state tried to suppress the demonstrators, but the tension escalated when a sniper reportedly killed a popular figure in the city, the former Mayor of Sidon, Maarouf Saad who was a Lebanese politician and activist and a former member of the Lebanese parliament. He served as Sidon's representative from 1957 until 1972. He founded the Popular Nasserite Organization in 1973. Tensions developed between Saad and the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1970s as they competed for influence in Sidon. Saad's assassination

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<sup>5</sup> Lebanese president from 1952 to 1958



sparked the Lebanese Civil War, and he is considered by many historians as the conflict's first casualty (Morgan, 2004, p. 127).

Such events along with various internal tensions inherent to the Lebanese system (and multiple regional developments) contributed to the breakdown of governmental authority and the outbreak of civil strife in 1975 (Khalidi, 1979; Salibi, 1976; Petran, 1987).

Socio-political tensions fueled rural uprisings and workers' strikes, and the emergence of a militant student protest movement (Petran 1983, 130-133; Dubar and Nasr 1982). These socially-oriented movements strengthened class solidarity and introduced class identities that challenged traditional identity patterns based on religion, tribe or region. Indeed, social identity patterns were developing along horizontal class lines, but this development was aborted with the outbreak of the civil war and the quick reaffirmation of rigid sectarian divisions and identity patterns (Dubar and Nasr 1982, p.106).

In the early stages of the war, militias (or political parties) tried to appeal to non-sectarian forces, but due to the sectarian nature of Lebanese society, they inevitably gained their support from the same communities which produced their leaders. It did not take long for all militias to become openly identified with a given community. The two main alliances were the Lebanese Front, which mostly included the nationalist Maronites who were against the Palestinian militancy in Lebanon, and the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), which consisted of pro-Palestinian Leftists. The LNM dissolved after the Israeli invasion of 1982 and was replaced by the Lebanese National Resistance Front. Throughout the war most or all militias operated with little regard for human rights and the sectarian character of some battles, made non-combatant civilians a frequent target (Khalaf, 1993).

Although several Lebanese militias claimed to be secular, most were or eventually became vehicles for sectarian interests. Still, there existed a number of non-religious political groups, primarily but not exclusively of the left or at the right. Such groups included without limitation the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) and the more radical and independent Communist Action Organization (COA). Another notable example was the (pan-Syrian) Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), which promoted the concept of a Greater Syria, in contrast to Pan-Arab or Lebanese nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

Since the beginning of civil war in Beirut, there were periods of harsh fighting and some of relative calm, consisting of several cycles, each one divided into several rounds, interrupted by ceasefire. According to Michael Davie (1993), in his book “*Marqueurs de Territoires Ideologiques a Beyrouth (1975-1990)*”, *Dans la Ville*<sup>4</sup>, the alliances between the fighters in each round changed which made the Lebanese war very complex.

The fighting that started in 1975 between the Kataeb (The Phalangist Party) and the Palestinian militias resulted in the destruction of the Palestinian refugee camps in East Beirut (Tal el Zaatar) and the division of Beirut to East and West by the so called “Green Line” (Davie 1993). In 1978, the fighting erupted in different parts of the city especially around the “Green line”, this time between Kataeb and the Syrian Army. Meanwhile members of the National Movement-Amal, (the Shiite militia group affiliated with the head of parliament Nabih Berry) and the Progressive social party (PSP) (led by Walid Jumblat) clashed in west Beirut. In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon. Beirut was besieged and the “Sabra and Shatila” Palestinian camp was destroyed by the Lebanese forces, (a local Christian militia). Fighting erupted again in the mountains between PSP and the Lebanese forces. Major combat returned to Beirut in 1987, when Palestinians, leftists, and Druze

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<sup>6</sup> Khoury (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1993).

fighters were allied against Amal, eventually drawing further Syrian intervention. Violent confrontation flared up again in Beirut in 1988 between Amal and Hezbollah<sup>7</sup> which swiftly seized command of several Amal-held parts of the city, and for the first time emerged as a strong force in the capital.

The Taef Agreement<sup>8</sup> of 1989 marked the beginning of the end of the fighting. In January of that year, a committee appointed by the Arab League, and chaired by Kuwait, included Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco. It began to formulate solutions to the conflict. This led to a meeting of Lebanese parliamentarians in Taef, Saudi Arabia, where they agreed to the national reconciliation accord in October 1989. In March 1991, parliament passed an amnesty law that pardoned all political crimes prior to its enactment. The amnesty was not extended to crimes perpetrated against foreign diplomats or certain crimes referred by the cabinet to the Higher Judicial Council. In May 1991, the militias (with the important exception of Hezbollah) were dissolved, and the Lebanese Armed Forces began to slowly rebuild themselves as Lebanon's only major non-sectarian institution<sup>9</sup> (Salibi, 1992).

### **The Lebanese Political Parties and their Divisions**

“Lebanon does not have a party system, as in the case of two-party or multi-party systems in functioning democracies” (El Khazen, 2003).

According to El Khazen (2003), political parties in Lebanon have been active since the state was formed in the early 20’s and they developed in five phases:

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<sup>7</sup> A Lebanese Shiaa militant Islamic group and political party, conceived in 1982 to resist the Israelis’ invasions against Lebanon. Also known as resistance movement.

<sup>8</sup> A National Reconciliation Accord or agreement that took place in Taef (Saudi Arabia) in 1989, in order to end the Lebanese civil war.

<sup>9</sup> Salibi, 1992. An interview in *Mulhaq al-Nahar*, July 18, p 6.

- (1) The French mandate period (1920-1943) prior to independence
- (2) The post-independence period from 1943 to 1970
- (3) The pre-war period from 1970-75, marked by unprecedented party activism
- (4) The war period (1975-1990), generated a drastic transformation in the conduct and objectives of political parties
- (5) The post-war period from 1990 to the present <sup>10</sup>

In the mandate period, two types of parties emerged:

- Ideological parties: the LCP (initially the Syrian-Lebanese Communist party led by Khalid Bakdash) subscribed to Soviet communism ,the SSNP (The Syrian Social Nationalist Party ) advocated Syrian nationalism and called for the formation of Greater Syria and the Kataeb Party subscribed to Lebanese nationalism within the boundaries of the newly-formed state.
- Elite-based parties: the Elite based parties operated more like loose political coalitions than as organized and disciplined parties”. (Duverger 1961) The “National Bloc” and “Constitutional Bloc” were led by two Maronite politicians, Emile Edde and Bechara el-Khoury, respectively.

The post-independence period witnessed the emergence of new parties: the Najjada Party<sup>11</sup>, the Progressive Socialist Party <sup>12</sup>in the late 1940s, the National Liberal Party <sup>13</sup>in the late 1950s, the Arab nationalist parties (founded outside Lebanon) in the 1950s and in the 1960s (the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Baath Party, and Nassirite parties).

<sup>10</sup> IBID

<sup>11</sup> A Lebanese Nationalist Party of Fascist trend, founded by Mouheddine el Nsouli (Journalist) in 1933.

<sup>12</sup> A Lebanese Socialist Party, founded in 1949 by Kamal Joumblat (Lebanese Druze Politician).

<sup>13</sup> A Lebanese Political Party founded by president Camille Chamoun in 1958

Since the late 1960s, leftist parties expanded rapidly within all communities and were influenced by revolutionary movements in Third World countries and by student activism in Western countries. The next section deals with Leftist parties in general, and the Lebanese Leftist party in particular.

### **Definition of the Leftist Parties**

The word Left is used in politics to designate the political parties which hold ideas in favor of change, especially in the interests of the working class and the poor. Historically, the division of political parties and political ideas into left, right and centre dates from the French Revolution when deputies in the National Assembly sat on the left or right of the chamber according to their views. It was easiest to apply these labels when socialists (left) parties faced conservative (right) parties in the middle years of the twentieth century. Some commentators say the old divisions of left and right are less and less relevant in the modern world, but they continue to be used (Collin, 2004).

It is during this time that Lebanon witnessed the rise of radical parties with various ideological platforms: Marxist, Leninist and Maoist, Trotskyite. During that period the Lebanese Communist Party seemed like a traditional establishment party.

The first half of the 1970s was also marked by the militarization of Lebanese politics. The PLO's armed presence divided Lebanese parties and the public into two camps: one opposed to the PLO's armed presence and to PLO-Israeli warfare in south Lebanon, the other giving it unconditional support. By the mid-1970s, domestic Lebanese politics overlapped with that of the PLO. This was the case in the three major crises that paralyzed

government in 1969, 1973, and 1975, in which the PLO was deeply involved both politically and militarily.<sup>14</sup>

In the end, armed conflict was inevitable, for the coexistence between an expanding Palestinian revolutionary movement backed by Arab regimes, and the Lebanese state was, at best, temporary.

The third phase (1970-1975), which immediately preceded the outbreak of war, was unique in the history of party politics in pre-war Lebanon. Over 15 political parties and groupings of all persuasions were engaged in large scale mobilization, recruitment, and propaganda activities across the country. This period was marked by two developments: the political assertion of leftist parties (the "old" and the New Left) and the Palestine Liberation Organization's political and military activism in Lebanon in the aftermath of the Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

During the civil war, militias were the de facto holders of power in the areas they controlled: the (Christian Party) Lebanese Forces in "East Beirut" and the (Shiite Party) Amal, the (Druze Party) Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), and other parties in "West Beirut." The first major attempt to integrate the militia order in the state was in December 1985, when Lebanon's three major militias - the Lebanese Forces, Amal, and the PSP - signed an agreement to end the war. Presented as a platform for reform, the Syrian-brokered Tripartite Agreement aimed to institutionalize Syrian domination over Lebanon through militia rule. Opposed by Lebanese Forces military commander, Samir Geagea [Ja'ja'] and by president Amin Gemayel, the Tripartite Agreement collapsed and Elie

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<sup>14</sup> El Khazen, *Al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyya*, p. 109.

Hobeika, the Lebanese Forces intelligence chief who brokered the agreement with Damascus, was ousted from "East Beirut."

As the war continued, militias became increasingly dependent on Syria, Israel and Iran for support.

Moreover, some militias ceased to operate during the war, notably the Fatah-backed Sunni militia Al Mourabitoun, while new parties/militias were formed. The two main newcomers were Islamist parties: Shiite-based Party of God (Hezbollah) and Sunni-based Harakat alTawhid (Unity Movement) led by Sheikh Said Shaaban. While the power base of Harakat al-Tawhid was confined to the northern city of Tripoli - and was backed first by PLO Leader Yasir 'Arafat and, after the latter's ouster from Tripoli in 1983, by Syria - Hezbollah had much greater influence and support.

Hezbollah's official founding was in 1985, its initial involvement in the war was in 1982 during the Israeli invasion. Armed and funded by Iran, Hezbollah clashed with leftist parties and was on bad terms with Syria at a time when the relationship between Amal (the other Shiite party), led by Nabih Berri since 1980, and Damascus was at its peak, particularly in the mid-1980s.

Having succeeded in attracting an increasingly large Shiite following, initially from within the ranks of Amal, Hezbollah became Amal's main rival in the Shiite community.<sup>15</sup>

The transition from war to peace was abrupt and involved no rehabilitation process for political parties and for the "war elites" who changed hats overnight. The war did not end

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<sup>15</sup> Sharara, Waddah. *Dawlat Hizballah: Lubnan Mujtama'an Islarniyyan* [Hezbollah's State: Lebanon an Islamic Society] (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1996)

with a peace conference that brought together the protagonists under international auspices, as in the case of other protracted conflicts. The closest substitute to a peace conference was the Taef Agreement held in the Saudi Arabian city of Taef and brokered through Saudi intervention. Its implementation sparked more conflict. The war finally ended with an act of war, when General Michel Aoun, heading an interim cabinet, was removed from office by Syrian forces assisted by Lebanese Army units loyal to the Taef government. With the ending of hostilities, political parties, like other political actors, entered the postwar phase of Lebanese politics. Militias had to adapt to this new state of affairs and quickly reverted to their political party status.<sup>16</sup>

### **Overview of the Political Song around the World**

For the purpose of this research, the term ‘political song’, will be used throughout the study since it was used by Lebanese journalists to designate the type of songs considered as propaganda or protest songs during war time.

Since the beginning of human civilization, songs were used as a motivational tool during wars, to praise a regime or a party and to mobilize people. John .L. Lewis (1939) classic statement “a singing army is a winning army”, highlights the importance and impact of the song on the masses and confirms that a song is a powerful tool in society, used in crises and for propaganda, as well as for entertainment. Many names have been given to this category of songs (e.g. war, protest, propaganda). Usually songs that are composed during war are called propaganda or protest songs, because they are an effective tool for mobilizing people.

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<sup>16</sup> Ta'if Agreement, see Joseph Maïla, *The Document of National Understanding: A Commentary* (Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 1992).



Propaganda is defined as "doctrines, ideas, arguments, facts, or allegations spread by deliberate effort through any medium of communication in order to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause" and as "a public action or display having the purpose or effect of furthering or hindering a cause." (Webster's, 1817, defs. 2 &3) Oxford's American Dictionary defines propaganda as "publicity intended to spread ideas or information that will persuade or convince people." (Ehrlich, p.718)

Usually propaganda songs are written to appeal to a public that is frustrated and urged to take action in a cause. National Anthems, Patriotic songs and military songs, are a good example of propaganda songs.

Perhaps Hubbard's words about the patriotic song show to what extent the song is effective in mobilizing people and moving them emotionally. "Love of country, together with a pride in its institutions...smolders in the breast of all mankind. This latent spark, when fanned into a blaze of fervor finds vent in....songs, which in turn inspires to action .... Such is the birth of patriotic music" (Hubbard, 1910, p. 101).

### **The French Political Song**

The modern form of the political song started with the 'Troubadours' (aristocratic poets and musicians) mainly in south France, from the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century through the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Under their influence and because of the crusades<sup>17</sup> related movements spread through Europe. The Troubadours tackled many social issues, especially love. They created different styles of poems and songs. The 'Crusades songs' and the 'Sirventes' were the early forms of the modern political song. The tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, originating with music and the poems of the English and Welsh Bards,

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<sup>17</sup> Military campaigns sanctioned by the Latin Roman Catholic Church during the High Middle Ages and Late Middle Ages. In 1095 Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade with the stated goal of restoring Christian access to holy places in and near Jerusalem.

were themes which were included in the lyrics of the Troubadour and minstrels songs. Noble ladies of the medieval period as well, were famous for their patronage of middle Ages music. (www.britanica.com). A few decades later, in France also, we witnessed the rise of a very important political song during the French revolution. Chantal Crozet argues that the “Mazarinades” are considered to be the most significant corpus of recorded political songs sung in French. They represent a mixed bag of political propaganda written during the civil war known as ‘La Fronde’ in seventeenth century France. Les Mazarinades were sung with popular melodies on the famous ‘Pont neuf’ of Paris by chansonniers (street singers), often without musical accompaniment. For the most part written by anonymous authors who feared reprisal, they aimed at discrediting Cardinal Jules Mazarin, then minister under Anne of Austria’s regency government for the child Louis XIV, who was accused of political and financial mismanagement as well as of sexual misconduct. The language of the Mazarinades was raw and used explicit sexual references. They set the tone for what songs could achieve in terms of giving space in the public arena to voices, topics and forms of expression which were not heard so easily elsewhere (Merrick 1994). La Marseillaise, which later became the national anthem, is an early revolutionary song. In the nineteenth century, during two subsequent social uprisings (the 1848 revolution and 1871 Commune) songs also continued to contribute to the making of history by informing and influencing political opinions.

### **Europe and America’s Political Songs**

From the “Marseillaise” and the “Internationale” to revolutionary Soviet songs and “Nueva Canci ‘on” in Latin America, and from national anthems to nationalist songs in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe to songs of the anti-colonial struggles for national liberation in Asia and Africa, songs have played an important role in mobilizing the masses (Massad, 2003, p. 21).

Later, in the 1930s and 1940s, La 'Chanson moderne' with its icon Charles Trenet came to symbolize the social changes French people wanted to see during this period. The poet song-writers of post-WW2 (e.g. Vian, Brassens, Ferré and Brel) reaffirmed the predominance of text over music in French songs throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Their messages were serious social or political commentaries. The protest/folk songs movement in France, another genre of socio-political commentary through songs, intermingled with the rock wave in the 1970s and 1980s. In the late 1980s, through the 1990s, and into current times with the advent of French rap and slam (urban poetry), the continuing legacy of the troubadours' emphasis on text/poetry over music is most palpable, and the long tradition of French political songs is most strongly felt and kept alive (Crozet, 2010, p. 131).

Another good example would be the freedom protest songs during the 1960's in the USA. The message delivered through these songs, asked people to make a change. Bob Dylan's music inspired people to participate in the civil right movement. "The emotional impact of these songs was reinforced by unifying the audience through hand clapping, and by call and responses, a technique where the main vocalist sings a line and the audience repeat it" (Hitchcock, 1986, p. 487).

The message in propaganda songs projects the power of involvement in a cause. The aim of these songs, (in particular March and Hymn) is to create pride, self-esteem and to show determination, courage and power. The composition and rhythm also played a major role in affecting people emotionally. They felt that they were not alone in their struggle, which created solidarity among the population to cope with the pain of the war.

Warren Dwight Allen, professor of music at Stanford university during World War II states that "Marching calls for organization; a marching people must be united....everyone must 'keep step'....and the march toward world unity is possible because of certain principles of

musical organization that are closely akin to the principles of political unity” (Moon, 2003, p. 347).

Composers and publishers had to adopt new musical motifs in order to please the popular thinking and the governments (or parties) they belonged to. In addition, composers and publishers often wrote music to promote their personal wartime sentiments. This specific idea will be highlighted later in this study, since most of the artists that were interviewed stated that the songs reflected their own political beliefs at the time. This music had a great influence on social and political attitudes, therefore serving as an effective propaganda tool. The usage and popularity of songs make them a powerful medium to convey messages, under different contexts and conditions. People memorize a song faster than memorizing any regular text. The combination of the lyrics together with the melody and rhythm make people sing along.

Politicians and parties use these propaganda songs to create a unity among people in order to disseminate their messages.

“By promoting ideas and, often, inviting the listener to sing along in groups as a shared experience, music helps achieve the goals of the propagandist. Besides the instantaneous generation of emotions, the most effective propaganda songs have qualities that make them memorable while relaying their messages in a fast time that is not too emotionally extreme to accept.<sup>18</sup> The Arab countries were not different from European countries in producing protest songs. One of the major influences of the troubadour songs was the ‘Sufi’ poets in Andalus (Spain). And since the beginning of the twentieth century Egypt and Later Lebanon were the cultural centers of the Middle East (media, cinema, theater and songs)

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<sup>18</sup> "War Songs, A Musical Overview". 7 Nov2003(<http://www.slipcue.com/music/jazz/warsongs>)

Before over viewing the Arab and Lebanese political song, an overview of the Lebanese song is necessary, in order to understand the evolution of the Lebanese leftist political song.

### **Overview of the Lebanese Song**

The Lebanese song was influenced by western and eastern music because Lebanon had been subject to many invasions during its history, making its cultural and artistic experience diverse.

“Beirut's musical culture features a complex conglomeration of Eastern and Western practices, repertoires and aesthetic outlooks. It presents a panorama of liturgies and styles that belong to various religious sects and ethnic groups” (Racy, 1986, p. 413).

In Lebanon and the region Bedouin styles were transformed into new forms “Ataba” and “Shruki” (singing styles) or “Zajal” where the singer creates poems on the spot, sung in the local Lebanese dialect. Ali Jihad Racy argues that traditional Bedouin styles were often transformed into city music (Racy, 1996, p. 406).

Popular music in Arab countries started to take its modern form after World War I. To the Lebanese elite, Egypt was the leader in modern music with composers like Sayed Darwich and Mouhamad Abdel Wahab whose music became popular in the whole Arab world due to the popularity of the Egyptian film and record industry, and Aleppo in old maqam<sup>19</sup> based music. In 1926 the ‘Lebanese Republic’ was declared and “A new elite emerged, educated with European teaching methods” (Hourani, 1992, pp 399-400). Lebanon was still under the French mandate and education, at that time, was in the hands of Christian schools and European and Americans missionaries. One of the main contributors of that period was

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<sup>19</sup> Is the system of melodic modes used in traditional Arabic music, It is "a technique of improvisation".

Mr. Wadih Sabra<sup>20</sup> who founded the first music school 'Dar Al Musica' which later became the National Conservatory.

Racy explains, "In the late nineteenth century, Protestant hymnals based on western tunes, were printed and distributed by American missionaries in Beirut. One such hymnal, from 1873, taught western music theory and notation" (Racy, 1986, p. 415).

Besides the influence of the Islamic culture and the Koran versus' chanting, many composers (e.g, Salvator Armita, Mitri el Murr) were influenced by the music of the Christian Syriac church and Byzantine music. Although they built on the heritage of the music developed in Egypt, those Lebanese composers wanted to create unique Lebanese music a combination of folk Lebanese music, (like Ataba and Mijana <sup>21</sup>which was accompanied most of the time with Lebanese folk dance dabka) and of western music. This turning point in the Lebanese music was a statement to show that Lebanon was different from its Arabic cultural environment, and that difference existed in the music of the Lebanese villages at the grass roots level.

Another reason for this shift was a group of talented poets who started reciting their poetry at the roman ruins in Baalback which in the 1950's became a major attraction for annual summer festivals. (Mainguy, 1969)

In 1948, the "Nakba"<sup>22</sup>, marked a new era for the Lebanese music. Palestinian intellectuals and artists moved to Lebanon. The artists included Sabri al Sharif who was the director of the music department in 'Al Shark Al Adna' Radio Station as well as Halim Al Roumi, a

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<sup>20</sup> A Lebanese composer and founder of the National Conservatory of Music. Best known for the composition of the Lebanese National Anthem.

<sup>21</sup> A traditional Arabic singing style, popular in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Improvisational solo singing.

<sup>22</sup> The Palestinian Exodus that took place in 1948, where approximately (750.000) Palestinian were expelled from their homes during the 1947-1948 Palestinian-Israeli war.

singer and composer. Both contributed to the development of the Lebanese song during that period.

Radio Levant, founded in 1938 by the French mandate and handed to the Lebanese government in 1946, contributed also to the rise of the Lebanese song as well as the Baalback festivals between the late 1950's and 1970s (Racy 2001, p. 339). These government-supported festivals usually presented musical plays featuring newly-composed and orchestrated tunes, and newly choreographed line dances. Festival music and dance, collectively known in Lebanon as "folklore", incorporated Arab, Russian, Balkan, and European, as well as Lebanese folk elements. The material was presented in modern, formally staged, and well-rehearsed formats. Festival music was associated with celebrities such as: the two Rahbani brothers, 'Asi, a composer and Mansur, a lyricist; Fairuz, a female singer; Wadih al Safi, a male vocalist, and others (Racy 1981, p. 36). The Rahbanis mixed traditional Arab instruments like the "Oud" and "kanoun" with European instruments like brass to give grandeur to their songs and deviated from the classical maqam or musical scale, in favor of harmony which does not exist in traditional Arabic music. Their compositions included "Mawal" (a vocal improvisation), "Taqassim" (an instrumental improvisation), and "Waslat", (a popular style of song in Aleppo and Cairo).

According to Burkhat (2013), "the Lebanese song differentiated itself from the Egyptian song" (p.156), first by style, shifting from being "Tarab" (a long repetitive melancholic song) to a shorter lively song, and second by text, using Lebanese dialect rather than Egyptian. Lebanese poets introduced new textual and musical images moving from the separation of the beloved and the pain it triggered in Egyptian songs to cheerful lively stories happening in Lebanese villages. Modern Lebanese song writers worked on high standard poetry relating to topics like love and patriotism. Fairuz sang for Said Akl and Al

Akhtal Al Saghir, two renowned Lebanese poets. What contributed to the popularity of the Lebanese singers in the Arab world beside Radio and record companies' producers was their ability to sing in different dialects like Egyptian and the Gulf region. Nour El Hoda, Sabah and more Lebanese singers participated in Egyptian movies as well.

"Al Hazima" (the defeat of the Arab countries with Israel) 1967, introduced a new style of patriotic songs supporting Palestine all over the Arab world especially in Egypt when Oum Koulthoum sang 'Asbaha indi el Ana boundoukiya' (I now have a rifle). In Lebanon the Rahbanis produced an LP or Long Play (a vinyl record that was adopted for recording) called 'Al Qudsu fil Bal' (Jerusalem on Our Minds) interpreted by Fairuz.

By the 1970's, Lebanese singers were performing in all Arab countries. In addition to Fairuz Sabah and Wadih El Safi , names like Melhem Barakat, Joseph Azar, Elie Shouwairi, Issam Rajji and more participated in Arab concerts and festivals. The video clip was popular via satellite TV channels and record companies relied on TV talents show to discover and recruit new talents.

### **The Lebanese War, another turning point in the History of the Lebanese Song**

During the Lebanese war from 1975 to 1990, the Lebanese music underwent significant changes. Many musicians interacted with the violent events of the war by either supporting them with their propaganda songs, or by protesting with their protest songs. Some expressed themselves freely and independently from what was happening around them, others stopped performing and left the country. Various militias had their own songs and radio stations.

They were "supported by an extremely well developed and sophisticated media-with their own broadcasting stations, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, slogans, symbols and



motifs which competed for access to potential recruits, clients, and converts” (Khalaf 2002, p. 270).

The “Lebanese Forces” had their own songs and Anthems praising Bachir Gemayel their leader, and telling of their accomplishments during the war especially in a district of down town Beirut ‘kantari’ and ‘Tall al Zaatar’, the Palestinian refugee camp that was demolished in east Beirut. The situation in west Beirut was completely different. The Leftists, mainly the communists had their own protest music which is the concern of this research paper. Artists like Ziad Rahbani, Marcel Khalife, Khaled El Habr and Ahmad Kaabour contributed to the emergence of the leftist political song during the war years.

### **Leftist Protest Culture**

The artists, subject of this study belonged to Lebanese left parties. Their background and belief system, therefore, represented the ideologies of left (communist and socialist). The difference between an artist and any other citizen is that the artist expresses himself through art and conceives his problems in an artistic form, whether musical, poetic or pictorial. A popular song in general, has a message and should be expected to influence people’s behavior and sentiments, by involving them in the issues tackled by the artist. The close relationship between the song and the socio-political situation, should lead to understanding the reasons behind the emergence of this Lebanese leftist song during the civil war (1975-1990). From this perspective the song becomes a motivational tool and the artist, along with what he represents a motivator.

Omar el Zeeni (a satiric poet and song writer, 1895-1961) was among the most famous protest writers and singers in Lebanon and Arab countries, ever since the decline of the Ottoman rule in the region, through the French mandate and independence. He wrote

hundreds of political, social, patriotic and feminist songs and was jailed on several occasions; the first time in 1926 when he wrote a satiric song, 'badna hourriyi ya rayess' (we want freedom O President), criticizing Charles Debbass, the Lebanese President during that period. In 1949, Bechara el Khoury (Lebanese President) also put him in jail even though he was his friend for writing another satiric song 'Jaddedlo', (renew for him), against his regime. (Jammal, 1983)

“Il est certain que la hardiesse et le mordant de sa satire politique ont constitue un element fundamental de son success” (Lecerf, 1933).

It is certain that the boldness and biting of his political satire constituted a fundamental element of his success. (Translation, Lecerf, 1933)

Most of the leftist artists were influenced by Omar el Zeeni as well as Cheik Imam<sup>23</sup>, first in the format of the song they wrote and second by the choice of the lyrics.

Burkhalter (2011) argues in his article, “How musicians from Beirut, react to war and violence”, that for a long time protest singing in the Arab world was mainly located within the political establishment. Famous Egyptian composers, musicians and singers like Mouhamad abdel Wahab, Oum Koulthoum and Abdel Halim Hafez sang politically-engaged songs about Palestine, however they were linked to national institutions and politicians, like Jamal Abdel Nasser (Massad, 2003). In Lebanon the Rahbanis and Fairuz associated themselves carefully and shrewdly with influential Arab leaders. They tackled universal values like love for the homeland, freedom and justice. Their names were also linked to communists, Palestinians, then Syrian and Lebanese nationalists. Burkhalter continues by stating that the resistance culture started to emerge outside the official

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<sup>23</sup> Famous Egyptian composer and singer. Best known for his political songs that were written by his partner, the poet Ahmad Fouad Najem.

political circles of power during the sixties. Singers began to praise the Palestinian guerrilla fighters. The blind Egyptian singer Sheikh Imam (1918-1995) became one of the most influential artists in this category; he accompanied himself on 'Oud'. The lyrics of his songs were written by his associate, the poet Ahmad Fouad Najem. Both were put in jail several times because of the ironic and bitter songs they wrote about Egypt, Arabs and Palestinians. One of their famous songs is 'Ya Falastiniya', (O Palestinians), which made Yasser Arafat (the PLO leader) visit Cairo in 1986 to meet Sheikh Imam, who sang it for him (Massad, 2003).

### **The Leftist Lebanese Political Song during the War**

In Lebanon during the civil war (1975-1990), propaganda and protest songs flourished. The political song represented the political situation, but "politics isn't the only specialty of this song, and it doesn't seek to monopolize it" (Bacha, 1985). The different political parties in East and West Beirut had their respective songs, hate speeches and radio stations.

"Voice of Lebanon expounded an exclusively Maronite version of the daily news to its Christian listeners. Across the city in Corniche el Mazraa, listeners who tuned to 240 meters medium wave were hourly blasted by the music of "Allah Akbar", the old Nasserite marching song of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. (...) On the Phalanges' station, disc jockeys played pop records newly imported from Paris. (...) There was even a grotesque mutation of the BBC's "Any Questions" programme in which the inequities of leftist, communist and their fellow travelers were damned in bloodthirsty terms. Every day, "Gemayel's daily disc" – a ten-minute lecture on the integrity of Lebanon by Sheikh Pierre, the father of the Phalange – would be transmitted. The "Voice of Arab Lebanon" provided a mixture of pan-Arab sentiment and invective against the "isolationist-Zionist conspiracy", longhand for Israeli-Maronite alliance (Fisk, 2001, pp.145-146).

The concern of this study is to focus on the leftist political song that emerged during the war. Marcel Khalife, Khaled el-Habre, Ahmad Kaabour , Ziad al Rahbani and many more like Issam el Hajj Ali , were members and/or supporters of the left and communist parties in West Beirut, and were the main contributors to the production of the so called leftist political song.

“The emergence of the political song was launched by communist Lebanese artists” (Bacha 2005, p. 21).

The Lebanese Communist Party encouraged those young artists and asked members of the party to sell cassettes of their singers on the streets, as actor and musician Rabih Mroue remembers:

As a young communist, I used to get fifty cassettes and sell them in West Beirut. All the young party members did so, for the sake of the cause. We also sold tickets for the concerts of our singers. And we were more or less obliged to go to the concert.” The singers sang their songs in universities and colleges. “I distributed my cassettes by myself. I took a box with fifty or one hundred cassettes and went to the nightclubs to ask people if they wanted to buy some (Burkhalter, 2013, p. 176).

Abido Bacha, a Lebanese journalist and song writer, wrote numerous articles in local Lebanese newspapers and magazines between 1980 and 2000 about the leftist political song in Lebanon and ended up in 2005 by writing a book entitled “*Maout Moudir Massarh , Zakirat Al Oughniya Al Siyassiya*” or Death of a Stage Director , the Memory of the Political Song. In his book, Bacha wrote about the history of the political song and the stories of the artists producing it, along with a biography since he was the song writer of many of these songs for more than one artist. He stated the history of the songs and linked

it directly to the events that took place during the Lebanese war and the respective personal stories of the artists in reference to his own memories. The introduction of the book depicts the problems of Lebanese cultural identity before the war and the direct relationship of this identity to Lebanon's social and political environment with its divisions and belongings mainly European to the Christians and Pan Arab to the Muslims.

While arguing that this genre did not start with the beginning of the war, he states that different artistic manifestations took place prior to war.

Paul Matar sang unusual (modern) songs in the late 1960's and the early 1970's. He sang texts by Mahmoud Darwish, Adonis and others. Additionally 'Mouhtaraf Beirut lilmasrah' (Beirut theater workshop) translated Che Guevara's 'Ma hamm ann namout fi douii sarkhat el harb' (it doesn't matter if we die during the loud cries of war) and gave it to Walid Gholmieh who put music to it. This piece was presented for the first time in the play Majdaloun then broadcast on radio stations after the outbreak of the civil war (Bacha. 2005, p. 46).

Ghazi Mikdashi the founder of 'Al Kawrass Al Chaabi', was one of the major contributors to this song , and presented Mahmoud Darwish in a very popular song also before the outbreak of the war 'Sajel Ana Arabi' (Mention that I am an Arab). Mikdashi promoted amateurs in his chorus. Quoting him Bacha (2005) continues:

It is enough that one can sing correctly to join the Chorus. It is enough to have a minor musical talent and it's not necessary to have studied music in order to produce songs...the first recruits of the chorus were residents of Mikdashi's street and his relatives (p. 31).

The band was consciously taking a stand against elitism, and its performances aimed to transmit meanings more than artistic form. The second attitude of the 'Popular Chorus' according to Bacha (2005), is the relationship between the 'song and the reality' song focused on issues related to certain social classes. The popular settings and performances were different. They performed on the streets, in schools, public places, military barracks and in villages. The aim was to create a relationship between the audience and the song. By performing on the streets, the chorus opposed the conventional way of listening to songs in concerts. The success of the 'Popular Chorus' attracted young artists such as Ahmad Kaabour, Tony Wehbe, Khaled al Habr and Oussama Hallak. According to Bacha , the experience of the chorus grew richer , and gave rise to solo projects; Khaled al Haber formed his own band, while Ousama Hallak walked out with a number of songs , and Ahmad Kaabour while remaining in the chorus, worked on his solo project 'Unadikum' ( I call upon you) which made him famous.

Marcel Khalife established 'Al Mayadeen' in 1976. His songs were mainly written by Mahmoud Darwish and Adonis. According to Bacha (2005), Marcel Khalife worked well on the composition and music while emphasizing the artistic side. All those young artists were inspired by the experience in Egypt of Sheikh Imam and Ahmad Fuad Najem. In 1983 Sheikh Imam, Ziad Rahbani, Khaled al Habr and Marcel Khalife participated in a concert on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Lebanese communist party (Bacha 2005, p. 138).

As for Ziad Rahbani, his prolific production cannot be restricted to the political song, since Ziad wrote plays and composed different styles of songs but he also was a major contributor to this category. According to Ziad Rahbani interviewed by Bacha (2005), "There is no such category called political song, music is an international language and

songs may talk about all human concerns...this song can travel and touch all people even if they were from a different ideological and political background". (Bacha 2005, p 196) This universal language of song is not limited but can speak for and of all people. Perhaps that is one of the reasons behind the popularity of the Leftist song in Lebanon- it spoke about the people, their concerns, aspirations, suffering, situation and hope.

Bacha gives an example of a song by Marcelle Khalife "Mountassibou al Kamati Amchi" (I Walk Upright), which was used in a documentary about Bachir Gemayel. Throughout his book Bacha continues to talk about the details of these artists' productions, listing them by song and concert and highlighting the close relationship between the political situation and what they wrote as well as the political parties. In fact, "most of the political songs were financed by the PLO and the leftist parties" (Bacha 2005, p. 92)

The political song was heavily used in Radio stations during the war, and it was used in different Lebanese movies, produced during the war by Maroun Baghdadi, Joceline Saab, and other directors.

Bacha ends his book by declaring the death of the political song at the end of the war, since the political environment that triggered it had vanished. One of the aims of my research is to find out if this category of songs still exists today, and if so, in which form? And who are the artists producing it?

## Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

This chapter adopts a psychological theoretical framework because listening to music and songs has the ability to motivate people and influence their moods.

Music and songs play a significant role in people's life and sense of identity. Nietzsche (1895) wrote in "Twilight of the Idols", "Without music, life would be a mistake". It was proven scientifically that music has a major influence on people's cognitive skills, learning, way of thinking, personal and social development, and definitely on our mood. Listening to our favorite song gives us pleasure. While listening to music, our brain releases "dopamine", the feel good chemical, that gives us pleasure. Music affects us psycho-physiologically as well. "Scientists at the University of Missouri have found that people can boost their mood simply by listening to upbeat music" (Boothly, 2013)<sup>24</sup>

According to Nina Kraus (2013), a neuroscientist and professor of neurobiology at Northwestern University in Illinois, who studied the effects of music on the nervous system "When listening to our favorite songs, our body betrays all the symptoms of emotional arousal, the pupils in our eyes dilate our pulse and blood pressure rise, the electrical conductance of our skin is lowered, and the cerebellum (a brain region associated with bodily movement) becomes strangely active. Blood is even re-directed to the muscles in our legs, that's why we begin tapping our feet". She explained that 'humans and birds' are the only creatures "that automatically feel the beat" of a song. She continued, "The human heart wants to synchronize to music, the leg wants to swing metronomically to a beat"... "Our bodies", Dr. Kraus concluded "are made to be moved by music and move to it".

Khan (1996) explains it further as he describes the innermost effects that music has on the human being:

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.healthline.com/health-news/mental-listening-to-music-lifts-or-reinforces-mood-051713>



"A person does not hear sound only through the ears; he hears sound through every pore of his body. It permeates the entire being, and according to its particular influence either slows or quickens the rhythm of the blood circulation; it either wakens or soothes the nervous system. It arouses a person to greater passions or it calms him by bringing him peace. According to the sound and its influence a certain effect is produced. Sound becomes visible in the form of radiance. This shows that the same energy which goes into the form of sound before being visible is absorbed by the physical body. In that way the physical body recuperates and becomes charged with new magnetism" (p. 21).

Music is present in all life's celebrations. Each time people want to celebrate they use music. They sing and dance to music, since music is a good motivator. We have songs for all occasions in life; the list is endless. People sing for peace, for love, for entertainment and also for war.

To deal with the song as a tool for motivation, the theoretical framework chosen for this study is the Motivation/Content Theory of Abraham Maslow. The leftist political song will be analyzed, through this framework, as a need or a motivator during the war, for the left Lebanese parties, for the artists who produced it and for the people who listened to it.

Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behavior. Motivation is what causes us to act, whether getting a glass of water to reduce thirst or reading a book to gain knowledge<sup>25</sup> (Kendra Cherry, 2013). The business dictionary defines motivation as "a concept that describes the activation of goal-oriented behavior in humans". Motivation theories can be classified in two different approaches:

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<sup>25</sup> About.com Psychology

- Content theories deal with what motivates people, and are concerned with the individual's needs and goals. Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg and McClelland studied motivation from content perspective.
- Process theories deal with the process of motivation and are concerned with how motivation occurs. Vroom, Porter and Lawler, Adam and Locke studied motivation from a process perspective.

This study will rely on the Maslow's theory, which is one of the content theories.

### **Abraham Maslow's Motivation/Content Theory**

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist, known for creating, "Maslow's hierarchy of Needs" - a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs in priority, culminating in self-actualization, which was written in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in *Psychological Review*. Maslow was a psychology professor at Brandeis University, Brooklyn College, New School for Social Research and Columbia University. He stressed the importance of focusing on the positive qualities in people, as opposed to treating them as a "bag of symptoms" (Hoffman, 1988, p. 109).

Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. Referring to "need gratification" as the most important single principle underlying all development, Maslow adds that "the single, holistic principle that binds together the multiplicity of human motives is the tendency for a new and higher need to emerge as the lower need fulfills

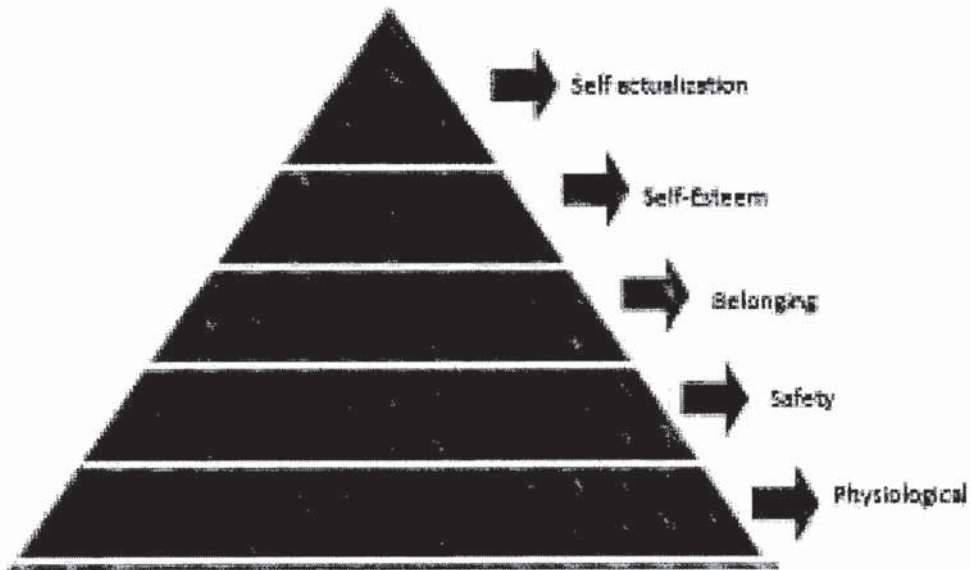
itself by being sufficiently gratified" (1968, p. 55). Maslow's Theory of Motivation includes a division of the levels of needs in each human.

These needs are organized in a hierarchy that begins with the need to stay alive. Each need contains a motivation that is used to fill that need. According to this theory, people seek higher needs, when lower needs are fulfilled. Once a lower level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a source of satisfaction. Needs are motivators when they are unsatisfied. This order reflects differences in the relative strength of each need. The lower a need is in the hierarchy, the greater is its strength because when a lower-level need is activated (as in the case of extreme hunger or fear for one's physical safety), people will stop trying to satisfy a higher-level need (such as esteem or self-actualization) and focus on satisfying the currently active lower-level need (Maslow, 1987).

### **The Original Hierarchy of Needs' Five-Stage Model**

The original hierarchy of needs' five stage-model includes:

- 1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
- 2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, and freedom from fear.
- 3. Social Needs - belongingness, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
- 4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, and respect from others.
- 5. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.



Maslow posited that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy: "It is quite true that man lives by bread alone — when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other (and "higher") needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still "higher") needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency (Maslow 1943, p. 375).

Changes to the original five-stage model were developed by Maslow during the 1960's and 1970s. It is important to note that Maslow's (1943- 1954) five/stage model has been expanded to include cognitive and aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970a) and later transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970b). Below is the expanded hierarchy of needs:

- 1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.
- 2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.

- 3. Social Needs - Belongingness and Love, - work group, family, affection, relationships, etc.
- 4. Esteem needs - self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility, etc.
- 5. Cognitive needs - knowledge, meaning, etc.
- 6. Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.
- 7. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.
- 8. Transcendence needs - helping others to achieve self actualization.

We have to consider that during war people's needs are unfulfilled. People, regardless of their social status, political affiliations and personal needs, share a common situation 'the war'. All their needs do not follow the previous hierarchy; the normal conditions that usually exist to fulfill those needs are challenged at the same time. "The need for safety is seen as an active and dominant mobilizer of the organism's resources only in emergencies, *e. g.*, war, disease, natural catastrophes, crime waves, societal disorganization, neurosis, brain injury, chronically bad situation" (Green, 2000).

During the Lebanese war, the Lebanese citizen had to cope with the dictates of war and was highly motivated, in the quest to have security, to belong and to have self esteem.

### **Degree of Relative Satisfaction**

Perhaps there is no scientifically acceptable way to determine what a need is, or how it is linked to behavior. The logic of using needs to describe behavior eventually becomes tautological. "...almost any behavior can be referenced to a

need as the cause of the behavior, and in turn, when someone has these needs, they cause the behavior. The logic is circular and does not provide any real explanation of the behavior” Maslow (p. 207).

Maslow argues that “If one need is satisfied, the other one emerges” (1943, p. 389). This statement may be misleading, Maslow explains, because most members of our society who are normal are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time. A more realistic description of the hierarchy would be in terms of percentages. A person may be 85% satisfied within physiological needs, 70% with safety needs, 40% with self-esteem needs .....As for the concept of emergence of a new need after satisfaction of the previous, this emergence is gradual. For instance, if pre-potent need A is satisfied only 10 per cent: then need B may not be visible at all. However, as this need A becomes satisfied 25 per cent, need B may emerge 5 per cent, as need A becomes satisfied 75 per cent, need B may emerge 10 per cent, and so on.

Maslow continues, “Reversals of the average order of the hierarchy are sometimes observed. Also it has been observed that an individual may permanently lose the higher wants in the hierarchy under special conditions. There are not only ordinarily multiple motivations for usual behavior, but in addition many determinants other than motives”<sup>26</sup>. The war is considered a special condition. People’s priorities change during the war because the war poses much threat. Their respective needs are not only to be safe, but also to feel good and to have high self-esteem as well as to value their country. There are certain conditions that are required for the basic need satisfaction. Danger to these conditions is considered almost a danger to the basic needs themselves. Conditions like freedom of speech, freedom to defend one’s self, justice, order in society, are examples of

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<sup>26</sup> IBID

the pre-conditions for the basic need satisfaction. Threatening such conditions will lead to an emergence response:

These conditions are not an end in themselves but they are almost so since they are so closely related to the basic needs, which are apparently the only ends in themselves.

These conditions are defended because without them the basic satisfactions are quite impossible or at least, severely endangered (Maslow. 1943, p. 384).

The most important factor is how close those conditions are to the basic needs. If they are very close, they are conscious desires and they have a very close relationship with the basic needs, so fulfilling them is like fulfilling the basic needs themselves. According to Maslow (1943, pp 81-86), a conscious motivator in our daily life is considered to be relatively important or unimportant according to how close it is to the basic need. A desire for an ice-cream might be an indirect expression of a desire for love. If so, then this desire becomes an extremely important motivator; if the desire is only to cool the mouth, then the motivation becomes unimportant.

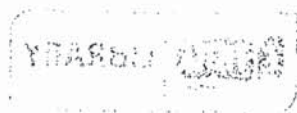
Listening to the political song during the war was an indirect expression for a desire of self-esteem and a sense of belonging as well as an expression of love and loyalty for country. A song in general as stated previously is a good motivational tool and affects people's moods and emotions. The leftist political song took on a much more important role; not only did it affect people's emotions, but it was one of the few tools during the war that reminded people about human values and the importance of one's country.

Clinical psychologists found that any behavior has not only one motivator but many motivators; any behavior tends to be determined by several or all the needs simultaneously, rather than by only one of them:

Within the sphere of motivational determinants any behavior tends to be determined by several or *all* of the basic needs simultaneously rather than by only one of them...Eating may be partially for the sake of filling the stomach, and partially for the sake of comfort and amelioration of other needs. One may make love not only for pure sexual release, but also to convince one's self of one's masculinity, or to make a conquest, to feel powerful, or to win more basic affection (Green, 2000, p. 31).

Listening to the leftist political song specifically during the war was different from listening to any other entertainment. It was partially for the sake of changing one's mood and mostly for the sake of comfort, to have self-esteem and to belong to a country that needed to maintain a positive image in people's mind. The lyrics used in these songs boosted the morale of people and compensated for the atrocities of war. Marcel Khalife's song "Inni Ikhtartouka Ya Watani", meaning (I Chose You, My Homeland) is a good example. It says;

I chose you my homeland  
 Lovingly and willingly  
 I chose you my homeland  
 Secretly and openly  
 I chose you, so let my age renounce me  
 As long as you will remember me  
 My wonderful homeland  
 My heart, you are ever green  
 For all that sorrow apparent in my eyes  
 My heart, you are ever a rebel  
 Even when my mornings turn into nights





I came in the time of low tide,  
 And in the height of exhaustion  
 I came, a downpour of force and anger

The homeland during the war was not wonderful at all, but Marcel Khalife's song made it so.

According to Alfred Adler (1938) an Austrian psychologist and founder of the 'Individual<sup>27</sup> School in Psychology', "People have in general a need or a desire for stable and high evaluation of themselves, of self respect or self-esteem and for the esteem of others. They strive for strength, achievement, confidence, independence and freedom, as well as recognition, attention, importance and appreciation". In this sense, the leftist political song was an important motivator for people during the war, to boost their morale and self-esteem as well as for the artists who produced it.

### **Reversal of the Hierarchy of Basic Needs**

Depending on the situation and the person, the hierarchy of needs is not always followed in its original order, for several reasons. One of those reasons is that for some people, self-esteem is more important than love. This is a common reversal in the hierarchy of needs, since people who are loved are strong and self-confident. People who lack love seek self-esteem, for the sake of love rather than for self-esteem itself.

"There are other, apparently innately creative people in whom the drive to creativeness seems to be more important than any other counter-determinant. Their creativeness might appear not as self-actualization released by basic satisfaction, but in spite of lack of basic satisfaction" (Maslow, 1943, p. 383).

This is the state of mind of an artist. A musician prefers to play music than eat. His priorities are different and the hierarchy of needs to him is reversed. Maslow continues by

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<sup>27</sup> A psychological method or science founded by the Viennese psychiatrist Alfred Adler. It is a holistic approach based of the individual's needs, desires, interests and growth.

saying that even if all our needs are satisfied, we still have a tendency as a human being to be unsatisfied unless we fulfill what we are fitted for. A musician must make music, a poet must write in order to be happy. This is called self-actualization. "The desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming"<sup>28</sup>.

To the artist, composing a song during the war, is what makes his personality, and is his reason for living. The war will give him a greater motivation to live and do what he can do best.

Finally, we have to consider the leftist political song as a good motivational tool for the Lebanese leftist parties that used it through their artists to motivate people. Karim Mroue<sup>29</sup> interviewed for the purpose of this study said:

People love to listen to political songs, which makes the communication process easier. The political song was a major communication tool not only to spread the ideology of the communist party but also to spread culture and thoughts.

To conclude, according to Maslow's motivation/content theory the leftist political song can be considered a motivational tool during the Lebanese war, that was used as a need by people in order to fulfill self-esteem and belonging to their country, the artists who produced it in order to fulfill their creativity and self actualization and the leftists parties in order to attract an audience or popular support.

The following chapter is dedicated to explaining the research methods used in order to define the leftist political song and to investigate the role it played during the war from the point of view of the artists who produced it as well as from the people's point of view.

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<sup>28</sup> IBID

<sup>29</sup> A communist leader, had the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Communist Party during the war.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

Part one of this chapter explains why a qualitative research was conducted and lists the research questions. Part two is a brief description of the research methods that were utilized.

A qualitative research approach was deemed best for this study since the topic of the Lebanese political song is yet unexplored and can be best uncovered from the insights of the artists that were part of the work itself. As previously mentioned, the study explores the reasons behind the emergence of the leftist political song. It analyzes the role of the Lebanese communist party and other leftist parties in supporting the artists that produced this type of songs, and their role in using this particular genre as a motivator and a communication tool to mobilize their followers. The relationship between the political engagement of the artists and the existence of this song is highlighted; also the role of the artists in using his song as a communication tool in order to make a change and motivate people in the Lebanese society is examined. This study intends to explore the reasons behind the relative disappearance of this song after the end of the war as well as public opinion regarding the existence of this song and its relative disappearance today. Finally, this study suggests considering the political song not only as “a product of the war culture” and a tool to understand social conflict, reconciliation and transformation but also as an artistic format represented by all its elements (lyrics, melody and music arrangement).

## Research Questions

To investigate the above queries, the following questions were addressed:

1. Does the political song reflect or symbolize a war culture, a socio-political environment or an artistic expression by the producer?
2. Is there an interplay of influence between the art (political song), and the ideological/socio-political environment of the artist (singer, writer, composer, producer?)
3. Is the political leftist song sustainable, or is it just a temporary phenomenon that existed under war circumstances?

In order to answer the research questions, qualitative naturalistic methodology was conducted. A qualitative naturalistic methodology is a detailed study that allows the researcher to investigate the time and the socio-political context of the leftist political song by observing the artists who produced it and the people under study in their natural setting. The natural setting is referred to as the “field”. This research, also called “fieldwork”, deals better with human experiences. Qualitative research seeks to understand the what, how, when, and where of an event or an action; it ascertains the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of events or actions rather than filling a questionnaire that does not provide all the necessary details. This methodology generates a plausible analysis.

“Qualitative research is also referred to as naturalistic research or inquiry (Taylor, 1977) into everyday living. Direct observations are made of human behavior in everyday life. Drawing on Symbolic Interaction Theory (Blumer, 1969), naturalistic researchers believe that gaining knowledge from sources that have “intimate familiarity” (Lofland, 1976) with

an issue is far better than the “objective” distancing approach that supposedly characterizes quantitative approaches” (Haworth, 1984).

## Research Methods

The research used the following techniques:

1. An Audio-Visual recording of Semi-structured interviews<sup>30</sup> with the main artists who contributed to the making of these songs, (Ziad Rahbani, Marcel Khalife, Khaled el Haber and Ahmad Kaabour) and with Karim Mroue (a communist leader) and Abido Bacha, a journalist who wrote a book in addition to several articles in local newspapers about the political song, and wrote the lyrics to many of these songs. Semi-structured interviews are conducted usually with a fairly open framework which allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information. Not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues.

The aim of the interviews is to analyze the context (socio-political environment) that created this type of songs and to investigate if this song is being produced today, years after the end of the Lebanese civil war. It is important to note that usually semi-structured interviews are conducted in order to understand the point of view of the interviewee and to get as much information as needed. It is also important to mention that the common questions were addressed to all participants during the semi-structured interviews, but also

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<sup>30</sup> A type of interviews used in research. It is an open interview allowing new ideas to be generated.

different questions were asked to each interviewee taking into consideration his standing and contribution to the leftist political song.

Main questions asked in the semi-structured interviews

1. What is a political song?
2. What is the difference between the leftist political song and other political songs?
3. What were the reasons behind the emergence of the leftist political song during the Lebanese war?
4. What is the aim of the Lebanese leftist song? Was it a motivational tool or a communication tool?
5. How has the public of this song differed from the time of the Lebanese war to today's public?
6. What is the role that the Lebanese Communist Party played in the emergence of this song?
7. Did the political engagement of the artists (being leftists) lead to the existence of this song?
8. What are the reasons that make few leftist political songs in particular memorized and adopted by people from opponent political affiliations?

2. An Audio recording of a Focus group<sup>31</sup> with Lebanese participants from different confessional and political affiliations and age, to investigate if this song is still popular today as it was during the war. The sample was a purposeful sample selected carefully to provide a credible representation of Lebanese sectarian and political characteristics and divisions. The focus group consisted of fourteen people. Two age groups were chosen. The first age group ranged from 40-50. It consisted of six Christians: two of them were leftists and four belonged to different "Right" parties and one Muslim with no political affiliation. This entire category was familiar with and knew the details of the leftist political song and the artists

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<sup>31</sup> A form of qualitative research, in which, a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards the topic of research.

who produced it, with the exception of one Christian lady who barely knew one or two songs for Marcel Khalife that had no political theme. The second age group grew up after the war and is in its 20's. It consisted of two Muslims, one with no political affiliation and another one belonging to 'Hezbollah' and five Christians: two with no political affiliation, one leftist and the last two belonged to the "Lebanese forces" party. Both groups have participants from different sectarian groups and political affiliations (left and right). The aim of the focus group was to test if people are familiar with this song and to investigate if people are still interested in listening to this type of songs today, whether they are familiar with it or not.

#### Focus Group Composition

Participant	Age	Gender	Religion	Occupation	Political Affiliation
1	42	male	Greek Orthodox	University Professor	Leftist
2	65	male	Maronite	Journalist	Leftist
3	55	male	Maronite	Journalist/Writer	Lebanese Nationalist
4	52	female	Greek Orthodox	House Wife	Rightist
5	53	male	Maronite	Editor in Chief Free Lebanon Radio	Rightist
6	45	male	Muslim	Radio Producer	None
7	32	male	Maronite	University Professor	Lebanese Forces
8	23	male	Muslim	Journalist	Hezbollah
9	22	male	Maronite	Student	Lebanese Forces
10	20	male	Maronite	Student	Lebanese Forces
11	26	male	Atheist	Film Maker	Leftist
12	28	female	Catholic Melkite	Graphic Designer	None
13	22	male	Catholic Melkite	Student	None

14	20	male	Muslim	Sound Engineer	None
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Below is the list of the questions that were addressed to the entire focus group. The preference was given to the younger age group to answer first, taking into consideration that they might not be as knowledgeable as the older age group in the subject of research and to avoid biased opinions after listening to the older age group

List of questions asked during the focus group session:

What is a political song?

What is the difference between a patriotic song and a political song?

What is the role of this song in your opinion? Does it affect you? How do you feel when listening to it?

What comes to your mind first when you listen to a political song? (Addressed to the older age group)

During the war, have you listened to political songs?

Are you familiar with the leftist political songs?

Are you familiar with the artists that produced this type of song? If so name a few.

Do you think a political song is a good motivator to engage people politically?

Do you still recall some songs? If so, can you sing any of these songs now?

In your opinion why this type of song is not being produced today?

In your opinion why radio stations are not broadcasting this type of songs anymore?

Would you like to listen to these songs today?

Please when you listen to a song I am going to play for you now, let me know if you recognize it and recognize who is the singer.

The following chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the research methods used in this research.



## **Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion**

As discussed in chapter one, Lebanese society is composed of several sectarian and confessional groups. Although during the war some militias tried to be politically oriented to non sectarian forces, but due to the sectarian composition of Lebanese society this approach did not work. Each Lebanese group had and still has not only its religious belief system and political affiliation but also its culture and life style in general leading to a diversified identity. For each group, the belonging to the country has a different approach, and the practice of most of life's experiences is diverse.

This chapter is divided into themes according to the arguments that were given by the interviewees from both the interviews and the focus group. It is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the answers to the major questions asked about the reasons behind the emergence and development of the leftist political song. The main point of the inquiry is to determine whether this song still exists today and the reasons that make the song memorable in general.

### **The political Song, a Tool to Define Identity**

There is no doubt that the leftist political song, like any other song, depicts the experiences people live and is definitely a tool to define their cultural and political identity.

During our interview, Khaled El Haber stated that "The political song has a unique identity. It is a direct and an indirect song at the same time: This is a song that mobilizes people and does not create incitement or it may create incitement without mobilizing people. You can listen to this song at home, in public or on the battlefield. As soon as this song is released, it will have its enemies. When it is sung, many people are against it. This is not the song of the 5% of the Lebanese people, those who rule and exploit the rest of the nation. It cannot be the song of the political power or the song of the sectarian leaders."

This song had a unique identity that represented the ideology of the leftist artists and parties as well as people who listened to it. Besides being a motivational tool, this song played a role in creating a leftist identity in a country where each sectarian group had its own identity. Lebanon suffered and is still suffering from a diversified identity. From this perspective, the political song is gratifying and it fulfilled the requirements of the social needs in “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs” that are belongingness, affection and love to the family, the community and of course to the country. The leftist political song uplifted those who had a specific outlook on their country and belief in that country by creating a strong sense of belongingness to the country.

When asked if the leftist political song can be considered a propaganda song for the leftist parties, Abido Bacha replied:

How can a song be a propaganda song when you’re singing for the martyrs? There is a soul and a feeling behind this song. This song used lyrics from Lebanese and Arab poets and also from international poets like Latin Americans. Since 1976, when the Syrian forces entered Lebanon until the Israeli invasion in 1982, producers of this song created a framework that could have lasted longer, but their problem was that they were afraid and left this project in the middle of the road when the Taef agreement was proclaimed”. Bacha continues” The political song is a song representing our internal clash, because the lyrics of this song are bold and repudiated. So far in the Arab world, we had a political satirical song” and here he mentioned the songs of Omar Zeeni, a social criticism song, a complaint song. Even Sheikh Imam’s songs are not political songs but they are political criticism songs. Only in Lebanon we had a political song because it was the result of a political conflict between the Lebanese themselves. The artists that contributed in the production of the leftist political song were not only artists but they were

practicing politics through art. They belonged to a unified structure that was not independent. They were not producing culture; they were producing politics through art and culture. One common fact is that all of them belonged to leftist parties, mainly the Lebanese Communist Party and the Organization of the Communist Action.

All the interviewees stated that this song was unique and committed to social justice and to the “cause” of the masses; its timing and content represented the identity of the artists who produced it and the politics and culture to which they belonged. The role of an artist is to transmit a message via a song, so how can he transmit a message that is against his beliefs. The aim and goal of the leftist political song will be discussed later in this chapter. It is important at this point to define the leftist political song according to the artists’ point of view and to how people understand it.

### **How Artists and People Define the Political Song**

As previously discussed in the literature review, several names and descriptions were given to the political song. To many scholars it is a propaganda song used during wars by governments or political parties in order to mobilize people. Others call it a protest song; sometimes it is called a revolutionary song. Usually a protest or revolutionary song is used during revolutions or during socio-political movements<sup>32</sup>. Before giving any definition about the leftist Lebanese political song that emerged during the Lebanese war, we have to mention that this song is not a patriotic song.

What was common in the answers given by the artists is that they all agreed that this is a “song” that follows the technical rules of song composition. Most of the interviewees objected when asked to define the political song, because they believed that its name was

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<sup>32</sup> The definitions and citations about these different terms were given in the literature review section

given by journalists during the war to differentiate it from the rest of the songs but they preferred not to categorize it. They deeply believe that this song is special and unique; they speak of it highly, especially because they highlight its content and lyrics. Mentioning that they used poems from very well known international and Arab writers, it was a new style of composition. What made it valuable are the “cause” and the message this song carried.

Marcel Khalife said: “When I started composing music to poems, I never thought that a song can be categorized into different categories, one for the war and another one for entertainment. All I knew is that there is a song. To me this song is humanitarian regardless of the direct political message it may have. I also wrote patriotic songs. If you consider the motherland political then yes from this perspective I wrote political songs. If politics is a general interpretation of human life then yes I wrote a political song”.

Ahmad Kaabour did not welcome the question and objected by saying: “I think we spent so much time trying to define and figure out this song. After all those years I have a reticence towards classifying songs into different categories political or non political. The matter is not that a group of people had an exclusive agency to produce this song. As far as I am concerned, I can decide to produce a song based on my beliefs and feelings towards a cause like the Palestinian cause for example or I can make a song that tells of the water pump in our building that is disturbing me and not allowing me to sleep. I believe that composing, writing and singing a song is far from ideologies. The ideologies have their political tools, tactics and alliances. Art is more genuine. If we want to categorize songs into political categories, then all songs are political. So let’s not define songs as political or non political. Let’s say this song is looking for a new artistic language in the lyrics, the music and the performance. It is a song that is biased towards the “martyr”, the “oppressed”, the people whose land is occupied and the defeated. It is a song that has its own artistic components. It is not a song that has a political theme; it is a song that has a

new language, a new tune, a revolutionary language initiated by revolution and love or any belief". According to Kaabour, classifying songs into different categories (political/non political) is inappropriate, and he prefers to classify songs according to the style and theme. To him he simply composed songs.

As for Ziad Rahbani, he believes that a political song is a regular song but its content is different. He said that "It is a song that talks about topics that are not mentioned usually in any regular song, like freedom, oppression, exploitation and racism. Since I started composing, I didn't restrict myself to love songs, in "Hali Taabani Ya Leila" (the situation is hard o Leila) Joseph Sakr is not talking about love at all with Leila, he is talking about social class difference. In "Nazel el Sourour" (The Pleasure Inn), I composed a hymn "Jayi Maa el Shaab el Masskin" (I Support the Oppressed); it is also a social class hymn and a patriotic hymn. Later "Ana Moush Kafer" CD (I am not a disbeliever) can be considered having political theme and in "Bima Inno" CD (Since it is), the song itself is a political song".

All of the interviewees affirmed that this song had a new artistic approach in the music composition (new rhythm, tempo and music orchestration) and lyrics if we want to compare it to the Lebanese song that was popular in the early seventies<sup>33</sup> and that it is a humanitarian song that talks about the poor, the martyrs, freedom, oppression, exploitation, and racism.

On the other hand, people in the focus group discussion had a different understanding of the political song. Most of them associated the song with the artists who produced it. They also confused it with the propaganda and protest song, with the exception of the leftist participants who had a clear understanding of what is a political song and its respective

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<sup>33</sup> The characteristics of the Lebanese song were mentioned in the literature review.

meaning. One of the rightist participants also gave a very clear explanation of the political song since he was a writer and journalist. He said:

1.3<sup>34</sup>. It is a cultural artifact and powerful tool. It is a song that can travel or affect all people, even opponents. It has a cause, a doctrine. It represents all people no matter what their political affiliations are.

Below is a summary of the answers that were given by people during the focus group discussion.

1.14. I don't know, but it reminds me of Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife.

1.13. It is related to a political party, in order to mobilize people.

1.12. It discusses political and social issues, delivers a message or criticizes.

1.11. There are different categories of political songs. I am only familiar with songs that were written in a certain political or social situation.

1.8. It has a social and political content. Produced on behalf of a certain party to mobilize and motivate people.

1.10. It can be a patriotic song or a song to praise a party in order to mobilize people.

1.9. It aims to mobilize people, or a social criticism song (e.g. 'Yabroud' song)

1.5. Originally from Latin America, Europe and America. It is popular song expressing culture. In Lebanon we have political songs produced by parties (propaganda songs) and we have songs that are related to humanitarian causes.

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<sup>34</sup> Please refer to the table in the research methods section to look for the contestants' profile. The coding of people's answers is listed as follows: first, the number of the question followed by the number of the participant. In this case, it was question one and participant number three.

1.4. It is a protest song that boosts the morale of the fighters. I am more familiar with the French political songs and I only know few songs of Marcel Khalife that don't have a political content.

1.2. It is a cultural artifact that intends to use the artistic elements of a song in order to create awareness and progress among people. It is not a parody that intends to incite people. The political song was produced throughout history by intellectuals and artists.

1.1. The political song is related to a political issue or cause that is expressed through a song to accomplish a certain political goal in order to change a situation, so it can be a revolutionary song. In Lebanon it was produced during the war by leftist's artists that belonged to the "National Movement"

1.6. A political song has a political message.

1.7. It is a song that was produced during the war by the different political parties that existed then.

The wide variety of answers is due to the composition of the focus group. Most of the people in the older age group are professional and work in a media environment. All the participants of the younger age group are university students, also most of their specialties are media related.

When did the leftist Lebanese political song emerge and what was the reason(s) behind its emergence will be discussed in the following section.

### **The Impact of the War: Timing and Reasons for the Emergence of the Lebanese Leftist Political Song**

The propagation of the leftist political song coincided with the beginning of the war and the existence of a very critical political situation. That's what all the interviewees agreed on. But in reality, it started just before the beginning of the war. According to Abido Bacha, the political song started before the Lebanese war in 1975. "Khaled El Haber started singing while he was doing his military service in 1973; Ahmad Kaabour started singing French revolutionary songs during his teenage years (Moustaki, Brel, Ferra...)".

Marcel Khalife also started writing and composing songs shortly before the war. He said: "My first album came out just before the beginning of the war and people liked it a lot, but it wasn't until later that journalists started calling the songs we wrote "political songs"".

It was Karim Mroue who gave a clear explanation about the timing and reasons for the emergence of this song. He said: "We were not the first in the region to produce this kind of songs; Egyptians and Iraqis started before the Lebanese, especially with Sheikh Imam in Egypt. As for us in 1974 the Communist Party was preparing for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and wanted to make a change, so the decision was to celebrate by having not only a political event but a cultural one as well; the cultural preparations included lectures, poetry and what attracts people most and what people like the most: songs, especially "the political song". I can say that it was during that period that the political song in Lebanon started to become popular. The communist party launched it and when the war started it was a major incentive for us in the communist party to work on spreading it. For us it was a major communication tool not only to disseminate the ideology of the party, but also to spread its culture and thoughts."



So the war was the major reason of the propagation of this song, but what is obvious is that those leftist artists were influenced by the Latin American and French political song, even before the civil war.

Ziad Rahbani mentioned that “The political song became famous in its modern form in Latin America and in the USA with Bob Dylan and Frank Zappa who talked more about social issues”.

What influenced the makers of the political song is perhaps their political engagement and what facilitated their production is the support of the leftist parties and the public at large. In the following section we will explore the role of the leftist’s parties: was it a moral or financial support? To what extent the Communist Lebanese Party and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) played a role in the support and propagation of this song?

#### **The Role of the Communist and Leftist Parties in the Emergence of the Song: their Moral and Financial Support.**

One of the study’s major investigations was to ascertain the type of support from the leftist parties to the artists and how it helped promote their songs. Did they finance concerts or cassettes (by that time we didn’t have CDs)? Did they take advantage of such productions and used this song as motivational tool?

One of the strategies of the Lebanese Communist Party was to organize cultural activities.

When asked what kind of support the party gave to those artists Karim Mroue replied:

“We used to organize events and festivals, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party in 1974 lasted 10 days, thousands of people attended and it included all sorts of cultural activities as well as the political song. In 1976, the communist party supported and organized Marcel Khalife’s performance in France during the humanitarian festival which was a turning point in Marcel Khalife’s career.”

After that, they organized concerts all over the world; this made Khalife famous worldwide. Therefore, the communist party helped spread the political song. The Israeli invasion in 1982 also helped in promoting this song. The conflict had shifted from being local and took a larger dimension, a resistance against the Israeli aggression.

Marcel Khalife was the party's favorite son; he was probably the only artist that was promoted by the party locally and on an international level, more than any other artist, and that facilitated his worldwide exposure. Karim Mroue referred to him a lot during the interview. The author had been witness to discussions among artists who agreed that Khalife was given preference over others. Of course Marcel Khalife's compositions were of high artistic value; they eventually made him a famous artist.

No one mentioned the financial support of the Lebanese Communist Party, not even Karim Mroue. When asked who financed some of his concerts or cassettes, Khalife said: "The Party didn't have the means to do so; on the contrary, I supported the party in many of my concerts by raising money to build hospitals and cultural centers in order to support the party's organizations".

Yet during this research and during personal conversations with members of the Lebanese Communist Party the author was told that communist countries especially, Eastern European countries like the Soviet Union and the Ukraine used to subsidize the Lebanese communist party for musical education and to organize festivals and concerts. This international umbrella expanded the audience of this song and gave the artists an international exposure.

It was only Abido Bacha who mentioned the financial support when he pointed out that the Palestinian Resistance paid a lot of money during the Lebanese war in supporting the political song and many other cultural forms like books, cinema and theater. Bacha said

that during the war, the Palestinian Resistance used to transfer money to a liaison, a very well known lady at that time, and it was through her that the payments were made. He insisted on saying that: “Financing this song didn’t mean controlling its content. It was a free song and the artists that produced it were also free”. They were never asked by the parties to produce a song for a special occasion or for any cause, it was always a personal initiative.

Khaled El Haber who is the son of a leader in the Lebanese Communist Party did not get direct financial support from the party; He had more support from the public than from the party. He said: “I never had direct financial support from the party. The party for sure was an incubative environment. I was an active member in the party for only one year, and then I left, but I consider myself a communist who is committed perhaps more than any active member. The public of the party supported us, especially in the beginning when the ‘left’ was in its golden age and that gave us an important push. In every adventure we had a crazy person who used to finance our project. When I did “Ahmad al Zatar”<sup>35</sup>, we needed a lot of money for recording since we had to pay for a philharmonic orchestra. We made a deal with the PLO to buy certain number of our cassettes in order to cover the expenses. In” Hina Yasmoutou Al Moughanni”<sup>36</sup> (While the singer is Silent), it was Dr. Abdel Rahman al Labban<sup>37</sup> who produced it. We didn’t have production companies. I don’t think Rotana<sup>38</sup> would be interested in producing an album for me”. Marcel Khalife before him mentioned that it was the artists who helped the Communist Party financially and intellectually, he said: “I know as a fact that a lot of people joined the communist party because of our songs. Many people fought because of our songs. Of course we helped the

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<sup>35</sup> The title of an Album for Khaled El Haber

<sup>36</sup> The title of an Album for khaled el Haber

<sup>37</sup> A deceased Lebanese neurologist who was a close friend to Ziad Rahbani

<sup>38</sup> The largest Arabic entertainment company. Owned by Walid Bin Talal (Saudi Prince). It includes a film production company, a magazine, TV channels, music channels (Rotana Radio), a record label and others.

communist party, even financially sometimes; we used to give concerts in order to raise money for the party's organizations like the federation of democratic youth or the committee for women's rights".

As for Ahmad Kaabour, he was bitter. He is probably the only artist that feels underestimated and blames the Leftist parties for not sufficiently supporting him. He said: "I have to be frank with you; this incubative environment is repulsive to me now. Did it support us? Let me talk about myself. When I started singing it wasn't because anybody told me to do so. I produced my albums and I used to sell them personally. I used to belong to the "national movement" and despite all its drawbacks and mistakes, I didn't take advantage and benefit from what you're calling incubative environment. I never asked for financial support for any of my productions; this never happened. In most of my concerts I volunteered and presented them for free to the leftist audience or the public. I sang because I believed and loved what I sang, I was really committed. Finally, there was no financial relationship between the leftist parties and my productions". When asked if the leftist parties used his songs to attract supporters and spread their ideologies, he replied:

"Yes for a certain period of time, the leftist parties were in need of a platform to motivate their public, so they used our songs as a tool. During that period, the left benefited from attracting a bigger audience, because people used to wait more for the artist than for the secretary-general of the party. That period was the golden age of the political song. Later I got depressed from the situation so I produced children's songs and I dedicated my time to cinema and TV".

What Kaabour stated is that the Communist Party needed a tool to motivate its public and the political song fulfilled that need. This statement reminds us that the political song can

be used as a motivator to attract the public during crises and is a good reminder of the motivational theory used in the theoretical framework of this research.

Ziad Rahbani had a similar opinion. He said that the party “supported artists like Marcel Khalife and Khaled el Haber by organizing international tours for them”. When asked if the party was a major reason for the emergence of the leftist political song, he replied: “Not at all, the party followed the trend and adopted it. Ahmad Kaabour who was famous with “Ounadikom” belonged to the organization of communist action”. Ziad was trying to recall the main contributors to this song. He continued “I have to mention Issam el Hajj Ali who produced nice political songs and was not appreciated, may be one day he’ll be”. Rahbani believes that the party was biased towards some artists; he mentioned it indirectly during the interview.

To summarize, the Lebanese Communist Party launched this song and used it as a motivational tool to attract its public. It organized numerous cultural events and festivals and that was part of the strategy but there never was any direct financial support. The Communist Party received donations from the Soviet Union, the French Communist Party and other countries. These subsidies were part of the political support given by the above countries to their allies. On the other hand, the PLO financed some of the artists’ productions because it was part of their tactics and because they received substantial donations from all over the world for the same reasons.

All the artists that produced this song were leftists. Was it a good enough reason? Usually artists express their beliefs through art. As mentioned earlier, each artist expresses his cultural and socio-political identity through his productions. Were our leftist artists aware of this reality? We will find out in the next section.

### **The Artist's Political Engagements and Ideologies**

All interviewees agreed that the artists' political engagement and ideologies definitely contributed to the making and the production of the leftist political song. When asked the same question, Marcel Khalife replied:

Of course because my worries were not only to make a song that was artistically beautiful, I was supposed to have a broad cultural understanding of the different artistic forms like poetry, painting, cinema, theater. That cultural milieu existed and was very active with the left. They organized many discussions and lectures with writers, poets, painters, journalists and producers. Hence this milieu affected me positively and increased my awareness and expanded my artistic knowledge. It had a direct impact on my choice of lyrics and compositions. Don't forget that I am a leftist, though I am not an active member of the communist party, but I am engaged in what affects people more than any political opinion or stand.

Abido Bacha went a little bit further in explaining the reasons behind the Lebanese leftist song. He said that the artists did not produce these songs just because they were leftist but "because the leftist movement is a humanitarian movement that seeks social justice. Since the French revolution all movements against injustice were conducted by leftists. Another reason is that the leftist parties organized a lot of cultural events, and that's why the leftist political song is important, because it intersected with a political project". The rightist parties didn't produce a political song in Bacha's view "all what they did were parodies"<sup>39</sup>.

For Khaled el Haber, the answer was similar. He said: "The major reason that made me produce this style of songs lies in my belief system; I sympathize with people, I

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<sup>39</sup> A satirical imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, genre or song with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.

sympathize with humanitarian causes, with the poor and the oppressed. I acquired this belief system since I was raised in a communist family that introduced me to the international political song and then the Arabic political song that was produced in Egypt by Sheikh Sayed Darwich and later Sheikh Imam and to the Lebanese song with the Rahbanis in some of their productions. I was also influenced by the French political song and the American and Latin American political song.”

All those artists were cultured and they were affected by their political environment. Ziad Rahbani, a story teller, a multi-talented and satirical artist always had his own unique answers. Returning to the subject at hand, when asked if the Lebanese Communist Party influenced him or asked him to compose any song, Rahbani replied laughing: “They asked me to sign a petition to support a song that was banned by the government”, Marcel Khalife’s song “Ana Yousouf Ya Abi” (I am Yousouf O Father). Because of this song Khalife was arrested since he used a poem by Mahmoud Darwich that had a verse from the Koran). He also mentioned that the party favored Marcel Khalife. He continued: “I composed two hymns, one for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lebanese communist party “Ya Riyah Al Chaab” (O Nation’s Wind) and “Nashid El Oumamiyi” (The Nationalism Hymn) and both were a personal initiative”.

Besides the international and local support of the leftist parties, what made this song popular were the wide Pan-Arab audiences and the Lebanese Diaspora, the characteristics of which are examined in the following section.

### **The Audience Then and Now**

The early performances of those young artists took place in unusual settings; they didn't perform on stage like most artists do. They performed on the streets, in schools, in hospitals and even in Palestinian camps. There are pictures of Khaled El Haber, Ahmad Kaabour and Marcel Khalife singing in front of a small group of students. It was a new approach for the Lebanese audiences. Everything about this song was new; the lyrics, the musical composition and even the way it was presented to the public. This song became popular among the leftist public and the youth in general. During the war it became popular not only in Lebanon but throughout the Arab countries and different parts of the world. This propagation was due to three major reasons. The first was the support of the leftist parties all over the world to their partisans. This support was both financial and cultural aimed at maintaining and increasing public support. The second reason was the Lebanese Diaspora's desire to be linked to the homeland and to participate somehow in the struggle, so they also supported the parties they belonged to through financial means and through organizing musical concerts. What was more attractive and motivating than listening to the political song during the war? Last but not least, the oppressed Arab publics needed an outlet. There was barely any freedom of speech in most Arab countries. In Egypt, Sheikh Imam was put in jail several times. In Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria the situation was not better. Until today when Marcel Khalife has concerts in Jarach or in Algeria he attracts huge audiences. He still voices the people's concerns and speaks of their struggles in simple, expressive and straightforward lyrics.

Khaled el Haber explained that even with the wide exposure this song had during the war it had a media blackout. Few radio stations broadcast this song, the only radio station that promoted this song is Sawt El Shaab or "Voice of The People", owned by the Lebanese Communist Party. El Haber said: "Originally the public that was leftist was composed of



students and youth. Usually any new style of singing is supported and spread by the youth. Then later this song started to spread and was not only limited to the leftist public. Obviously the public of this song is the public exposed to this song. We suffered from media blackout, but people who listened to this song became addicted to this song; it became a need to them and they couldn't live without it. There were some people that were against it from a social class and political perspective yet they came and listened."

That was during the war but who is the audience today?

According to Marcel Khalife, today's audience is diversified. When asked who is listening to his songs today he replied: "Believe it or not the audience today is really wide. You see people from different age groups attending our concerts, the grand-parents and the younger generation as well. Many of the songs I wrote are still popular because of their content. Rita in the song is still young and has beautiful eyes, your passport is still important to you (referring to both of his songs "Rita" and "Jawaz Safar" meaning passport). On the contrary, today this issue is more important, people are still looking for a passport." Ya Bahriyi" (O Sailors) became a classic, a folk song, interpreted by thousands of people in the Arab world and that's what makes a folksong important because people sing it and repeat it for so many years until they forget who originally wrote it." There is little doubt that Marcel Khalife's songs are popular all over the Arab countries. If you ask people who composed political songs during the war, the first composers that come to their mind are Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife then they mention "Ounadikom" for Ahmad Kaabour not remembering who the singer is. Khaled el Haber is particularly popular among the leftist audience.

Why do people listen to this song today? Abido Bacha has this answer: "People are nostalgic; they listen to these songs because some of them apply it to the situation today.

Most of them don't. People listen to this song today only to remember the other meaning that this song gave to life's events back then and not for anything else. Why is it important to listen to this song today? It is important, because we can evaluate it from a distance. Those artists knew for a certain period of time their respective goals and they succeeded in reaching them. Later they said farewell to the most important political and artistic experience not only in the history of Lebanon but also in the history of the region."

Are people still familiar with this song today? Do they recognize the artists that produced it? The research garnered different answers. Below are the answers to both questions asked during the focus group discussions:

5.7. When this respondent was asked why he is familiar with this song although he belongs to the Lebanese forces he replied, because this song is humanitarian. It deals with social issues. "I am with it on a social level not on a political level. The Lebanese forces made a revolution against the Phalangist Party (Kataeb), and this is a revolutionary song".

5.14. and 5.12. Are familiar only with Ziad Rahbani's songs.

5.9. Is familiar with Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife's songs

5.5. Is familiar with Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife's songs. He said that even though I was politically against them, but I loved their songs and style.

Interviewees 13, 10, 4 are not familiar with the artists at all. Interviewees 11, 8 3, 2, 1 6 and 7 are familiar with the artists and know the songs by heart, even though some of them belonged to the extreme right parties.

### Why Listen to the Song?

During the focus group interview, I asked people why they listen to a song anyway, whether it a song is political or not. These were the answers:

3.13. A song is an entertaining tool. People listen to different styles of music according to their mood.

3.8. To entertain, meditate or relax. Also for special occasions (weddings), also to disseminate political messages and spread awareness about social issues.

3.11. It is an artistic form; songs that are composed with feelings and adopt a cause affect people more than entertaining songs.

3.10. The role of a song is cultural. Various people listen to the type of songs that fits their personality: you can tell the character of a person by observing the style of songs he/she listens to.

3.5. It is an artistic form. Each song creates a certain mood. Listening to a song is dangerous especially if it has violent words. Most of today's songs unfortunately are purely entertaining.

3.3. In our region, I think we need to group songs in two eras: before and after Rotana (a pan-Arab production house), since Rotana is responsible for producing commercialized songs. You can tell if a population is sophisticated when you listen to its songs, a song is a measurement tool for civilization. The tune and rhythm affect people a lot. A song can be considered a weapon or tool to deliver any intended message.

3.2. Listening to a song is related to the mood of the listener. A song may hold many roles: entertaining, protesting...

3.1. A song is the first tool of mass communication. Early civilizations used songs to transmit ideas and messages (verbal communication). We memorize better something that carries a tune. The intonation of the Koran's verses is a good example. Songs facilitate the transmission and retention of a certain idea. It holds and reflects a social mood and value and can mobilize people. It is important to mention that today we live in the era of visual communication, so the image is more important than the sound.

N.B. the rest of the interviewees said that a song is entertaining.

### **The Goal of the Leftist Political Song**

The authors and composers of the leftist political song were trained musicians. All of them studied music theory. Each one of them thinks of his compositions in a different way.

According to Burkhalter, biographical research teaches us that "we always reconstruct our biography (career) out of the present. We bundle, categorize, construct and reconstruct" (Burkhalter, 2013)

I asked each of them a different question to understand how they personally evaluate their own songs.

Marcel Khalife talked about his background and choices, he said: "Besides being a composer and singer, I have an academic background. I taught "oud" (Lute) at Lebanese conservatory and wrote many music books about the study of oud or "oud etudes". My experience in composing and singing started before the Lebanese war. My original intention was to express myself through music and not to sing for the sake of singing. That's why I carefully chose the lyrics of my songs from well known Arab poets like Mahmoud Darwich and many others".

In his book "La Critique D'Art" Andre Richard (1968) discusses the different art criticism schools. One of these schools is the Marxist school. According to Marx, art has a social function. Art cannot be done for the sake of art only. The artist therefore has a duty towards his community. Marxism does not isolate the artist from his society. The artist expresses the conscience of the society.

Khaled El Haber emphasized the relationship between the reality that the artist experiences and the product itself. He said: "I don't think there is any production which is not based on reality or on a certain incident, but it has to be delivered in a refined and sentimental manner like a dream. Reality stimulates us to write, compose and sing, with additional care in executing the previous steps in an esthetic way".

Ziad Rahbani was technical in his approach. He highlighted the difference between composing music during the war and the composition of a political song and linked both compositions to the socio-political environment. He said: "Words are more effective than music by itself. Music does not relate at all to war or peace. During the war, immediately after "Akar" building collapsed by a vacuum bomb, I composed a piece called "Min kil bidd" (For sure). It was composed on a major scale which is a scale that creates a positive mood and happiness. There is no logic when it comes to music; I mean the relationship between music and war, no relationship at all. If the political song parallels some social or political event, it becomes part of a public movement, but if you take it by itself as a song that drive people to act, I really doubt that it is related to a particular event. If the direct speech or address doesn't affect people, how could lyrics put to music do that? In a song you have musical restrictions in the choice of the lyrics. When you are composing a song even if it is political, it is a song in all cases, that has artistic features; you need to have a rhyme, you need may need to sometimes pick a word that rhymes instead of what you were intending to use".

Ahmad Kaabour has a different point of view. According to Kaabour the artistic value of a song is the most important issue: “What determines the value of what we wrote composed and sang is not what links the song to politics and the notion of ideology but rather its artistic components. Let’s say somebody composed a “bad” song about Palestine, do you think it will make it a good song?”

When asked if the political song was one of their tools of communication. Mroue replied: “We exaggerate if we pretend that it was one of our communication tools, we can say it helped and made the communication process easier, because when people listen to a song they sometimes don’t pay attention to the lyrics, but with a critical situation like the war, the lyrics become important in conveying the message. That’s why the role of the political song was promoted to the level of the political conflict. All the elements of the song, the lyrics, musical composition, arrangement and the voice become unified in order to serve the political conflict. Everything was used to serve the political conflict. Even our opponents used the same strategy. They also had their political songs and we all used these songs to create excitement or incitement, so it was definitely an effective tool to spread our ideology”.

Furthermore, he clarified his ideas by saying: “The lyrics in a song are not direct, most of the time it is poetry and poetry does not disseminate direct messages. Poetry creates ideas about an issue and that is the major role of a song”.

It is necessary to mention that music is a powerful tool, stronger than the lyrics. People usually memorize the tune first, and if they want to remember the lyrics of a song they start by reciting the tune. That’s why poetry combined with music is easier to remember.

Finally Abido Bacha compared the leftist political song with the oriental song by saying: “One of the major goals of the political song was to break the concept that the oriental song

was directly related to the singer; we say this is “Oum Khoulthoum” singing, for example. So the political song is a category of songs that highlights content. What is important is what this song is trying to say and not which singer is singing. Its importance is that it converged with the aim of a political reformist project which is the project of the “National Movement”.

It is true that the leftist political song adopted a new style of composition and that is what made it attractive in the first place. Everything in it was new; the lyrics, the music and especially those young bearded singers with their guitars. What was most attractive is that it belonged to communists. Did it attract the rest of the Lebanese population? That’s what we’re going to find out in the next section.

### **Lebanese Sectarianism: a Clash over National Affiliation**

The Lebanese citizen is free to choose the song that appeals to his/her ideas, ideologies and sentiments. As discussed earlier the Lebanese population is fragmented with multiple affiliations. Each song dealing with abstract terms whether composed by a leftist or not is likely to be received differently by people belonging to various political or religious groups. Each individual might get a different message from the same song.

Even though the artists had specific intentions each time they composed a song, the interpretation of their songs remained out of their hands. Marcel Khalife said:” I think I never wrote a song that had a direct political message. I know for a fact that a lot of my songs were exchanged and heard by people from different political affiliations; extreme left and extreme right. What was important in this song was the humanitarian message it carried.”

What were the circumstances that made him compose ‘Mountasibou El Kamati Amchi’ (I walk upright), Khalife replied:”I sang this song for the resistance that was fighting the

Israeli invasions during the war, its lyrics are written by Samih Al Kassem<sup>40</sup>. This song also became a very popular folk song, a hymn that anybody can interpret and enjoy; different people from different political affiliations used it”. As mentioned earlier, this song was used in a documentary for Bachir Gemayel (an extreme right wing politician and a militia leader who was assassinated as president-elect).

Although Ahmad Kaabour agreed that popular songs belong to all people, he was annoyed that people used his songs for political purposes. He said: “What makes a song popular and adopted by everybody is its artistic value and this is not annoying to me. What annoys me is when it is used for a political purpose. We can give as an example my song “Unadikom” (I call upon you). If you go to YouTube, you will notice that it is dedicated to Hassan Nasrallah, to Rafic Hariri, to Yasser Arafat. When Toufic Ziad<sup>41</sup> wrote ‘Ounadikom’, he didn’t indicate specific people. He wanted to talk about his land, his cause and addressed himself to the human conscience”.

Besides being popular, these songs were formed of abstract terms. That is why, like any other work of art, they can be interpreted according to the listeners convictions and political orientation. More so in Lebanon, where confessional and political lines are vividly drawn in the national consciousness.

### **The Political Song: Alienated from Today’s Radio**

Another major inquiry as mentioned before was to know why this song is no longer produced and broadcast. Included in the focus group were two Radio Station managers. The first one is the managing director of “Radio Free Lebanon” (owned by the Lebanese Forces) and the second one is the former Manager of “The Voice of the People” (owned by the Lebanese communist party). The following questions were addressed only to them.

<sup>40</sup> A famous communist Palestinian poet and journalist. Most of his writings were about the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation.

<sup>41</sup> Palestinian Politician, best known for his poetry of protest.



Why aren't radio stations broadcasting the leftist political song anymore? Did your radio station broadcast the leftist political song during the war?

8.5. During the war it was impossible for "Radio Free Lebanon" to broadcast leftist political songs since we were political opponents, with the exception of few songs for Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife. During the war we used to broadcast songs for Lebanese artists only. Today FM Radio stations are purely commercialized and they broadcast mainly what the production houses pay them to broadcast even though this activity is illegal. Another reason is that those artists are not producing new songs and part of Radio Station's strategy is to broadcast the latest releases.

8.2. In order to attract and satisfy the audience Radio stations broadcast songs that are popular and new. "The voice of People" is an exception; it used to and still broadcasts the leftist political song, because it is not a commercialized Radio Station and because it is that same station that supported those artists and made their songs popular. Finally "The Voice of People's" audience is still interested in listening to these songs.

### **The Leftist Political Song Today: Does it still Exit?**

To answer this question, the author asked the artists themselves if they are still producing a political song and if so what are they working on right now? The question was also asked to the respondents in the focus group and they gave interesting and realistic answers.

Today the leftist political song is not as present as it used to be during the war, may be not present at all. There is not a single reason for the disappearance of this song; in effect, many factors combined together made this song fade away. Below are the most important opinions that participants in the focus group stated.

7.14. Because there is no “cause” today that pushes those artists to produce songs about.

7.13. Those artists are not popular with the new generation. We simply don’t know most of them.

7.8. There is no market need for this song, from a commercial point of view. In reality the social and political situation is badly in need of such songs.

This song was never a commercialized song, but that there is a market need for this song today in Lebanon more than any other time. We still have many social causes and political issues that our government along with our civil society need to solve.

One of the participants blamed the artists themselves for not being visible. He clearly stated:

7.12. I blame the artists themselves for not being visible today. If they produce something good, I think they will have an audience.

7.11. I link the production of the leftist political song to a cultural movement that existed during the war and is not present today. Our generation is not interested in “culture”. Today’s causes are related to money and power.

7.5. It is a worldwide pattern; we have a regression in culture and art due to social media. This generation is not cultured at all, they want everything fast.

7.3. Nowadays the media themselves are more important than the content they deliver. The media, especially the giant media, are imposing on people a content that has no value and no cultural background. They want to keep people ignorant and just make money.

Our society lacks culture. Neither the government nor the media are investing in it. It is expensive. Our government has other priorities like national security which remains a

challenge. As for the media, competition brought more commercialization and financially driven agendas.

7.4. I don't know if the leftist's parties exist today in order for their artists to produce songs. There is no motivation for the artists to produce such songs.

The major communist sponsor collapsed. All communist parties around the world used to get their support from the Soviet Union. This is probably one of the reasons that made the Lebanese Communist Party weak lately. Besides that, a former communist said during the focus group that:

7.2. A confessional system does not produce a political song. How can a confessional system produce a political song? More than any time before, Lebanon is confessional and this is a major reason. The political environment affected a lot the production of the leftist political song.

9.4. I am not familiar with these songs, but if listening to them today is going to remind me of the war I'd rather not listen to them at all.

Many people today, like our participants do not want to be reminded of the war. We do not want to listen to the songs that remind us of the war, but we definitely need to have political songs that are more relevant to the present situation.

7.1. The society and political power are always challenged by Media. During the war there was a movement for change and this song was part of it. Today with the new Media, we might witness a change but it is not exactly like the previous one. I think the role that those leftist artists played ended. Today there is a new venture that is happening with the youth using innovative forms.

9.2. I don't listen to them anymore, and if I listen to them I'll laugh because the artists that produced these songs have changed and are doing or producing something else; they are working on music and making a revolution through music.

The trend of the leftist political song that existed during the Lebanese war may have vanished. Of course, if the same artists want to produce a political song today, they have to adapt it to the multimedia environment and to the young generation. This is what Rap and Hip-Hop music are doing today.

At this point, it is important to mention that all "the political criticism songs" that emerged during the civil war and until today praising or promoting a certain political regime are not included in this study, since they are not considered political songs according to the standards and norms of this study.

At the end of the focus group, four different songs (listed below) were played in order to test if the participants still remember them. -"Ounadikom" (I call upon you) for Ahmad Kaabour, -"Sobhi el Jiz" (a proper name) for Khaled el Haber, -"Mountassibou el Kamati Amchi" (I walk upright) and -"Nezha Rifiyi" (A provincial promenade) for Marcel Khalife.

Almost everybody recognized "Ounadikom".

Respondents from the new generation didn't recognize any of the above songs. They recognized Marcel Khalife because of his musical style.

Interviewees 2, 3, 1, 7, and 6 (participants that witnessed the war) recognized all the songs and remembered the lyrics.

Interviewees 4, 13, 10 didn't recognize any (participant 4 witnessed the war but is not familiar with the political song at all, as for participants 13 and 10 they are from a younger generation and are not familiar with the political song at all).

Interviewees 14, 11, 8, 12, 9, 5 recognized only "Ounadikom" and "Mountassibou al Kamati Amchi" (those two songs are arguably the most popular leftist political songs).

The artists during the interviews talked about their present situation and if they're still producing a political song today and why. As for Karim Mroue, the Lebanese Communist Party leader, he said:

In 1966, the communist party made the youth revolution and was very active until it reached a peak in 1974 during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party. During the war we used to be a major player among political parties, but after 1982 the cultural role that the party played started to retreat without having a direct effect on the political song, but of course it affected it somehow. I also need to say that the artists that produced this song like Marcel Khalife, Ahmad Kaabour and others started having other preoccupations, that's why the political objectives and meanings of the political song deteriorated. At the same time the situation in the country changed, the political conflict that the party was facing also changed; this affected the aim of the political song and culture in general. Today, more than ever before, we need a political song, because people are suffering and they need a song that expresses their sufferings.

Marcel Khalife is composing music and he still performs his famous songs in the Middle East and the rest of the world. He believes that the themes such songs can never die since they deal with "freedom and human rights" everywhere:

These topics are what life is all about. People are always looking for freedom and love. Lebanese people are still suffering from emigration. The principles I shared with them during the war survived and didn't stop. Big humanitarian topics never die, and that's why my songs discuss these issues. If these songs were protest songs related to particular events that took place during the war, then they won't exist today. But most of my songs have humanitarian topics that may never end.

Abido Bacha had a different opinion from Khalife's. The former believes that the leftist political song died and that's what he discussed in his book '*Mawout Moudir Massrah, Zakirat al Oughniya al Siyassiya*'. Even the title of the book speaks about the death of the political song. He said: "Those authors/composers looked back at the political song and found that it was cursed, so they had two choices: either accept the curse or go into different directions. They chose the second option. All the artists that worked on this song are working in music today, finding it a proper escape despite the fact that what killed the Arab audience are their ears, meaning that you have to talk to them in order to attract their attention. Those artists were afraid of the new political agenda of the country titled "Development and reconstruction"; so they were afraid to die, just like their songs. This song doesn't exist today because the circumstances of its existence are no longer there". He added that those artists are not aware of the importance of their experience; otherwise they would have behaved differently, later.

When asked if we had a political song today in Lebanon, he replied: "Not at all, what we have is a political criticism song. If you're asking if this song ended, then the answer is yes, because the leftist political song gave suggestions for change and solutions for the problems people were facing. The death of this song is in reality the death of the governing political relations in the country".

Ahmad Kaabour speaks with a broken heart about the whole issue. That's why he changed direction and is working more with TV stations lately composing jingles and songs. He told the writer:

A political song? I am still producing a song. I believe that what is happening in the Arab countries now is a logical result of the death of political life and activity in the Arab world is the result of forty to fifty years of suppression and tyranny that sold Palestine, sold our demands, sold Islam and itself in order to keep its interests. There is no politics now. What is happening are political deals. In Lebanon, the democratic country, the political life got killed, when they assassinated Kamal Joumbat<sup>42</sup>, Hussein Mroue<sup>43</sup>, Rafic Hariri<sup>44</sup>, Samir Kassir<sup>45</sup>, and Georges Hawi<sup>46</sup>. That's why there are no political horizons, but rather are political instructions. That's why I distanced myself from politics, and what is happening right now in Lebanon and the Arab world is the desire of people to recuperate their humanitarian nature.

When asked what was special about his songs then which does not exist today, he replied:

The song before was linked to politics. Today, the artists that produced political songs are discrepant in their political views. What remained is their songs which have high artistic value.

The song remained the same but the artist changed. The so called 'communist' is no more. People today are pretending that they belong to secular parties. The reality is different.

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<sup>42</sup> A Druze politician and deputy, who was assassinated in 1976

<sup>43</sup> A Lebanese journalist and writer, who was assassinated in 1987

<sup>44</sup> Lebanese prime minister assassinated in February 14 2005

<sup>45</sup> A Lebanese journalist who was assassinated in June 2005

<sup>46</sup> Former General secretary of the communist party, assassinated in 2005

According to Ziad Rahbani, secularism does not exist in Lebanon. He said: “In my opinion, this song was similar to the parties that supported it. Just before the end of the war people started going back to their respective regions and became sectarian again. Secularism does not exist in Lebanon anymore”.

Today even the communist party is divided. We have in Lebanon new political affiliations that are dividing people to sects within the same religion.

Ziad Rahbani produced a political song, that is for sure, but his compositions are broader (in the genre) than the rest of the artists under study. He produces a political song only when he feels he needs to say something. When asked if he is in the process of making a political song, he replied: “I am actually and it is called “Shou Hal Injaz” (what an achievement). It describes how workers met at the museum (which is at the border line between East and West Beirut) and embraced each other. (He continues laughing by reciting the rest of the lyrics) “Shou Hal Shi el Moumtaz” (what an excellent matter).

Furthermore, when asked if the political song is sustainable, he said: “A song like ‘Imagine’ for John Lennon is still popular today and it is spread worldwide because it talks about a very deep subject, human belonging and homeland: homeland is for all the people. It is not easy in a capitalist country to sing “Imagine”; it takes courage. This song is 50 years old. I wrote a similar song “Bala Wala Shi” (without anything) that talk about land’s ownership. I think today, Rim Al Banna (a Palestinian artist), is producing the best political songs. What the Palestinians are going through is not a temporary phase any more, if an artist is living in certain circumstances and feels them deeply, he or she can come up with very deep themes”.

During his career Khaled El Haber became known for the leftist political song. He did not compose another genre or category of songs. When asked what made him do so, he replied:



“My decision from day one was continuity and to make sure to get over all the obstacles that one might face in order to survive while producing this type of songs, whether they are financial, emotional or moral. There is a need for this song and it was proven that there is a need. If we stay away for a certain period of time people start inquiring through social media. This song, like art in general, is a need for people; it represents them and they respect it and that is important to me”.

What Haber said coincided with the motivational theory used in the theoretical framework of this research. Yes, this song was and still is a need to a large number of people perhaps. The political party, the artist, or the people use it as a motivational tool to boost their morale and self-esteem.

Khaled El Haber is still performing and composing political songs. When asked about the topic of his next song? He replied: “GOD. Everybody is fighting in the name of God and every political formation has its own God. So I imagined that there are many Gods talking to each other in order to make peace among people”.

### **Opportunities and Constraints of this Study**

My research was facilitated by the personal acquaintance with those artists. Knowing the artists personally made them more comfortable as they trusted me and revealed to me their thoughts and perspectives. Moreover, those artists are familiar with being interviewed during their careers. They appreciate scholarly research since they themselves are considered social critics. My knowledge and experience in the field also made my research easier, since I participated as a singer in many of these leftist political songs.

However, the above opportunities may be considered as constraints by some scholars who believe that I may be unable to objectively evaluate the subject and make critical observations and conclusions.

In reality the personal acquaintance with the artists saved me time and allowed me to make a comprehensive study. At the same time the relationship with the artists was professional since they realized that it was the subject of an academic research and not an interview to be published in a magazine or broadcast.

Another constraint was the limitations in the existing academic literature. Very few references exist on the leftist Lebanese political song. This topic was not explored by scholars as a separate subject of study, but was a section in books or theses written by ethnomusicologist about the Lebanese song, with the exception of Abido Bacha's book "Maout Moudir Massrah" (The death of a Stage Director" mentioned in the Review of Literature section.

## Ch V: Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the aims in this thesis was to explore the leftist political song and to find out if its emergence was closely related to war. Furthermore I wanted to inquire about the role that the Lebanese communist party played in the existence of this song and if the political engagement of the producers of this song affected the content. Another inquiry was to find out if this song has survived and still has the same value today as it did when it was produced.

One may argue that this song ended with the end of the war and that the present political Lebanese situation is not conducive for the production of the leftist political song. In addition, political affiliations have changed, and the enemies of yesterday became allies. The leftists themselves are currently divided, and the Soviet subsidies for the Lebanese communist Party no longer exist. The Party itself is split; most of its members are no longer active.

However upon closer investigation of the subject, it was evident that the emergence of the leftist political song occurred at the beginning of the war. The support of Lebanese communist party, at least its moral support and its contribution in the launching and diffusion of this song made this song famous not only locally but worldwide as stated earlier, which is not the case today. The artists are not getting the same support as they did during the war.

It is important to mention that the leftist political song received its support not only from the Lebanese communist party, but also from the political alliances that existed during the war, namely the 'National movement' and the 'Palestinian Resistance' which were important sponsors as well.

The political engagement of the artists and their ideologies affected the content and style of composition of the songs. In fact, all interviewees affirmed that their belief systems, political convictions and cultural identity fully shaped this song; the lyrics, the music composition and the singing style. Every element in this song was new and different from the traditional oriental song that was popular then.

It is also important to remember that Lebanon still faces political instability and severe conflicts. The cultural and socio-political characteristics of the Lebanese population are diversified and our national identity remains a complex mosaic. The diversified characteristics of Lebanese society make it hard on the Lebanese people to have a unified attitude on governance and national administration. That's why this song is needed today more than any other time whether at war or in peace, because Lebanese society is still facing the same social and political problems.

Art is essentially for all people. The demand for art and cultural expressions exists regardless of the belief system of people. During my interviews, I noticed that almost everybody said, except for the artists themselves that this song does not exist today. In reality radio stations are not broadcasting political songs anymore, but each time there is a critical security situation, radios pull from their archives the same old political and patriotic songs. After the end of the war we had many Lebanese artists who produced social and political criticism songs like Ghassan Rahbani who wrote for the "Fersan al Arbaa" (a group of four Lebanese singers) "El Zouama Fallou Min Lebnan" (The Leaders Left Lebanon), Julia Boutros is very famous with her patriotic songs, she even dedicated a song for "Hezbollah" in recognition of its victory against the Israeli aggressions of 2006. Those artists

believe that the political songs they produced still exist, and that a similar genre of songs has not been created yet.

Ahmad Kaabour is not composing a political song right now, but ‘Ounadikom’ is still popular.

Marcel Khalife is also not composing new political songs; he is working on musical compositions, but each time he has a concert he makes it grandiose. Many famous orchestras around the world have played his music<sup>47</sup>. His songs became folk songs;

“Ya Bahriyi” is one of them.

As for Khaled El Haber, he is still producing a leftist political song today, and to him there is a need and a demand for it. “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs” is related to a basic human aspect. Music and songs on the other side are the ultimate manifestation of self-actualization and also an expression of human aspects. The leftist political song is an implementation to the reversal of the hierarchy of needs. It is also an implementation of the related self-esteem needs<sup>48</sup>. A composer needs to express himself through music more than to eat, he is literary pegged to the same concept of needs.

Ziad Rahbani is an important example that explains why this song is still popular today. He is a prolific artist. His songs, plays and everything he has done since he started composing is still very popular. If we go back to his early songs, “Hali Taabani ya Layla” and “Ya Seif el AAl Eeda Tayer” both can be considered political songs and remain popular today.

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<sup>47</sup> Refer to appendix I

<sup>48</sup> Refer to chapter II, theoretical framework

The reasons that make those artists believe that the political song still exists today regardless of whether they are still composing or performing is related to reality and to history. It is true that radio stations are not broadcasting the leftist political song lately for commercial reasons, (because they'd rather broadcast the latest releases) but that doesn't mean that this song is dead.

"The song of life" never dies. The song that talks about people's pain and struggle never dies, irrespective of whether it is political or not. All songs of high artistic value never die. They are transmitted from one generation to another. 'El Helwa Di" (this charming lady), for Sheikh Sayed Darwich in Egypt, was reproduced many times, by many singer around the Arab world, including Fairuz, the famous Lebanese singer . I don't think "Ounadikom" (I call upon you) for Ahmad Kaabour or "Jayi Maa el Chaab El Maskin" (I stand by the poor people) for Ziad Rahbani will ever die. "Ne me quittes pas" for Jacques Brel, and "Imagine" for John Lennon are still popular today.

In sum, I would like to say that the trend of the leftist political song that emerged during the Lebanese war has faded because the factors that contributed to its existence are no longer applicable. But the leftist political song itself will never die. New forms may emerge, and new trends as well. We can consider "Rap" as one of them, but the content remains the same. The leftist political song has outlined its original contextual, social and political conditions. It has moved beyond the restrictions of being dedicated to a specific time or a specific political party. By dedicating its lyrics to the general human condition, it acquired new life to speak for people's everyday concerns and struggles. It became a song for all people

regardless of their political or confessional affiliations. So it became of equal interest to both leftists and rightists. No matter where this song comes from, whether from Lebanon or from England. This song travels all over the globe. This song is called "The song of Life".

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

Khalife, Marcel. Interview with the author. Rec. April 17, 2014. Amchit, Lebanon

#### Biography

Marcel Khalife is a Lebanese composer, “Oud” master and performer. Born in 1950, he studied the *oud* (the Arabic lute) at the Beirut National Conservatory of Music. In 1976 Marcel Khalife launched “Al Mayadine” Ensemble. Khalife has performed in such prestigious halls as the "Palace of Arts" in Montreal, "Symphony Space" and "Merkin Concert" in New York. Marcel Khalife's compositions have been performed by several orchestras, notably the Kiev Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of Boulogne Billancourt Orchestra, The San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and many more. Since 1982, Marcel Khalife has been writing books on music that reflect his avant garde compositions and the maturity of his experience. Since 1974, Marcel Khalife has been composing music for dance which gave rise to a new genre of dance, the popular Near Eastern ballet (Caracalla, Sarab Ensemble, Rimah, and Popular Art Ensemble). Marcel Khalife has also been composing soundtracks for film documentaries produced by Maroun Baghdadi like *Kamal Jumblatt* (1976), *The Martyr* (1977) and many more. Marcel Khalife's works has been critically acclaimed both in the Arab World and worldwide. His creativity, innovations and his educational and humanitarian concerns and contributions to the promotion of arts and Culture in the Arab world has earned him tens of awards in the Arab World and Internationally. Following are some of the awards and recognition that Marcel Khalife has received throughout the years.

1. Cultural and Artistic recognition Award of the Tunisia Ministry of Culture- 2012
2. Charles Cros Award (World Music category) – Paris, France 2008
3. UNESCO Artist For Peace- Paris, France 2005
4. The National Palestine Medal- Palestine, 2001
5. Arab American University Graduates- USA 1982

In June 2005 Marcel Khalife was named UNESCO Artist for Peace for his artistic achievement and humanitarian contributions.

#### Interview

1. Who is listening to the leftist political song today?

Believe it or not the audience today is really wide. You see people from different age groups attending our concerts: the grand-parents and the younger generation as well. Many of the songs I wrote are still popular because of their content. Rita in the song is still young and has beautiful eyes, your passport is still important to you (referring to both of his songs “Rita” and “Jawaz Safar” meaning passport). On the contrary, today this issue is more important to people looking for a passport.” Ya Bahriyi” (O sailors) became a classic, a folk song, interpreted by thousands of people in the Arab world and that’s what makes a folksong important because people sing it and repeat it for so many years until they forget who originally wrote it.

2. Was the political song you wrote a protest song or was it a communication tool that depicted people’s opinions and their war experiences?

If that song was a protest song related to the events that took place during the war, then it won't exist today. But most of my songs have humanitarian topics that will never end as time passes by.

### 3. Why did you compose this type of songs?

Besides being a composer and singer, I have an academic background. I taught "oud" at Lebanese conservatory and wrote many books and "oud etudes" about music in general and techniques of playing "oud". My experience in composing and singing started before the Lebanese war. My original intention was to express myself through music and not to sing for the sake of singing. That's why I chose carefully the lyrics of my songs from very well known Arab poets like Mahmoud Darwich and many others.

### 4. What is a political song in your opinion?

When I started composing music to poems, I never thought that a song can be categorized into different categories, one for the war and another one for entertainment. All I knew is that there is a song. At the beginning of the Lebanese war, we witnessed a cultural renaissance from different aspects. My first album came out just before the beginning of the war and people liked it a lot, but it wasn't until later that journalists started calling the songs we wrote "political songs". The leftist's parties started organizing festivals and concerts for the so called "political song". I think I never wrote a song that had a direct political message. To me this song is humanitarian regardless of the direct political message it may have. I know for a fact that a lot of my songs were exchanged and heard by people from different political affiliations; extreme left and extreme right. What was important in this song is the humanitarian message it holds. Don't forget that I am a leftist, I am not an active member of the communist party, but I supported it in many of my



concerts by fund raising money to build hospitals and cultural centers and my concern is what affects people more than any political opinion or stand.

5. What was your intention when you sung “Mountasibou al Kamati amchi”?

I sung this song for the resistance that was fighting the Israeli invasions during the war, its lyrics are written by Samih Kassem. This song also became a very popular folk song, a hymn that anybody can interpret and apply its meaning; different people from different political affiliations used it. I also wrote patriotic songs. If you consider the country political then yes from this perspective I wrote political songs. If politics is a general interpretation of human life then yes I wrote a political song.

6. Was it because you were a leftist you produced these songs?

Of course because my worries were not only to make a song that was artistically beautiful, I was supposed to have a wide culture and understand the different artistic forms like poetry, painting, cinema, theater and that milieu was very active and present with the left because they used to organize a lot of discussions and lectures with thinkers and cultured people, writers, poets, painters, journalists and producers. So this milieu affected me positively and increased my awareness and made my artistic knowledge very rich and of course had a direct impact on the choice of my lyrics and compositions.

7. Did the communist Lebanese party finance any of your CD's?

Not at all, they didn't have the means to do so.

8. What are singing about today?

Freedom and human rights. These topics are all the time dynamic because this is what life is all about. People are all the time looking for freedom and love. Lebanese people are still

suffering from emigration. What I shared with people during the war survived and didn't stop by the end of the war, because I am still working on it and improving its basic tools. What never change are big humanitarian topics, they never die, and that's why my songs discuss those issues.

Lyrics of "Inni Ikhrartouka Ya Watani"

اني اخترتك يا وطني حبا وطواعية  
 اني اخترتك يا وطني سرا وعلانية  
 اني اخترتك يا وطني فلينكر لي زمني  
 مادمتم ستذكرني  
 يا وطني الرانع يا وطني  
 دائم الخضرة يا قلبي وإن بان بعيني الأسي  
 دائم الثورة يا قلبي وإن صارت صفحاتي مسا  
 دائم الخضرة يا قلبي وإن بان بعيني الأسي  
 جنت في زمن الجزر جنت في عز التعب  
 رشاش عنف و غضب  
 و غضب و غضب و غتضب  
 و غضب و غضب و غضب و غتضب  
 و غضب

## Appendix II

Mroue, Karim. Interview with the author. Rec. April 22, 2014. Beirut, Lebanon

### Biography

Karim Mroue was born in Hariss in southern Lebanon in 1930. Coming from a family of Shiite clerics, he turned to communism under the auspices of his father's cousin, the martyr Hussein Mroue, (a well known writer and thinker), while attending secondary school in Baghdad in 1947-1949. To his return to Beirut in 1952, he joined the Lebanese Communist Party. The following year, he was elected to the executive committee of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. From 1962 to 1964, he represented the Arab peace movements in the "World Peace Council" which met in Vienna. He was then elected a member of the political bureau of the Lebanese Communist Party, and was reappointed until 1999. He occupied the position of the "Deputy Secretary General" in the Lebanese communist party from 1984 to 1992 during the dark hours of the Lebanese war. He represented the Lebanese Communist Party in many Arab and international conferences of communist parties. At the end of the 8th Party Congress in January 1999, Karim Mroue leaves the governing bodies of the party to devote himself mainly to research, and books and articles writing. To this date, he has published more than eight books about the Lebanese conflict, the Palestinian cause and Israeli peace process, and the Marxist ideology compared to the religious belief systems.

### Interview

1. When did the leftist political song start in Lebanon?

We were not the first in the region to produce this kind of songs; Egyptians and Iraqis started before the Lebanese, especially with Sheikh Imam in Egypt. As for us in 1974 the communist party was preparing for his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and wanted to make a change, so

the decision was to celebrate by having not only a political event but a cultural one also. Cultural from different perspectives including lectures, poetry and what attracts people most and what people like most: songs, especially “the political song”. I can say that it was during that period that the political song in Lebanon started being popular. The communist party lunched it and when the war started it was a major incentive for us in the communist party to work on spreading this song. For us it was a major communication tool not only to spread the ideology of the party, but also to spread culture and thoughts.

## 2. Was this song a communication tool for the party to spread its ideology?

We exaggerate if we pretend that it was one of our communication tools, it helped and made the communication process easier, because when people listen to a song they sometimes don't pay attention to the lyrics, but when in a critical situation like the war, the lyrics are important in conveying the message. That's why the role of the political song was promoted to the level of the political conflict; all the elements of the song, the lyrics, music composition and arrangement and the voice become unified in order to serve the political conflict. Everything is used to serve the political conflict. Even our opponents used the same strategy, they also had their political song and we all used it in order to create excitement or incitement, so it was definitely a facilitating tool to spread our ideology.

## 3. Did the communist party support the leftist political song financially, in Media or it was simply a moral support?

We used to organize events and festivals, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party in 1974 lasted 10 days, thousands of peoples attended as I mentioned earlier, it included all sorts of cultural activities as well as the political song. In 1976, the communist party organized for Marcel Khalife a performance in France during the humanitarian festival and that was a turning

point in Marcel Khalife's career. Later we organized different concerts all over the world, which made Marcel famous worldwide. So the communist party helped along with its organizations worldwide to spread the political song. The Israeli invasion in 1982 also helped in promoting this song, because the conflict shifted from being local to become a resistance against the Israeli occupation.

4. Was the political song trying to depict what was happening during the war or was it simply affecting people and motivating them?

The lyrics in a song are not direct, most of the time it is poetry and poetry does not disseminate direct messages. What poetry does is that it creates ideas about an issue and that is the major role of a song.

5. Why we don't have a political song today?

In 1966, the communist party made the youth revolution and was very active until it reached a peak in 1974 during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party. During the war we used to be a major player among political parties, but after 1982 the cultural role that the party played so far started to retreat without having a direct effect on the political song, but of course it affected it somehow. I also need to say that the artists that produced this song like Marcel Khalife, Ahmad Kaabour and others started having other preoccupations, that's why the political objectives and meanings of the political song deteriorated. At the same time the situation in the country changed, the political conflict that the party was facing also changed; this affected directly the aim of the political song and culture in general. Today we need more than any other time a political song, because people are suffering and they need a song that expresses their sufferings.

### Appendix III

Bacha, Abido. Interview with the author. Rec. April 23, 2014. Beirut, Lebanon

#### Biography

Abido Bacha is a well known journalist, university professor and writer. Besides writing thousands of newspaper articles in “Al Safir” Newspaper , where he was the editor in chief of the cultural section for more than twenty two years , he wrote many plays and books (children’s and criticism books) like “Abou Ali’s Parents”, “House of Fire”, “Arabs’ Teatro” “Death of Theater Director” ( the only book about the Lebanese political song) and many more. He also wrote the lyrics of many political songs for Ziad Rahbani, Ahmad Kaabour, Khaled el haber, Ghazi Mekdashi and others. His professional experience is broad .He performed in many theater plays that were innovative in the Lebanese theater especially in “Masrah Al Hakawati” (Story Telling Theater) were he participated in three plays “In Lessons and Needles”, “Tales from 1936” and “Khiyam Days” (Winner of the best Play Award in Cartage ‘play festival’ in 1983). He also performed in many Arab movies like “The sniper” for Faysal Al Yassiri, “Maaraka” for Roger Assaf and others. He contributed in launching the Children Lebanese Theater with “Al Sanabel”, “Paul Matar’s Troup” and other troupes. TV producer for many TV shows like “Hiwar El Omor” at LBC (Lebanese Broadcast Corporation) and Director of the morning show “Sabaho” at “Tele Liban” for thirteen years. He lectured in Arab theater festivals and conducted educational workshops, as well as being a Media and artistic consultant especially in Mansour Al Rahbani’s theater.

## Interview

### 1. What was the goal of the political song?

One of the major goals of the political song was to break the concept that the oriental song was directly related to the singer; we say this is “Oum Khoultoum” singing for example. So the political song is a category of songs that highlights the content of the song, what this song is trying to say and not the singer and its importance is that its aim converged with the aim of a political reformist project which is the project of the “National Movement”. The political song started before the Lebanese war in 1975. Khaled El Haber started singing while he was doing his military service; Ahmad Kaabour started singing French revolutionary songs (Moustaki, Brel, Ferra...). The political song is a song representing our internal clash, because the lyrics of this song are improper and repudiated. So far in the Arab world, we had a political satirical song, a social criticism song, a complaint song. Even Sheikh Imam’s song is not a political song but it is a political criticism song, only in Lebanon we had a political song because it was the result of a political conflict between the Lebanese themselves. The artists that contributed in the production of the leftist political song were not only artists but they were doing politics through art. They belonged to a unified structure that was not independent. They were not producing culture; they were producing politics through art and culture. One common fact is that all of them belonged to left parties, mainly the Lebanese communist party and the organization of the communist action.

2. Was it because those artists were leftists, they produced this political song?

No, but because the left movement is a humanitarian movement aiming to accomplish social justice. Since the French revolution any movement against injustice was conducted by leftists. Another reason is that the left parties included in their activities a lot of cultural events, and that's why the leftist political song is important, because it met with a political project. The right parties didn't produce a political song, all what they did is parodies.

3. Was the leftist political song a propaganda song for the left parties?

How can a song be a propaganda song when you're singing for the martyrs? There was a soul and a feeling behind this song. This song used lyrics from Lebanese and Arab poets, also from international poets like Latin Americans. Since 1976, when the Syrian forces entered Lebanon until the Israeli invasion in 1982, the producers of this song created a framing that could've lasted longer, but their problem was that they were afraid and left this project in the middle of the road when the Taef agreement was proclaimed. Those producers looked back at the political song and found that it was cursed, so they had two choices: either accept to be cursed because of the curse of their songs or go into different directions. They chose the second option; I wish they accepted to be cursed. All the artists that worked on this song are working on music today, finding it a proper escape despite the fact that what kill the Arab audience is their ears, meaning that you have to talk to them in order to attract their attention. Those artists were afraid of the new political agenda of the country titled "Development and reconstruction"; so they were afraid to die like their song. This song doesn't exist today because the circumstances of its existence no longer are there.

4. Do we have a leftist political song today?



Not at all, what we have is a political criticism song. If you're asking if this song ended, then the answer is yes, because the leftist political song gave suggestions for change and solutions for the problems people were facing. The death of this song is in reality the death of the governing relations in the country.

5. Who financed this song during the war?

Left political parties and organizations financed some productions, as well as the Palestinian resistance who paid a lot of money not only to finance the political song but also other cultural forms: books, theater, cinema etc... financing this song didn't mean controlling its content. It was a free song and the artists that produced it were also free.

6. Are people still listening to this leftist political song today?

People are nostalgic; they listen to these songs because some of them apply to the situation today and most of them don't. People listen to this song today only to remember the other meaning that this song gave to life events back then and not for the sake of listening to it. Why is it important to listen to this song today? It is important, because we can evaluate it from a distance. Those artists knew for a certain period of time their respective goals and they succeeded in reaching them. Later they said goodbye to the most important experience not only in the history of Lebanon but also in the history of the region.

#### **Appendix IV**

Kaabour, Ahmad. Interview with the author. Rec. April 24, 2014. Beirut, Lebanon.

### Biography

Ahmad Kaabour is a renowned Lebanese singer, songwriter, music composer and actor. Born in 1955, he is perhaps best known for his song “Ounadikom” (I Call out to you) based on a poem written by Tawfiq Ziad , which he composed in 1975 upon the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. Ever since, his musical endeavors have continued. His father Mahmoud (aka Al-Rasheedi) was a prominent violinist who played along the biggest musicians of the time. His father's work cultivated his musical background alongside other influences. Kaabour is one of Lebanon's veteran singers and is a prominent figure in the Middle East. Early on in his career, he produced a body of work dedicated to Palestine and its people, which evolved to encompass issues concerning his home country Lebanon and its struggles. His music portrays his belief in the power of music in shedding light on humanitarian causes, and its ability to make a difference. Kaabour started his career as an actor by taking roles in several plays during the 70s and 80s, as in "Shi Fashil" (A failure) with Ziad Rahbani in 1983. Later on he appeared in "Nagi El Ali" movie alongside Nour El Sharif in 1991. He made his international film debut playing the featured role of Wadie Haddad in the historical epic “Carlos”, which premiered at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. He has released seven albums to date and continues to produce music for children’s theater, television, film and other media.

### Interview

1. Is the political song an independent category of songs?

I think we spent so much time trying to define and figure out this song. After all those years I have a reticence towards classifying songs into different categories political or non political. The matter is not that a group of people had an exclusive agency to produce this song. As far as I am concerned, I can decide to produce a song based on my beliefs and feelings towards a

cause like the Palestinian cause for example or I can make a song that talk about the water pump in our building that is disturbing me and not allowing me to sleep. I believe that composing, writing and singing a song is far from ideologies. The ideologies have their political tools, tactics and alliances. Art is more genuine. The propagation of this song coincided with the beginning of the war and the existence of a very critical political situation; we were young, honest and beautiful in our songs, but what determines the values of what we wrote composed and sung is not what links the song to the politics and the notion of ideology but its artistic components. Let's say somebody composed a bad song about Palestine, do you think it will make it a good song? If we want to categorize songs into political categories, then all songs are. So let's not define songs as political or non political. Let's say this song is looking for a new artistic language in the lyrics, the music and the performance. That's what made it special, because it was linked to the politics, because today, the artists that produced political songs are discrepant in their political views, but what is left, is their songs because those songs had a high artistic value.

2. Were the left parties an environment incubator to the leftist political songs or were they immediate financers for concerts and CD's productions?

I have to be franc with you; this incubative environment is repulsive to me now. Did it support us? Let me talk about myself. When I started singing it wasn't because anybody told me to do so. I produced my albums and I used to sell them personally. I used to belong to the "national movement" and despite all its gaps and mistakes, I didn't take advantage and benefit from what you're calling incubative environment, not even asked for financial support for any of my productions, this never happened. In most of my concerts I volunteered and presented them for free to the leftist audience or public back then. I sung because I believed and loved to what I sung, I was really committed. Finally there was no financial relationship between the left parties and my productions.

3. Did the left parties use your songs to attract supporters and spread their ideologies?

Yes for a certain period of time, the left parties were in need for a platform to motivate their public, so they used our songs as a tool to do it. During that period, the left parties benefited a lot from attracting a bigger audience, because people used to wait more for the artist than for the secretary-general of the party. That period was the golden age of the political song. Later I got depressed from the situation so I produced children's songs and I dedicated my time to cinema and TV.

4. Why is it that the same song is adopted by people from different political beliefs and is interpreted differently?

What makes a song popular and adopted by everybody is its artistic value and this is not annoying to me. What annoys me is when it is used for a political purpose. We can give as an example my song "Unadikom" (I call upon you). If you go to YouTube, you will notice that it is dedicated to Hassan Nasrallah, to Rafic Hariri, to Yasser Arafat. When Toufic Ziad wrote "Ounadikom", he didn't indicate specific people. He wanted to talk about his land, his cause and addressed himself to the human conscience.

5. Are you still producing a political song?

A political song? I am still producing a song. I believe that what's happening in Arab countries now is a logical result of the death of the political life and activity in the Arab world and is the result of forty to fifty years of suppression, tyranny that sold Palestine, sold our demands, sold Islam and himself in order to keep its interests. There is no politics now, what is happening are political deals. In Lebanon, the democratic country, the political life got killed, when they assassinated Kamal Joumblat, Hussein Mroue, Rafic Hariri, Samir Kassir, and Georges Hawi. That's why there are no political horizons but there are political instructions. That's why I

distant myself from politics, and what is happening right now in Lebanon and the Arab world is the desire of people to recuperate their humanitarian nature.

#### 6. What is the definition of a political song?

It is a song that is biased towards the “killed”, the people whose land is occupied, the defeated and it is a song that has its own artistic components. It is not a song that has a political theme; it is a song that has a new language, a new tune, a revolutionary language initiated by revolution and love or any belief or issue.

### **Appendix V**

El Haber, Khaled. Interview with the author. Rec. April 25, 2014. Beirut, Lebanon

#### **Biography**

Khaled El Haber is a Lebanese composer, musician and singer. Born in 1956, he was raised by a communist family and is best known for the political songs he wrote since an early age. He studied guitar since when he was ten years old. During his high school years he formed a band called “Rainbow Bridge” with Issam El Hajj Ali, Toufic Farrouk ( two Lebanese musicians and composers) and others. Khaled composed his first songs while doing his military service just before the outbreak of the Lebanese war. In 1975 he released his first album titled “Aghani siyassiya” (Political songs) which made him famous among the youth. Some of his popular songs during the early years of war are: “Kafarkela” and “Jafra”. During the war Khaled met Ziad Rahbani who composed for him a song titled “Sobhi el Zij” that Fairuz sung in her album “Wala kif” in 2002. Khaled performed in Europe, Cuba, and Japan and all over the Arab countries. Khaled El Haber is among the few leftist artists that is still composing and singing political songs today.

## Interview

1. Is it because you are a communist, that you produced this style of songs?

The major reason that made me produce this style of songs is that in belief system, I sympathize with people, I sympathize with humanitarian causes, with the poor, the oppressed. This belief system was acquired since I was raised in a communist family which made me recognize and be aware of the international political song, then the Arabic political song that was produced in Egypt by Cheick Sayed Darwich and later Cheick Imam and in Lebanon with the Rahbanis in some of their productions; finally the French political song and the American and Latin American political.

2. What's the difference between a political song and a patriotic song?

The political song has a unique identity. It is a direct and an indirect song at the same time. This is a song that mobilizes people and don't create incitement or create incitement without mobilizing people. You can listen to this song at home, in public or on the battlefield. As soon as this song is released, it will have its enemies. When it is sung, many people are against it. This can't be the song of the 5% of the Lebanese people who are exploiting the rest of the nation. It can't be the song of the political power or the song of the sectarian leaders.

3. Did the communist party finance any of your albums or concerts?

I never had a direct financial support from the party. The party for sure was an environment incubator. I was an active member in the party for only one year, and then I left. But I consider myself a communist that is committed more than any active member. The public of the party supported us, the leftist public in general, especially in the beginning the left was in its golden age and that gave us an important push.

4. Did you help the communist party through your songs in order to recruit new members?

I know as a fact that a lot of people joined the communist party because of our songs.

Many people fought because of our songs. Of course we helped the communist party, even financially sometimes; we used to make concerts in order to raise money for the party's organizations like the federation of democratic youth or the committee for women's right.

5. Who financed your albums then?

In every adventure we had a crazy person who used to finance our project. When I did "Ahmad al Zaatar", we needed a lot of money for recording since we had to pay a philharmonic orchestra. We made a deal with the PLO to buy certain number of our cassettes in order to cover the expenses. In "Hina Yasmoutou Al Moughanni" (while the singer is silent), it was Dr. Abdel Rahman al Labban who produced it. We didn't have production companies. I don't think Rotana would be interested to produce an album for me.

6. Was the leftist political song depicting the reality of the war or was it a protest song?

I don't think there is any production which is not based on reality or on a certain incident, but it has to be delivered in a refined and sentimental manner like a dream. The reality stimulates us to write, compose and sing, while taking care of executing the previous steps in an esthetic way.

7. Who is the public or audience of this song?

Originally the public was the leftists in particular, students and the youth in general.

Usually any new style of singing is supported and spread by the youth. Then later this song started to spread and was not only limited by the leftist public. I can say that the public of this song is the public exposed to this song. We suffer from media blackout, but people who listen to this song become addicted to this song, it becomes a need to them and they can't live without it. There are some people that are against it from a social class and political perspective yet they come and listen.

8. You're still producing and singing the same style of songs today, how come?

My decision from day one was continuity and to make sure to get over all the obstacles that one might face in order to survive while producing this type of songs, whether they are financial, emotional or moral.

9. What are the elements that make a song in general popular and heard for years?

All the elements that make a song: the lyrics, the music composition and arrangement, the performance and voice of the singer, I mean performing this style of songs. Together all of these elements make the song successful; if only one of these elements is weak then the song no longer can persist.

10. Why are you still producing this political song today?

Because there is a need for this song and it was proven that there is a need. If we stay away for a certain period of time people start inquiring through social media. This song, like art in general is a need for people; it represents them and they respect it and that's what is important for me.

11. What is the topic of your next song?



GOD. Everybody is fighting in the name of God and every political formation has its own God. So I imagined that there are many Gods talking to each other in order to make peace among people.

## Appendix VI

Rahbani, Ziad. Interview with the author. Rec. May 3, 2014. Beirut Lebanon

### Biography

Ziad Rahbani, The son of the Lebanese famous composer Assi Rahbani and Nouhad Haddad, the famous Lebanese female singer known as Fairuz, was born in 1956. He is a composer, pianist, performer, play writer and director, and political commentator. He is a very popular artist in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world. He studied music and piano since an early age. He started his career in the seventies by composing songs for his mother Fairuz, the song "Saalouni El Nass" (people asked me) was among the first songs he composed. In 1973 he presented his first play "Sahriyi" (Wakefulness). Ziad Rahbani is not only famous by the new musical style he composed, but also by his plays like "Film Ameriki Tawil" (Long American Movie) and "Shi Fashel" (A Failure), his radio shows like "Baadna Taybeen Oulou Allah" (We're still Alive praise God) and "El Akl Zeeneh" (The Accessorized Mind) and by his simple, realistic and satiric lyrics. Rahbani's first known artistic work was "Sadiqi Allah" (My Friend God), a collection of writings between the years 1967 and 1968 when he was in his teens. Before, during and after the Lebanese war, Rahbani released several albums like "Bi hal shakel" (Like That), "Abou Ali" (Ali's Father), "Houdou Nesbi" (Relative Calmness) "Ana Mouch Kafer" (I am not an unbeliever) and many more. He also held many Oriental Jazz Concerts in Lebanon and abroad. In addition, he wrote soundtracks for a number of Lebanese and Arab films, most

notably for the films "Moutahadirat " (Civilized) (1999) and " The Kite " (2003) , directed by Lebanese late Randa Chahal as well as many albums for Fairuz like "Wahdon" (Lonely), "Maarefti Fik" (Knowing You) and many more. Many of his musicals satirize Lebanese politics both during and after the civil war, and are often strongly critical of the traditional political establishment. Rahbani has a long standing relationship with Lebanese leftist parties.

## Interview

### 1. What is a political song?

It is a song that talks about topics that are not mentioned usually in any regular song, like freedom, oppression, exploitation, racism. This song became famous in its modern form in the USA and Latin America with Bob Dylan and Frank Zappa who talked more about social issues.

### 2. Did you compose a political song?

To me a political song is a regular song. Since I started composing, I didn't restrict myself to love songs, in "Hali Taabani Ya Leila" (the situation is hard o Leila) Joseph Sakr is not talking about love at all with Leila, he is talking about social class difference. In "Nazl el Sourour" (The Pleasure Inn), I composed a hymn "Jayi Maa el chaab el Masskin" (I support poor people); it is also a social class hymn and a patriotic hymn. Later "Ana Moush Kafer" CD (I am not an unbeliever) can be considered having political songs and in "Bima Inno" CD (Since it is), the song itself is a political song.

### 3. Was the communist party a major reason for the emergence of the leftist political song?

Not at all, the party followed the trend and adopted it. They supported artists like Marcel Khalife and Khaled el Haber. Ahmad Kaabour who was famous with "Ounadikom"

belonged to the organization of communist action. I have to mention Issam el Hajj Ali who produced a lot of very nice political songs and was not appreciated, may be one day he'll be.

4. Who was supporting the other: the party or the artists?

The party supported the artists, since he organized international tours for them.

5. Did the party ask you to compose a song for a special occasion?

They asked me to sign a petition to support a song that was banned by the government (mentioning Marcel Khalife's song "Ana Youssef Ya Abi" I am Youssef O Father). I composed two hymns, one for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lebanese communist party "Ya Riyah Al Chaab" (O nation's wind) and "Nashid El Oumamiyi" (The Nationalism Hymn) and in both cases it wasn't a demand, I did it because of personal initiative.

6. Is a song in general a powerful tool for change in society or is it a communication tool only?

Words are more effective than music by itself. Music does not relate at all to war or peace.

I composed during the war immediately after "Akar" building collapsed by a vacuum bomb, a piece called "Min kil bidd" (For sure). It was composed on a major scale which is a scale that creates a positive mood and happiness. There is no logic when it comes to music; I mean the relationship between music and war: no relationship at all.

7. Does the political song affect people?

If the political song parallels some social or political event, it becomes part of a public movement, but if you take it by itself as a song that initiate people to action, I really doubt. If the direct speech or address doesn't affect people, how about lyrics that are put to music. In a song you have musical restrictions in the choice of the lyrics. When you are composing a song even if it is a political, it is a song in all cases that has artistic features; you need to rhyme it in order to do so, you need to choose sometimes a different word that rhymes.

8. Was this song representative of the war? Did it start with it and ended with it?

In my opinion, this song was similar to the parties that supported it, just before the end of the war people started going back to their respective areas and became sectarian again. Secularism does not exist in Lebanon anymore

9. If you were to write a political song today, what would it be about?

I am actually and it is called the "Shou Hal Injaz" (what an achievement). It describes how workers met at the museum (which is a border line between east and west Beirut) and embraced each other. (He continues laughing by reciting the rest of the lyrics) "Shou Hal Shi el Moumtaz" (what an excellent mater)

10. Does the political song last?

A song like "Imagine" for John Lennon is still popular today and it is spread worldwide because it talks about a very deep subject, human belonging and homeland: homeland is for all the people. It is not easy in a capitalist country to sing "Imagine", it takes courage. This song is 50 years old. I wrote a similar song "Bala Wala Shi" (without anything) that talk about land's ownership. I think today, Rim Al Banna (a Palestinian artist), is the best artist that is producing political songs. What the Palestinians are going through is not a

temporary phase any more, if an artist is living in circumstances and feels them deeply; he can come out with very deep meanings.

## Appendix VII

Focus group. Conducted by author. Rec. May 29, 2014. Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon

Below is a table that lists the characteristics of the interviewees that participated in the focus group conducted by the author.

Participant	Age	Gender	Religion	Occupation	Political Affiliation
1	42	male	Greek Orthodox	University Professor	Leftist
2	65	male	Maronite	Journalist	Leftist
3	55	male	Maronite	Journalist/Writer	Lebanese Nationalist
4	52	female	Greek Orthodox	House Wife	Rightist
5	53	male	Maronite	Editor in Chief Free Lebanon Radio	Rightist
6	45	male	Muslim	Radio Producer	None
7	32	male	Maronite	University Professor	Lebanese Forces
8	23	male	Muslim	Journalist	Hezbollah
9	22	male	Christian	Student	Lebanese Forces
10	20	male	Maronite	Student	Lebanese Forces
11	26	male	Atheist	Film Maker	Leftist
12	28	female	Catholic Melkite	Graphic Designer	None
13	22	male	Catholic Melkite	Student	None
14	20	male	Muslim	Sound Engineer	None

Below are the Focus group questions and answers.

1. What is a political song?

1.14. I don't know, but it reminds me of Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife.

1.13. It is related to a political party, in order to mobilize people.

1.12. It discusses political and social issues, delivers a message or criticizes.

1.11. There are different categories of political songs. I am only familiar with songs that were written in a certain political or social situation.

1.8. It has a social and political content. Produced on behalf of a certain party to mobilize and motivate people.

1.10. It can be a patriotic song or a song to praise a party in order to mobilize people.

1.9. It aims to mobilize people, or a social criticism song (e.g. 'Yabroud' song)

1.5. Originally from Latin America, Europe and America. It is popular song expressing culture. In Lebanon we have political songs produced by parties (propaganda songs) and we have songs that are related to humanitarian causes.

1.3. It is a cultural artifact and powerful tool. It is a song that can travel or affect all people, even opponents. It has a cause, a doctrine. It represents all people no matter what their political affiliations are.

1.4. It is a protest song that boosts the morale of the fighters. I am more familiar with the French political songs and I only know few songs of Marcel Khalife that don't have a political content.

1.2. It is a cultural artifact that intends to use the artistic elements of a song in order to create awareness and progress among people. It is not a parody that intends to incite people. The political song was produced throughout history by intellectuals and artists.

1.1. The political song is related to a political issue or cause that is expressed through a song to accomplish a certain political goal in order to change a situation, so it can be a revolutionary song. In Lebanon it was produced during the war by leftist's artists that belonged to the "National Movement"

1.6. A political song has a political message.

1.7. It is a song that was produced during the war by the different political parties that existed then.

2. What is the difference between a patriotic song and a political song?

2.1. A patriotic song is a song that praises the land and country. The national hymn can be considered a patriotic song.

N.B. Everybody agreed and had a clear understanding of the difference.

3. What is the role of this song in your opinion? Does it affect you? How do you feel listening to it? What comes to your mind first when you listen to a political song?

3.13. A song is an entertaining tool. People listen to different styles of music according to their mood.

3.8. To entertain, meditate or relax. Also for special occasions (weddings), also to disseminate political messages and spread awareness about social issues.

3.11. It is an artistic form; songs that are composed with feelings and adopt a cause affect people more than entertaining songs.

3.10. The role of a song is cultural. Each person listen to the type of songs that fits its personality: you can tell the character of a person by listening to the style of songs he/she listens to.

3.5. It is an artistic form. Each song creates a certain mood. Listening to a song is dangerous especially if it has violent words. Most of today's songs unfortunately are purely entertaining.

3.3. In our region, I think we need to group songs in two eras: before and after Rotana (a pan-Arab production house), since Rotana is responsible for producing commercialized songs. You can tell if a population is sophisticated when you listen to its songs, a song is a measurement tool for civilization. The tune and rhythm affect people a lot. A song can be considered a weapon or tool to deliver any intended message.

3.2. Listening to a song is related to the mood of the listener. A song may hold many roles: entertaining, protest...

3.1. A song is the first tool of mass communication. Early civilizations used songs to transmit ideas and messages (verbal communication). We memorize better something that carries a tune. The intonation of the Koran's verses is a good example. Songs facilitate the transmission and retention of a certain idea. It holds and reflects a social mood and value and can mobilize people. It is important to mention that today we live in the era of TV not Radio, so the image is more important than the sound.

N.B. the rest of the interviewees said that a song is entertaining.

4. Do you think a political song is a good motivator to engage people politically?

Almost all interviewees agreed that a song in general motivates people and mobilize them especially the political song



5. During the war, have you listened to political song?

5.14. and 5.12 are familiar with Ziad Rahbani's songs only.

5.9. Is familiar with Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife's songs

5.5. Is familiar with Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife's songs, even though I was politically against them, but I loved their songs and style.

Interviewees 13, 10, 4 are not familiar at all. Interviewees 11, 8 3, 2, 1 6 and 7 are familiar and knows them by heart, even though some of them belonged to the extreme right parties.

5.7. Is familiar with all the leftist artists. When I asked him how come he is familiar with this song, since he belongs to the Lebanese forces? He replied that this song is humanitarian and deals with social issues. "I am with it on a social level not on a political level. The Lebanese forces made a revolution against the Phalange party, and this is a revolutionary song".

6. Are you familiar with the leftist political song? Are you familiar with the artists that produced this song? If so name a few.

Same answers of the previous question.

7. In your opinion why this type of song is not produced today?

7.14. Because there is no cause today that probably pushes those artists to produce songs about.

7.13. Those artists are not popular for the new generation. We don't know them.

7.8. There is no market need for this song, from a commercial point of view. In reality the social and political situation is badly in need of such songs. No production houses are willing to produce such songs.

- 7.12. I blame the artists themselves from not being visible today. If they produce something, I think they will have definitely their targeted audience.
- 7.11. I link the production of the leftist political song to a cultural movement that existed during the war and is not present today. Our generation is not interested in culture. Today's causes are related to money and power.
- 7.5. It is a worldwide pattern; we have a regression in culture and art due to social media. This generation is not cultured at all, they want everything fast.
- 7.3. Nowadays the Media itself is more important than the content it delivers. The power of the Media, especially the giant Media are imposing on people a content that has no value and no cultural background. They want to keep people ignorant and just make money.
- 7.4. I don't know if the leftist's parties exist today in order for their artists to produce songs. There is no motivation for the artists to produce such songs.
- 7.2. Agreed with interviewees 4 and 11. A confessional system does not produce a political song.
- 7.1. The society and political power are always challenged by Media. During the war there was a movement for change and this song was part of it. Today with the new Media, we might witness a change but it is not exactly like the previous one. I think the role that those leftist artists played ended. Today there is a new venture that is happening with the youth using unfamiliar forms, which will probably emerge soon.
8. In your opinion why radio stations are not broadcasting this type of songs anymore?  
This question was addressed to only two interviewees the first one is the managing director "Radio Free Lebanon" (owned by the Lebanese Forces) and the second one

is the former Manager of “The Voice of the People” (owned by the Lebanese communist party)

8.5. During the war it was impossible for “Radio Free Lebanon” to broadcast leftist political songs since we were political opponents, with the exception of few songs for Ziad Rahbani and Marcel Khalife. During the war we used to broadcast songs for Lebanese artists only. Today FM Radio stations are purely commercialized and they broadcast mainly what the production houses pay them to broadcast even though this activity is illegal. Another reason is that those artists are not producing new songs and part of Radio Station’s strategy is to broadcast the latest releases.

8.2. In order to attract and satisfy the audience Radio stations broadcast songs that are popular and new. “The voice of People” is an exception; it used to and is still broadcasting the leftist political song, because it is not a commercialized Radio Station and because it is that same station that supported those artists and made their songs popular. Finally “The Voice of People’s” audience is still interested to listen to these songs.

9. Would you like to listen to these songs today? If so what comes to your mind first when you listen to a political song?

9.4. I am not familiar with these songs, but if listening to them today is going to remind me of the war I’d rather not listen to them at all.

9.2. I don’t listen to them anymore, and if I listen to them I’ll laugh because the artists that produced these songs have changed and are doing or producing something else different; working on music and making a revolution through music.

9.5. I don't purposefully listen to these songs, but if it happens I'd rather listen to a political song that has nice melody and rhythm and not a political content.

9.3. I listen to all of them all the time because I like to analyze them from a musical perspective.

9.1. I haven't listened to them since a long time.

10. I am going to play few songs; do you still recall them? If so can you sing along?

11. I played "Ounadikom" (I call upon you) for Admad Kaabour, "Sobhi el Jiz" for Khaled el Haber, "Mountassibou el Kamati Amchi" (I walk upright) and "Nezha Rifiyi" (A provincial promenade) for Marcel Khalife.

Almost everybody recognized "Ounadikom".

The new generation didn't recognize any of the songs. They knew it was Marcel Khalife because of the musical style.

Interviewees 2, 3, 1, 7, and 6 recognized all the songs and remembered the lyrics.

Interviewees 4, 13, 10 didn't recognize any.

Interviewees 14, 11, 8, 12, 9, 5 recognized only "Ounadikom" and "Mountassibou al Kamati Amchi"